

# **Economy, magic and the politics of religious change in pre-modern Scandinavia**

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I, Hugh Atkinson, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that these sources have been acknowledged in the thesis.

## Abstract

This dissertation undertook to investigate the social and religious dynamic at play in processes of religious conversion within two cultures, the Sámi and the Scandinavian (Norse). More specifically, it examined some particular forces bearing upon this process, forces originating from within the cultures in question, working, it is argued, to dispute, disrupt and thereby counteract the pressures placed upon these indigenous communities by the missionary campaigns each was subjected to.

The two spheres of dispute or ambivalence towards the abandonment of indigenous religion and the adoption of the religion of the colonial institution (the Church) which were examined were: economic activity perceived as unsustainable without the 'safety net' of having recourse to appeal to supernatural powers to intervene when the economic affairs of the community suffered crisis; and the inheritance of ancestral tradition.

Within the indigenous religious tradition of the Sámi communities selected as comparanda for the purposes of the study, ancestral tradition was embodied, articulated and transmitted by particular supernatural entities, personal guardian spirits. Intervention in economic affairs fell within the remit of these spirits, along with others, which may be characterized as guardian spirits of localities, and guardian spirits of particular groups of game animals (such as wild reindeer, fish).

These same roles and functions may have been assigned to guardian spirits within the religious conceptions of Scandinavian communities, and an attempt was made to demonstrate that this was at least partially the case. Personal guardian spirits were certainly heritable in both cultures; to accept and receive them as inheritance was an act and an event which expressed and demonstrated an individual's place within a family (either as blood relative or in-law, or sometimes friend) and the body of tradition which that family possessed and enacted. In both cultures these spirits were key constituents of the web of indigenous religious conceptions, and central cogs in the machine of relations with the supernatural sphere; as such they represented and embodied the *primus motor* of 'paganism' in the eyes of missionaries, and were accordingly demonized and targeted for some of the most vehement bile directed by the Church against the indigenous religion.

Other themes, both broader and narrower, addressed or touched upon in the present study include: continuity and discontinuity of religious customs in the conversion and post-conversion eras; contextualization of religious and magical rituals within the immediate social, ecological and economic circumstances to which the community which had recourse to said rituals was subject; Christian attitudes to inherited cultural traditions, encompassing revisionism, rehabilitation of 'pagan' ancestors, the concept of the 'noble heathen', the de-sacralizing of 'pagan' cosmology and its preservation for posterity; indigenous religious discourse, and specifically that placed into the mouths of (or articulated by) personal guardian spirits, as an expression and externalization of the experience of conversion and the behaviour, tone and rhetoric of missionaries and missionary kings; folk religiosity as social and political dissidence contra the alliance of state and orthodox religion; and more generally the human-spirit contract and partnership and the dynamic pertaining within it.

Keywords: cultural inheritance, human-spirit relations, popular religions, Sámi, schism, tutelary spirits

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## Abbreviations

|                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AM = Den arnamagnæanske institut, Copenhagen & Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Reykjavík                                   | Kaupmannahöfn, held by Landsbókasafn Íslands, Reykjavík                                                                      |
| Da. = Danish                                                                                                                   | JS = the collection of Jóns Sigurðsson held by Landsbókasafn Íslands in Reykjavík                                            |
| Det kgl. bibl. = Det kongelige bibliotek, Copenhagen                                                                           | <i>KHL</i> = <i>Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder</i>                                                         |
| <i>FAJ</i> = <i>Finmarkens Amts Justitsprotokol for 1692</i> , in Trondhjems Stiftsarkiv                                       | MIcel. = Modern Icelandic                                                                                                    |
| Far. = Faroese                                                                                                                 | No. = Norwegian                                                                                                              |
| fol. = folio                                                                                                                   | NRA = Den nye kongelige samling, held by Det kongelige bibliotek, Copenhagen & Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Reykjavík |
| fols. = folios, folia                                                                                                          | <i>ONP</i> = <i>Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog</i> (Degnbol et al. 1989—)                                                |
| GKS = Den gamle kongelige samling, held by Det kongelige bibliotek, Copenhagen & Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, Reykjavík | SáN = North Sámi                                                                                                             |
| Holm papp = paper manuscript held by Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm                                                           | Sw. = Swedish                                                                                                                |
| Holm perg = parchment manuscript held by Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm                                                       | 4to = quarto                                                                                                                 |
| ÍB = Safn Hins íslenska bókmenntafélags, deildar þess í                                                                        | 8vo = octavo                                                                                                                 |

## Introduction

This dissertation sets out to investigate the nexus between two cultures: the Sámi and the Scandinavian; and two cultural spheres: economy and religion. These respective subjects, at times convergent, at others divergent, will be studied chiefly by reference to textual sources.

The nature of the sources in question necessitates a third dimension of variance, namely a **CHRONOLOGICAL DIMENSION**. This dimension, as will become apparent, is one in which there exists a disparity which it is not possible to mend, but which an attempt will be made to reconcile, in as satisfactory and pragmatic a manner as possible. The religious dimension being central to this investigation—and more specifically religion in transition and dynamic interaction with other cultural forces—the subject matter which will constitute a central focus of the investigation will be the respective cultures' religious experiences during the period of conversion to Christianity. The process of ostensible conversion took place in different periods in the respective cultures: for Scandinavian communities in different regions of Scandinavia and its North Atlantic diaspora in a period probably encompassing the ninth through eleventh centuries, now on a national basis, now on a comparatively ad hoc basis; for Sámi communities in different parts of Sápmi in a period spanning the latter half of the seventeenth to the first half of the eighteenth century.

Furthermore, if one disregards the evidence of folk traditions from the post-conversion era (which one in fact does well not to disregard—but more on this later), it is the conversion period—whether documented by contemporary witnesses or reconstructed in retrospect in texts compiled in later centuries (the latter is the case for accounts of the Scandinavian conversion period, the former for the Sámi conversion period)—from which derive the most extensive accounts of the non-

Christian religion of these two cultures, which is to say the indigenous religious culture as it was before representatives of the Christian church undertook the project of undermining and replacing it with Christianity. As problematic as they are for source-critical reasons, some the most extensive accounts of Scandinavian religion purport to depict the period in which Christian missionaries were active among Scandinavian communities, with Ansgar one of the earliest documented (in *Vita Anskarii*). Conversely, the information provided by this same corpus of sources concerning Sámi religious culture of this same period is paltry. Probably the most extensive account we have of Sámi religious ideas is the account of the Sámi noaidit from *Historia Norwegie*. This account appears highly trustworthy, bordering on ethnographic, when checked against the indicium of later accounts of noaidit and their rituals, and does tell us something about Sámi conceptions of tutelary spirits, but (along with the *semsveinar* episode in *Eyrbyggja*) it is just about all we have from this era.

It would be misleading to describe these indigenous religious cultures as pre-Christian given that we have no concrete evidence that, in the form we encounter them, they predate Christianity. It is reasonable to assume that the indigenous religions of these two cultures, whilst in some respects deeply conservative and likely retaining many core features over the course of time, were nonetheless also, like all religions, in an ongoing state of flux, however slight the changes which they underwent through time. This applies to Christianity no less than to non-scriptural religions. Indigenous Sámi religion is non-scriptural inasmuch as there were no Sámi written languages prior to the development of orthographies by Scandinavian philologists.

Indigenous Scandinavian religion may be said to be scriptural inasmuch as there existed a script, namely runes, which besides other applications could be (and indeed



was) used to express religious thoughts and ideas, and to invoke supernatural powers. However, even a runic text as exceptional and extensive as that carved into the Rök stone, a text which, cryptic though it is, exhibits mythological (and by extension religious) content, cannot be compared in scope and authority with voluminous texts of religious dogma of the kind conventionally denoted by the term and concept of scripture-based religion.

### CHRONOLOGICAL PARAMETERS

I have chosen to study the respective cultures in a commensurable period of transition, and under comparable ideological pressures, namely the conversion period, the period in which each culture underwent an enforced transformation in the substance of its religious affairs under pressure from the agents of a missionary campaign implemented by the Church.

I have selected precisely this period in an attempt to calibrate the comparative dimension of the study, because I think it makes more sense to study two cultures as they experience the same process, than it is to study two cultures at the same period of time, when each was subject to quite different pressures, just as a comparative study of two cultures during the period archaeologists identify as those cultures' respective Stone Age, Bronze Age or Iron Ages might prove fruitful in ways a synchronic study of the same cultures would not.

The intensity of the mission to Scandinavian communities in the centuries either side of the turn of the first millennium was, as far as can be deduced from the scant evidence available, much greater than that directed towards contemporaneous Sámi communities, even if it is possible to identify associations of Sáminess in certain pronouncedly demonic converts of the missionary kings of Norway, such as Eyvindr kinnrifa (whose parents, unable to conceive, eventually do so with the help of Sámi in

a manner highly suggestive of the Sámi concept of conception, the foetus and the soul) and Rauðr inn rammi (with his Sámi entourage).

As such I am less concerned with synchronic cultural interaction, as such, than some of the earlier comparative studies of these two cultures have been. I consider the dimension of intercultural development of religious ideas in a syncretic and synergetic perspective worthwhile and potentially very fruitful, and I do not ignore this dimension in my study, since neither culture at any point existed in a state of hermetic cultural isolation (so far as we can deduce from pre-historic evidence—archaeological finds, which are more or less impossible to assign a definite or wholly distinct ethnic affiliation).

Having selected these parameters, in an attempt to resolve the disparity that would arise from a study of the two cultures in the same era, I have (as stated) elected to focus a significant portion of my investigation on a comparison of the respective cultures' experience of the period of religious conversion each underwent at the hands of Christian missionaries. Through a focus on this shared experience, and the in some respects differing, in others broadly similar reaction each culture and each community had to the pressures of conversion, I have attempted so far as is possible to achieve an acceptable degree of equivalence of comparanda.

For these reasons, it becomes impossible to undertake a comparative study of conversion era Sámi and Scandinavian religions which is at the same time synchronic, simply because the conversion of the respective cultures, in its most intensive phase, took place in periods separated by centuries.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It would have been desirable to undertake a thorough investigation of the extent of efforts to convert Sámi communities during the extended period of the wholesale conversion of Scandinavian communities, and to what extent conversely this may have been considered a superfluous goal by the Church in that era. On the face of it such an investigation might prove largely inconclusive, given the paucity of evidence. Having said this, in the light of evidence suggestive of the existence of ethnically mixed communities of individuals of variously Sámi and Scandinavian extraction from an early period onwards (Zachrisson 1997, 2008; Price 2002), it is not unreasonable to assume a kind of collateral

### PHENOMENONOLOGICAL PARAMETERS

The magical and religious phenomena examined in what follows will be placed within two paradigms, which are not mutually exclusive but rather coexistent and in fact complementary, these being: the application of magic to the sphere of economic affairs; and the shifting dynamic in relations between people and tutelary spirits as this relationship reacts to the pressures of religious conversion.

With respect to the first paradigm, the broad contention which will be presented in what follows is that a continuity of tradition of ideas of acts of magic applied to economic affairs can be traced in traditions given expression through an extensive period post-dating the religious conversion of each of the two cultures. This suggests that given socio-economic priorities, viz. the acquisition of economic resources the lack of which the poorest in society felt most keenly were it unable to secure them, could override social and economic pressure exerted by power bases (the Church, the

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conversion of Sámi individuals who were members of such biethnic communities resulting from a mission targeted principally at Scandinavians.

The distinction between incidental, piecemeal and partial conversion on the one hand, and thoroughgoing and blanket, albeit staggered, conversion on the other, is a key one of course, as is the fact that indigenous Sámi religious forms (irrespective of the quotient of Christian elements assimilated into them) were still intact, possessed of an internal structural integrity not fundamentally compromised or disrupted by outside pressures, at the time the Finnemission and its precursors and counterparts in seventeenth century Sweden and Norway were embarked upon.

Also, crucially, Sámis were free to practice their religion openly, in contrast to the situation which pertained as a result of the interdictions of the Mission in the conversion and post-conversion period, when these practices went underground as far as the Church authorities were concerned or indeed aware, a situation comparable to that which resulted from the acceptance of Christianity by the republic of Iceland in the year 999 or 1000, even if in the latter case, in contrast to the former, covert practice of indigenous customs was ostensibly condoned (cf. e.g. Strömbäck 1997, Grønlie 2006 and references therein to scholarly accounts of and debate concerning this event, the political mechanics which brought it about, and its concrete effects with respect to indigenous religious praxis).

Thus we may legitimately draw a comparison in terms of scale, scope and totality between the missions to which Scandinavian communities were subject from the ninth through eleventh centuries, and that to which the Sámi resident seasonally or permanently within the parts of Sápmi lying within or overlapping the borders of the kingdoms of Norway and Sweden were subject in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Crown) within and without society to abandon ideas about resorting to supernatural intervention as a means of ensuring that said priorities were met. Whilst not seeking to actively oppose or enter a conflict with ideological norms set out by the forces of state authority, ideas of appeal to supernatural powers not endorsed by the Church (or in turn the Crown) naturally ran counter to the ideological hegemony of the latter. These 'grass-roots' ideas were thus dissident by default, a 'counter-power in society'.<sup>2</sup>

This is not to posit a ritual counterpart to these ideas, notwithstanding evidence of continuity of certain magical practices in the post-conversion era in both cultures. The ideological organism (or perhaps mechanism) of inter-feeding ideas and physical actions, symbols and configurations of objects commonly designated religion undeniably undergoes a change of phenomenological status when the ritual element falls away, or when the ritual element may no longer be performed openly to and with the involvement of a section of the public, the community.

Publicity is arguably a central element in determining what we define as religion, with covertly performed rituals typically defined as acts of magic on the basis of this minimal distinction. Religion is collective, and predisposed upon collective involvement and shared expectations and concerted aims. Covert ritual acts, whilst based upon the same bedrock of cosmology and understanding of the nature of reality and its mechanisms, function quite differently for lacking those elements which attend upon a public (or overt) ritual act: an audience sharing and contributing to the ideological scaffold of the ritual, engaging with and partaking in the religious act.

That which is defined as religion is essentially communal, whilst that which is defined as magic typically serves the few rather than the many. This difference can be seen at least partly as the consequence of the religious-cum-magical ritual being deprived of a public audience, its mechanism thus being forcefully disengaged from

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<sup>2</sup> To borrow Hamayon's phrase (Hamayon 1994).

the surface upon which it formerly had purchase. If beliefs are reckoned by believers—the soil in which they grow (to borrow an analogy from Christian rhetoric)—to deprive a religion of a public forum is to deny beliefs the oxygen without which they will expire.

Another definition of magic contra religion is that codified by a social entity wishing to usurp the centrality of a religion, depose it and assume the same central position itself: another religion. This is of course the strategy of the Church in its confrontation with indigenous northern religions.

This dissertation takes as its broad subject the religious life the Sámi and Scandinavian cultures of the Scandinavian peninsula and its North Atlantic diaspora. The perspective is comparative, namely a comparison of these two cultures. More specifically the project focusses upon the way these cultures adapted and reacted to two external pressures: the ecological and economic conditions to which they were subject, and religious conversion.

The precise parameters of this study are as follows. The **CULTURAL PARAMETERS** have already been stated, and as such the investigative scope of the project is cross-cultural. The chronological parameters are the periods in which these cultures were subjected to the pressures of religious conversion from Christian missionaries. It may be noted at once that these two periods are not contemporary or synchronic. The conversion of the Scandinavian peoples, piecemeal, progressively and in places (e.g. later Sweden) according to a somewhat ad hoc sequence, is reckoned to span a period of more than a century, such that the conversion of the peoples of the respective regions of Scandinavia is itself not synchronic. Confining ourselves to the evidence of textual sources, early attempts at conversion were made by the priest Ansgar in Denmark and Sweden in the early ninth century, and parts of Sweden were still being converted, seemingly on a farm-by-farm, family-by-family, man-by-man

basis as late as the eleventh century.

Notably, according to this same source, Christ was initially adopted into the pantheon of gods with which the community which hosted Ansgar reckoned, on the basis of lot casting. Thus from the earliest accounts, syncretism was the norm, and this syncretism arguably (and perhaps unsurprisingly) remains a constant aspect of both Scandinavian and Sámi religious cultures from that point on and through to the most recent popular religious traditions.<sup>3</sup>

It is considered likely that a fruitful extension and continuation of the area of enquiry of the present investigation would be to study, in a similar manner and along the same lines as the conversion-era source materials presently under discussion, the popular traditions of the post-conversion period, which certainly lend themselves to use as sources for religious ideas and attitudes towards the traditions of the past, the latter being a central thread in this study.<sup>4</sup>

The **GEOGRAPHICAL PARAMETERS** differ for the respective comparanda. The Scandinavian examples taken come from an eclectic geographic range, with a particular emphasis on communities presented as resident in peripheral regions of the Scandinavian diaspora, and accordingly subject to particular ecological and economic conditions, which in turn condition their religious strategies. The textual sources for these cultures and religious phenomena likewise have a varying provenance, but largely confined to texts preserved in their earliest extant and reconstructible forms in Icelandic and Norwegian codices from the medieval period.

It was considered desirable to confine the examples of Sámi religious phenomena to one area of the heterogeneous continuum of Sápmi. The North Sámi

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<sup>3</sup> One might even go so far as to argue that syncretism is a universal element of religion per se, not least Christianity in its various sects, denominations and local hybrids (an example from the cultural area under discussion being Læstadianism).

<sup>4</sup> For a presentation of arguments for the validity of use of this corpus in this way see e.g. Pollan 1990.

culture of the Norwegian county of Finnmark, documented in a cluster of sources dating from the end of the seventeenth and start of the eighteenth century, was chosen for this purpose. At all times an attempt is made to contextualise these comparanda with respect to their purported geographical and immediate cultural provenance.

### **TYPOLGY VS. CONTEXTUALISM**

Scholars discussing this material, e.g. Bäckman, acknowledge, even as they go through the exercise of placing the various designations and manifestations of spirits into a typology, that we have no way of knowing whether the people who experienced these spirits placed them into a similar typological framework within their broader worldview, and that they more than likely did not. The only thing we can be sure of is that scholars are interested in placing different phenomena, often derived from sources which are in many respects widely divergent (e.g. as regards cultural context, immediate social context, time, place), into a typology. It is an abstract exercise and the scholar's understanding of the assembled material, presented to the reader, cannot be assumed to tally with the way an indigenous person, an 'experiencer' (a person who experienced these phenomena first-hand) understood these things.

Without in any way seeking to diminish my own shortcomings in this respect, I considered it important in my research into these phenomena—through the medium of textual sources—to at least attempt to ground my study by, to the best of my ability, imposing a degree of contextuality and limiting the comparanda to more clearly defined, relatively discrete corpuses of material, and in this way hopefully mitigate the pitfall of unreflexive comparisons between phenomena which it arguably makes little sense to compare. Ideally, and insofar as possible, I aim to compare like with like.

In comparison with the sources for Sámi religious conceptions, the Norse-Icelandic material is in many respects more scattered and heterogeneous in its

provenance, and therefore it would profoundly narrow the scope of the study—and specifically the range of phenomena studied—were I to limit the selection of Norse-Icelandic material that will serve as the basis of my study according to the same criteria and parameters used to delineate my selection of sources for Sámi religious culture. Nor would such an approach succeed in achieving the desired equivalence, for it would fail to take account of an *equivalence of context*—or lack thereof.

While I have attempted to maintain a contextual focus, it is acknowledged that it has not always been possible to apply this methodology thoroughly and consistently. The criteria that I have applied to source selection nonetheless seek to impose some degree of contextual perspective, and thereby counteract a tendency to compare phenomena the comparison of which is for various reasons problematic, nonsensical, or methodologically suspect or paradoxical, viz. drawing parallels where one is not comparing like with like, but rather two things one would either not reasonably expect to exhibit similarities, or the differences between which could more satisfactorily and convincingly be explained by contextual factors, or the similarity of which might more honestly be described as fortuitous, superficial, or otherwise erroneous.

It is important to make very clear that I am utilising these texts as sources for ideas *about* reality, not as sources for real circumstances, for 'history' in the unreflexive sense of the term. Only having made an attempt at giving an account of these historical ideas about reality—those we fancy we can make a case for being able to apprehend through the prism of the sources we utilize (here textual sources)—do I consider it possible (that is, in a way I find methodologically cogent) to move onto the next stage, of starting to speculate upon what circumstances—sociological, economic, ecological, environmental, climatological—these ideas may have been shaped by and in turn imposed their own interpretative structure upon.

Furthermore I contend that these ideas or not confined to one era, in fact we



can demonstrate the existence of *ideas* of tutelary spirits and tractive magic right up into early modern popular tradition. It becomes somewhat less germane to concern oneself with the question of how accurate a thirteenth century idea of tenth century 'reality' can possibly be, when what one has opted to concern oneself with is the history of ideas about these phenomena—ideas being the very core and substance of magico-religious phenomena—during the period in which the sources come into being, rather than the period in which the sources purport to document.

While one cannot rule out the possibility that a source which putatively describes an earlier period of cultural history can potentially present a picture of that period which is relatively accurate compared with a recollection of the same period recorded a relatively short span of time subsequent to the period in question—and we have precious few, if any, examples of near contemporary texts (be they non-Scandinavian texts or runic inscriptions) depicting the same Scandinavian communities and their religious ideas as those depicted in hindsight by native written (as opposed to inscribed) sources. The probability of accuracy seems slim here in any case. Therefore we are on much safer ground studying the texts which depict the people and ideas of earlier periods as sources for the people and ideas of the era in which the texts were produced. This naturally encompasses also

Rowe studies the political function of *Flateyjarbók* in the period in which this manuscript was produced. My study of the textual sources I have selected does not venture into such codicological territory. One avenue I would like to pursue in future work is to consider those texts describing the magico-religious phenomena I have taken as the subject of my study, which cluster in three particular manuscripts: *Flateyjarbók*, *Pseudo-Vatnshyrna* and *Hauksbók*. Hermann Pálsson has noted the connection the latter two manuscripts have with communities in northern Norway, and thereby with what was likely a mixed Norse-Sámi cultural milieu.

I do in fact attempt to test whether we can establish a basis for considering one widely-discussed textual source for tenth century magico-religious activity in Norse Greenland to be a potentially accurate source for the ideas of the community, period and locality it purports to depict, by reference to comparative and circumstantial evidence. This rests upon the assumption that, whilst exhibiting idiosyncracies and variations, magico-religious strategies aimed at influencing ecological circumstances and thereby economic affairs follow similar broadly patterns across the whole (or the greater part) of the circumpolar area. At the same time they are conditioned by local climatological and other environmental conditions, conditions namely shared (broadly speaking) by communities throughout this area. Thus one hypothesises an ecological continuum (exhibiting local variation with certain parameters) which gives rise to a ideological, and more specifically a magico-religious continuum.

The idea that communities subject to the same or commensurable environmental conditions are predisposed to adopt commensurable economic strategies, and in turn commensurable magico-religious strategies aimed at influencing the ecological and supernatural variables perceived as determining one's likelihood of success in a given economic endeavour, is one argued for by Hultkrantz in several publications. See also Biering's presentation of Douglas' and Ostrander's models of social relations and the organization of society (Biering 2006): 'Douglas states that people come to think alike when they are in comparable situations, because the internal conscience is structured in a specific social setting [...] Because religion is a part of culture, all religions – like people – have certain similarities.' (referring to Douglas 1982:245)

I adopt Hultkrantz' hypothesis as one of the presuppositions underpinning my attempt to establish a basis for the admissibility of evidence derivable (with due circumspection) from the account of economically-oriented *seiðr*, located by the frame

of the text at Herjólfssnes in Greenland in the mid-980s, into discussions of the nature of contemporary and local Scandinavian religious ideas about the supernatural sphere and magical practices aimed at interacting with it and influencing it on behalf of and for the benefit of the community.

As part of the same analysis of this text I also consider what contemporary (i.e. early fourteenth-century) relevance and function the inclusion of this text in a compilation (*Hauksbók*) might have had.

### SCHOLARSHIP ON THE *SEIÐR*-SHAMANISM NEXUS<sup>5</sup>

The arguments put forward for the identification *seiðr* = (a) shamanism themselves rest upon definitions of shamanism, against which *seiðr* is compared by these scholars, and by reference to which arguments are put forward for the identification *seiðr* = (a) shamanism.

As one might expect, the choice of which definition of shamanism is referred to, and the degree to which the argument adheres strictly to this (abstracted) definition of shamanism, dictates the conclusion, whether or not *seiðr* does = (a) shamanism.

Solli for instance rebuts Dillman's argumentation as 'begrepstyranni'.<sup>6</sup> Dillmann makes reference to Eliade and Vájda. and to 'classical' Siberian shamanism, in so doing buying into a) the homogenization of multiple (indeed numerous) heterogeneous ritual practitioners and practices into one abstracted scholarly construct termed (unrepresentatively) shamanism.

The idea of Siberian shamanism as the 'classical' shamanism is formulated by Eliade, and while it has been challenged by later scholars within the field of

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<sup>5</sup> A more comprehensive summary of this debate is given by Price 2002:315-7.

<sup>6</sup> 'Jeg er av den oppfatning at Francois-Xavier Dillmanns avvisning av at seid har noe med sjamanisme å gjøre, er for katagorisk og preget av kriterie- og begrepstyranni. Han følger Eliades kriterier for sjamanismen, og gud nåde de kjensgjerninger som ikke passer inn under de på forhånd fastlagte kriterier.' (Solli 1997-8:25)

comparative religion, Dillmann does not engage with this debate. This is a problem, and arguably the root of his flawed take on shamanism.

Dillmann's methodological choice of particular definitions of shamanism over others serves his argumentation well, and (in Solli's view at least) lends his case a pronounced tendentiousness. Yet most scholarly arguments are arguably at some level tendentious, so why should we (or Solli) call Dillmann out on this point? The answer must be because we believe it a worthwhile scholarly exercise, which it behoves scholars to at least attempt, to aim for the greatest reference to real-world (or 'real' experience-of-the-world) circumstances and phenomena when discussing those same circumstances, even when we know that our discussion can inevitably only ever deal in scholarly constructs. The model must be as accurate as we can possibly make it, whilst working within the restrictions of realities we can only at best apprehend subjectively. If we fancy we are capable of objectivity, then we must strive for the greatest objectivity we know ourselves to be capable of, rather than taking methodological short cuts that we know full well misrepresent the realities in question in order to simplify the route we are taking to our conclusion. Put another way we must behave like circumspect, dispassionate and conscientious scientists in search of a truth, and not like politicians, economical with truths as and when it serves the purpose of accruing political capital. Allowing rhetoric to gain the upper hand at the expense of honest results – even if we have to admit areas where we cannot come to a definitive or emphatic conclusion.

If shamanism as discussed within the pages of scholarly publications is and can ultimately only ever be a scholarly construct, then surely it is permissible to only work within these parameters? Dillmann, without undertaking fieldwork – which besides the fact that the ethnographic subjects in question are so numerous as to make the task impossible, even were a lifetime to be spent upon it, would also require the use of a

time machine in order to be able to encounter the most pertinent subjects (Norse and Sámi ritual practitioners) – cannot engage with the subject first-hand, and is therefore dependent on the ethnographic documentation and syntheses of others.

The fact that this scholarly construct ('shamanism') is given a name derived from the term for a ritual practitioner in just one of the pre-modern cultures of northern Eurasia, the Evenki *săman*, whilst in itself a pragmatic choice, highlights the reductiveness inherent in the construct.

*Seiðr*, as it is presented by some scholars, can be demonstrated to share traits with rituals performed by specialists on behalf of their communities in other parts of Eurasia. That *seiðr* does not share all or enough of the traits shared collectively (although not universally) by other north Eurasian ritual practices is the argument used by Tolley in one of the most recent and probably the most comprehensive treatment of this question published to date. He argues that since these elements are scattered rather than being incorporated into a coherent and consistent system, we cannot speak of Norse shamanism, be it the *seiðr* of the sources or anything else. This is a circumspect position, but one might add that what we understand as Norse religion or cosmology *per se* are arguably no less constructs assembled from scattered references, than are scholarly attempts at gathering references to *seiðr* and other phenomena (such as Óðinn's initiation and putative soul-flight) into such a system—no less a semblance of coherency and systematicness concealing an underlying dissonance.

In a sense the textual sources for Norse culture as they are handed down to us have been through at least several pairs of editorial hands, undergone revision and systematisation. To take the example of Norse mythology and cosmology, Snorri does this, and so do his poetic sources (the Eddic corpus). And at some point this is what the text becomes: an interpretation, more than a hypothetical and ultimately

unrecoverable original. The interpretation of the text becomes the text. That is what we have in our hands, whatever else we lack. This is the reality of textual sources, and at the end of the day all we really have. Every else involves a greater or lesser degree of speculation, and furthermore all engagement with these artefacts entails the interpretation we ourselves undertake. Our own mediation of the sources is merely the latest in a long line of interpretations and reinterpretations.

Given that the identification of *seiðr* as shamanism—more properly *a* shamanism—at some point becomes a question of typology over contextualised ethnographic realities, where an ultimately heterogeneous range of phenomena occurring in a selection of ethnically distinct cultures, distinguished by idiosyncratic features, is subsumed to a collective definition assigned a label derived from the name of the ritual practitioner of just one of those many cultures, one could just as well invert the definition and call other shamanisms types of *seiðr*, rather than saying *seiðr* is a type of shamanism. If one variant may serve to represent all variants, this terminology would be no less valid nor arbitrary than the one we inherit from early modern Siberian ethnography.

If we are going to split hairs, we could say that, even allowing the use of the term shamanism, a cultural construct which as stated comes to Western European scholarship from Evenki *šaman* via Russian *шаман* and German *Schaman* (cf. also the derivative *shamanka*, applied to female ritual practitioners), the only ritual practice that can legitimately be called shamanism is that practised by a *săman*, viz. an Evenki ritual practitioner. By the same token only a *seiðkona* or *seiðmaðr* can be said to practice *seiðr*, along with other specifically stated to do so (practitioners described as *spákonur*, *vǫlur*, or not given a *nomina agentis* at all), and only a *noaidi* practices *noaidevuohta*.

Here it is understood that we are taking the textual sources at their word, for the purposes of the scholarly investigation, and in fact disregarding whatever the reality may have been as regards the use of these terms in the period the sources purport to depict. What in fact is of more, if not exclusive relevance here is what people conceived this magical practice and its practitioners as being, whether this be the conception of the day or of a later era. The magic exists so long as people conceive of it. The idea of magic is the sum and the essence of what it consists in. The question of what is real need not arise, since whatever exists in a person's imagination is as real as anything else s/he perceives to be part of the visible or invisible world.

My position regarding the question of whether *seiðr* is a shamanism is that it is in some respects equivalent to other ritual practices identified by scholars as shamanism(s), but that it also exhibits features which distinguish it from those shamanisms. This is itself entirely congruous with the nature of these shamanisms, inasmuch as within this wide corpus of cultures in which the rituals nominated as shamanisms are embedded, variation in the details of the rituals in question is the rule rather than the exception. Indeed, variation in technique from one ritual practitioner to another, within one and the same culture or community, is commonplace. As such it is perhaps more apt to speak in terms of shamanic variants, to draw an analogy from the discipline of palaeography. And this goes counter to attempts at typological classification, throws a proverbial spanner in the works.

It is therefore understandable that scholars opt to overlook or downplay variation, for to acknowledge this state of affairs calls into question the validity of assembling a typology of the various instances of ritual practices, when to do so on any significant scale (incorporating any significant number of variants) entails disregarding or playing down differences between the shamanic variants while

emphasising the common traits shared by two or more variants. Not to do so would be to give up any attempt at typology, for one must recognise each individual variant as unique, which of course it is.

To return to the analogy of the stemma, acknowledgement of the uniqueness of each variant encourages the study of each in its own right, which in the case of a manuscript means producing a single text or single manuscript edition, coupled with an account of the codicology of the manuscript (its individual history, including the circumstances of its production, its various owners, movements and whereabouts and use at different times), as opposed to an edition of all extant witnesses to the text, amalgamating and supplementing where one or another is defective, which entails the production of a stemma and the establishment of a hierarchy of texts in which some become effectively immaterial and are disregarded by dint of being copies of older exemplar, exhibiting no textual variants considered significant. This approach also tends to divorce manuscripts from their social context and texts from their codicological context, as it were amputating them and considering them only in relation to (to extend the analogy) corresponding limbs from other textual bodies.

In the latter case the concept of a hypothetical archetypal text and its reconstruction is the overarching *raison d'être*, while in the former the manuscript and its personal circumstances, including the social context in which it came into existence and was made use of, take precedence. Similarly, when studying of the magical ideas and rituals which have been grouped under the umbrella term 'shamanism', the approach taken to the corpus of shamanic variants by some scholars, perhaps most notably Mircea Eliade, has been to start from an assumption of the existence of a hypothetical archetypal or 'classical' form of shamanism, to which some examples recorded in ethnographic data conform closely, whilst others are perceived to differ,



and as such constitute a dilution of the putative original model of shamanism. Thus a hierarchy of shamanisms and semi-shamanisms is established, much as one establishes a hierarchy of manuscript witnesses when constructing a stemma. This approach, as noted, in seeking to construct a typology disregards variation which it deems less significant, or perhaps, variation which does not facilitate the clear stratification of the variants into neat groups, or variation which complicates the typology in an undesirable way.

Another approach adopted more recently by some scholars is to consider each manifestation of what have hitherto been classified as shamanism or (later) shamanisms in its own right, contextualised within and not isolated from the social context in which it occurred. A number of studies have for instance been published of individual shamans, such as the the Uzbek *bakši* (shaman) Tašmat Kholmatov studied by the Russian ethnographer V. N. Basilov.<sup>7</sup>

In fact my approach both attempts a typology and borrows the stemmatic method, the latter inasmuch as I have adopted a method whereby I attempt to elucidate the more oblique or inscrutable aspects of given cultural phenomena, to 'fill in the blanks', but reference to equivalent phenomena occurring in another culture in which similar phenomena occur. This approach might then be likened to the supplementing of one manifestation of another cultural phenomenon or artefact, the medieval text, by reference to other manifestations of what are identified as the same text. The plurality of manifestations facilitates a comparative analysis, and one manifestation is used to inform the other(s).

This approach thus reckons with commonalities between pseudo-shamanisms or shamanic variants, or at any rate between the shamanic variants occurring in various

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<sup>7</sup> Basilov 1996.

communities and local and regional cultures belonging to two broad ethnic groups, namely the Sámi of the northern part of the Scandinavian peninsula and (specifically the Norwegian county of Finnmark) and the Scandinavian inhabitants of the western part of Scandinavia, including the North Atlantic Scandinavian diaspora (specifically Iceland and Greenland).

At the same time, in keeping with the contextualist approach to ethnography, I acknowledge variation where it occurs, both within and between cultural collectives. It would be disingenuous to suggest that I have succeeded in applying a wholly or consistently contextualist method, but I have sought to implement this perspective where I was able to.

The rituals described in the textual sources with which the terms *seiðr*, *seiða*, *seiðkona* etc. are associated will be treated first and foremost as *seiðir*, and only secondarily as shamanisms or shamanic variants; and the same must apply to *noaidevuohta*, if we are to be consistent. In any case the parameters of this study encompass these two ritual complexes, and as such further discussion of shamanism can happily be put to one side from here on. It has nonetheless been necessary to broach the at times vexed question of shamanism and *seiðr* here in order to contextualise the discussion of particular applications of *seiðr* which follow. Had space permitted, it might also have proven fruitful to discuss the interpretation of other Norse mythological ideas within the framework of shamanistic cosmology and ritual praxis; however, this falls well outside the stated parameters of the present dissertation.

As intimated in the parameters set out above, selective use has been made of sources for Scandinavian religious culture. The textual source which will receive most attention is a section of an Icelandic saga, *Eiríks saga rauða*, for which there are two extant medieval manuscript witnesses. This text will be presented in full in Chapter

Three and a preliminary account of the scholarly debate surrounding it given below.

Besides this central textual source evidence for pre-modern Scandinavian conceptions of magic have been drawn from a broad chronological range, their unifying themes being twofold, namely the nature or manner of the magical effect (physical traction) and the intended aim of the act of magic (economic gain). Predominantly native sources have been consulted, but this geographical provenance should not be taken to imply greater insight into the conceptions or people described. The earliest of the Scandinavian sources dates to the early second millenium.

The majority of the sources for Scandinavian magic surveyed employ the term *seiðr*, or a derivative of this word. The terminology of the sources thus provide a not unproblematic typology, and while it is hazardous to adopt, unreflexively, this typology as a framework for study, the preponderance of the term has nonetheless compartmentalized academic inquiry into historical Scandinavian conceptions of magical practices to a certain extent, for instance in the distinction made between *seiðr* and *galdr*.<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of the present study, a decision was made to focus upon those acts of magic thus tagged by the sources themselves as *seiðr* which fall within the parameters of narrower criteria, namely tractive magic applied to economic affairs. More comprehensive surveys of *seiðr* per se have previously been undertaken which take in the full scope of its various applications,<sup>9</sup> and others focussing primarily on a narrower range of its potential uses.<sup>10</sup> I present my own brief survey in the opening chapter of the present study, but from there on have opted to narrow the focus along the lines set out above. In this I partly follow the lead of Bo Almqvist,<sup>11</sup> and seek to build upon his observations by introducing a comparative, cross-cultural perspective.

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8 For a brief discussion of this typological distinction see Chapter One, footnote 39.

9 Strömbäck 1970; Raudvere 2008.

10 Price 2002, focussing on magic, including magic designated *seiðr*, in the context of warfare.

11 Almqvist 2000:263.

The comparanda selected for this purpose, namely Sámi traditions, were chosen for the relative geographical proximity of the respective communities, and the common ground in terms of environmental pressures and strategies adopted to cope with them.

The most extensive literary account of a magical ritual referred to by the term *seiðr*, found in the Icelandic saga *Eiríks saga rauða*, has been variously used to dispute or defend the assertion that *seiðr* should be classified as a manifestation of shamanism, or as equivalent to shamanisms documented elsewhere in Eurasia. One of the earliest scholars to put forward this assertion was Dag Strömbäck with the publication of his monograph *Sejd*, a study of literary accounts of acts of magic designated as *seiðr*.<sup>12</sup>

While there has been far less dispute with respect to the typological classification of *noaidevuohhta*, it is a definition open to question just as that of *seiðr* is. It may be more helpful to think of both as idiosyncratic variations on a broader type. This begs the question: why introduce shamanism into the discussion at all if this risks muddying the issue? Yet given the prominent place shamanism has had in the debate surrounding *seiðr*, as a central point of dispute, it is not easy to avoid the matter entirely if one is to engage with this debate. A brief survey of scholarship now follows.

#### SCHOLARLY OPINION ON THE ACCOUNT OF *SEIÐR* IN *EIRÍKS SAGA RAUÐA*

Tolley puts together a very thorough and persuasive case for seeing the account of the *seiðr* ritual in *Eiríks saga rauða* as wholly literary and aimed at celebrating the coming of Christianity to this part of the Norse diaspora and to Iceland where Guðríðr's descendants will become bishops, directing the reader back to Christianity's accomplishments via the lens of a heathen ritual starring a Christian front and centre.

Þorbiörg as Magi (Tolley 2009:490); Þorbiörg as an inverted bishop (Tolley 2009:491-

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12 Strömbäck 1935:206.

2), a travesty. Use of dramatic narrative.

The argument Tolley puts forward is thorough and convincing, yet it seems difficult to see why the author would choose a pagan ritual as the mannequin which, so to speak, is then dressed as a mock bishop. Unless the remainder of the prophecy (besides the part concerning Guðríður) is meant as a yet another allegory for the coming of Christianity: “Things will improve soon, i.e. when Christianity arrives.” The change of season from winter to spring would then work on a figurative level, symbolising an emergence from the long dark period—paganism, the winter—into a brighter age—Christianity, the spring. The participants in the ritual, including the mock-bishop herself, are then presumably intended by the author to be thought of as children playing at being Christians but yet to mature into fully-fledged, pious, reverent churchgoers, exemplars for coming generations of Greenlanders.

All the same the irreverence and misrule which Tolley claims the account is modelled upon could at a push be interpreted as rhetoric directed by contemporary Christians commenting upon the economic mismanagement and extreme and ultimately fatal degree of social inequality upon which the Greenland bygd rested. Mockery of a bishop who was seldom present in the country, whose estate nonetheless creamed off the best of meagre pickings while parishioners lived hand-to-mouth.

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Several details of the description of Þorbiörg lítilvölva and the ritual she performs at Herjólfssnes, found in chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða*, have invited some scholars to draw comparisons with accounts of shamans and shamanic ritual from ethnographic records, including the pseudo-ethnographic missionary accounts of Sámi *noaidit* (Sámi shamans).

Þorbjörg’s clothes and accessories are described in great detail, and Hilda Ellis-

Davidson has compared the description to that of the costume of certain Siberian shamans, in particular the shaman of the Enets tribe.

The Swedish folklorist and scholar of religion Dag Strömbäck, in his work *Sejd* from 1935, draws a direct comparison between the song sung by the young Christian woman Guðríðr during the *seiðr* ritual and that sung by a young Sámi woman as part of a séance performed by a *noaidi*, as described by a Norwegian man named Isaac Olsen, who worked first as a teacher among the Sámi, and then in 1716 began working as a missionary for the then newly-established *Finnemission*. Contrary to earlier loan theories, and based on a thorough survey of the ritual as it is described in the whole of the Old Icelandic literary corpus, and resting significantly on his analysis of chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga*, Strömbäck interprets *seiðr* as a religious ritual complex loaned from the Sámi to the Norse.

This was at the time something of a radical perspective, and yet, as Håkan Rydving notes, it is not sufficient merely to invert earlier loan theories – such as the view dominant among scholars of Old Norse until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the greater part of the indigenous Sámi religion had been loaned from the Norse – for in so doing “There might be risk that one type of less well-founded analogy replaces another.”

One methodological safeguard which can potentially counteract the tendency to draw overly superficial comparisons between the religious phenomena of different cultures is to try to locate the religious phenomena in question in their social, economic and environmental context, rather than simply examining isolated features with little or no regard for their place and function within the religious system in which they actually occur, or occurred. In Chapter Two of the present study I have attempted to apply such a methodology to an analysis of the account of *seiðr* at Herjólfunes.

### SOURCES FOR THE RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF THE SÁMI OF FINNMARK

The extant sources for the religious culture of the Sámi communities permanently or seasonally residing within the (at times shifting) borders of the Norwegian county (*fylke*) of Finnmark were written down in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They comprise court records, royal decrees, unpublished reports, an ecclesiastical directive (*instruks*) and full-blown literary works. Among the authors of these texts are a county prefect (*amtman*), a magistrate, a rural dean, and several missionaries in the service of the Misjonskollegium based in Trondheim, whose remit was the Christianization of the Sámi parishioners of the Sámi districts (*lappmarker*) of Norway.

In addition we know the names of a number of the Sámi informants from whom these authors acquired the information they mediate concerning the local religious cultures with which they came into contact in the course of their day-to-day business. They all worked in or in some cases travelled through Finnmark in the prosecution of their vocations. These sources are commonly classified as secondary inasmuch as they stand at one remove from the statements of the individuals who held the beliefs and practised the rituals the authors describe. Indeed it is probable that none of these men ever witnessed a Sámi religious (or magical) ritual first-hand.<sup>13</sup> As close as these men got to 'ground zero', to Sámi communities and to Sámi culture, it is important to recognize their limitations.

In addition we have a second class of sources, which consist of textual witnesses to the lost texts and oral statements of missionary Thomas von Westen, statements which in part almost certainly describe the religious culture of Sámi communities in Finnmark encountered during two trips to Finnmark undertaken by

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13 Myrhaug 1997:110-1.

von Westen in 1716 and 1718-19. Whilst problematic, these latter sources may potentially be used to supplement our more direct textual witnesses.

Throughout this overview of the sources an attempt will be made to map out the local geographical and chronological provenance of each author's various statements, and thereby that of the religious phenomena described, in keeping with the proposed contextualist approach underpinning the present study as a whole. Given that certain authors, particularly the Finnmark missionaries Isaac Olsen and Knud Leem, worked in more than one district or locality, and for a span of several years, provenance will accordingly usually encompass a span of dates and places, where these can be definitively established.

Authors will be presented in chronological order following the period in which they were in active contact with the subject of their writings (the Sámi communities of Finnmark), and in the last instance the date of their surviving manuscripts (or in the case of the lost works of Thomas von Westen, the ascertainable date of the author's lost manuscripts and/or the dating of the extant texts in which the lost texts have been transmitted). Furthermore, the principal object of study within the parameters of the present study being economically-motivated and -oriented magic, the primary focus in the context of this survey of sources and source authors will be on records of specifically this category of magico-religious activity, whilst acts of magic motivated by other factors and with consequences falling outside the sphere of the directly economic will only be touched on in passing.

### 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The seventeenth century sources are penned by two government officials, district governor Hans Hansen Lilienskiold and judge Niels Knag, and by king Christian IV of Denmark.



King Christian IV (b. 1577, r. 1588-1648) issued two royal decrees dated 20<sup>th</sup> February 1609 and 12<sup>th</sup> October 1617 in which he commands servants of the crown to attend to the eradication of witchcraft within his realm. The opening lines of the first of these ordinances makes no bones about who the principal sinners are in this respect:

'Oc som forfarenhed noksom gifuer at de forbenefnde *Findsche* oc *Lappiske* folch aff naturen oc brug till Troldom er geneignet oc derfor baade Nordmænd oc andre fromme folck iche vell tøre boe nær hos dennem, meget mindre udj de samme fiorder sig at nedersætte, som saa mange Finner er udj. Da skall du haffve it alvorligt oc strengt inseende med, at de som bliffver *befunden at bruge troldom*, ved dom oc *sentenz* uden ald naade *aflifuis*.<sup>14</sup>

Besides echoing statements in older Norwegian law codes forbidding the consultation of *finnar* (i.e. Sámi), this statement sets out the Dano-Norwegian state's conception of and stance towards Sámi religion in this period, and sets the tone for the campaign of witch-hunts and trials prosecuted throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century, not least in the county of Finnmark.<sup>15</sup>

These decrees are cited at the start of a chapter in a manuscript written by **Hans Hansen Lilienskiold** (ca. 1650-1703), governor of Finnmark from 1684-1698.

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14 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:63. NB the italicized words (italicized by the editors) represent text written in Latin script in the manuscript as distinct from the Gothic script in which the text is otherwise written.  
 15 Cf. e.g. Zachrisson 1993; Mundal 1996; Ældre Borgarthings-Christenret, ed. Keyser & Munch 1846:350-1 ('at gera finfarar. fara at spyria spa', 'at fara a Finmork oc spyria spa'); Ældre Eidsivathings-Christenret ed. Keyser & Munch 1846:389 ('Engi man a at trua. a finna. eða fordæðor'), 403 ('Engi madr skal trua a din eda fordædoskap'). King Christian's directive should be seen in the context of the climate of witch-hunting prevalent across Europe in this period, a discourse in which monarchs also had their say. The Danish king's contemporary King Jacob VI of Scotland (from 1603 James I of England and Scotland) penned in 1597 a programmatic text, *Daemonologie*, in which he similarly stated that the devil prayed upon the ignorance of the inhabitants of Lapland, cf. e.g. J. Craigie's edition of 1982; Hagen & Sparboe 1998:30. The role of the science of demonology in Norwegian authors' interpretations of Sámi religion will be explored in more depth later.

The manuscript, now deposited in the Royal Library in Copenhagen (catalogued Thotts samling 950 fol.),<sup>16</sup> appears to be a draft of a work later completed and presented to King Frederik IV in 1701, entitled *Speculum Boreale*. The chapter in question, chapter 4 in part one of the text, gives an account of trials brought for witchcraft in Finnmark over the course of the 1600s, listing individual trials in chronological sequence and sub-grouped according to who was the governor in office at the time of each trial. Lilienskiold compiled this text on the basis of county court archives, the greater part of which have since been lost.<sup>17</sup>

Among the accused are ten Sámis, two women and eight men.<sup>18</sup> Of these, three are accused of bringing about a person's death, whilst one does not state any specific crime besides the use of witchcraft.<sup>19</sup> These cases thus do not tell us a great deal about local economically-motivated and/or oriented religious practices.

Of the remaining six defendants, a married couple, Nils Rastesen 'finn' and Solveig Andersdatter, together with a third man, Nils Saresen (whose trial—if indeed a case was brought against him—is not recorded by Lilienskiold), are said to have performed an act of weather magic that in bringing about a storm led to the death at sea of a group of people, a deed said to be motivated by the failure of a certain Iver

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16 Thotts samling 950 fol. was first edited in 1998 by Rune Hagen and Per Einar Sparboe, under the title *Trolldom og ugudelighet i 1600-tallets Finnmark*.

17 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:37-40.

18 Anders Poulsen (Lilienskiold [1690s] 1998:256-73); Gammel-Sare (*ibid.* 68-71); Mons Andersen (*ibid.* pp. 68-71); Mons Storebarn (*ibid.* pp. 68-71); Nils Jonsen (*ibid.* pp. 72-3); Nils Rastesen (*ibid.* pp. 134-7); Qvive Baardsen (*ibid.* pp. 108-111); Sarve Persen from Porsanger (*ibid.* pp. 120-5); Solveig Andersdatter (*ibid.* pp. 136-7); Solveig Nilsdatter (*ibid.* pp. 190-3, and cf. pp. 176-7, 198-201, 214). Rune Hagen reckons twenty-six Sámi to have been accused of and/or tried for witchcraft in Finnmark (Vardøhus Len inclusive) in the course of the seventeenth century, viz. the (Hagen 2002a, cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:41 where the authors reach a figure of twelve Sámi to be added to those listed above based upon a survey of all source material documenting seventeenth century witch trials in Finnmark).

19 These are named, respectively, as Gammel-Sare, Mons Andersen and Mons Storebarn, all residents of Porsanger, and Nils Jonsen Finn (for whom no home district stated, but he presumably resided somewhere in the region of Hjelmsøy, where his sentence was announced), cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:68-73. Nils Jonson was sentenced 11<sup>th</sup> August 1617, the others 13<sup>th</sup> July 1610 in Kjelvik.

Syversen to pay for the skin of a reindeer calf Solveig had sold him.

Sarve Persen from Porsanger is accused, amongst a long list of crimes, of having carried out several acts of harmful magic allegedly motivated by economic, usually specifically mercantile disputes between him and the victims: goods not paid for to Sarve's satisfaction, and in one instance the theft of some reindeer.<sup>20</sup>

Solveig Nilsdatter from Andersby was accused of having partaken in a kind of witches' sabbath together with a number of Norwegian women. Besides this, and together with the same accomplices, she is said to have bewitched a cow such that it died, and conspired 'at jage fisken fra landet. Da vaar de alle udj *qual*-lignelse oc jagede fisken med *tare*-legger.'<sup>21</sup> Both of these acts of magic thus had negative economic consequences.

Qvive Baarsen from Hasvåg is said to have worked weather magic which resulted in loss of life, although not out of malice but rather because the wind blew stronger than intended. He also used a magic drum, a *runebomme*, which is stated as having had an economic application, in that 'Paa bommen er maaled *ni stræger med olderbarch* som de maaler *benchedyner* med. ... oc siden bemercher de andre alle slags dyr huormed de kand haffve løcke'.<sup>22</sup> The economic role of the drum and drum divination is well-attested from a number of other sources from Finnmark and elsewhere; here the defendant himself would appear to be the direct source explicating the link between the images on the drum skin and economic fortune.

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20 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:120-3. Sarve's sentence was pronounced in Kjelvik, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1934.

21 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:191. No date (nor venue) for Solveig Nilsdatter's trial is given in Lilienskiold's record of the case, but it may well have been in January 1663 to judge from the dates of the trials immediately preceding and following, and given Lilienskiold's consistent chronological sequencing.

22 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:109, 111. Qvive Baarsen was sentenced 11<sup>th</sup> May 1627, it is not stated where. The sailing wind which Qvive summoned on behalf of a southern fish merchant might also be interpreted as having had an ultimately economic dividend, viz. fishing or the selling of fish ('Da han giorde bor for en Nordfar, falder hans bekendelse, at hand vasket sin fod oc skaffet en spag søndenvind.').

The final Sámi documented as having stood trial for witchcraft in a Finnmark courtroom, whose case comprises the very last entry in Lilienskiold's composite record, is an elderly Sámi man by the name of Anders Poulsen. He receives significantly more detailed coverage in the extant sources than the others, in two manuscripts authored by Lilienskiold, and two other documents deriving directly from the case brought against Anders and its preparation, both authored by the then magistrate serving the Vardøhus court where the trial took place, Niels Knag.<sup>23</sup>

Anders Poulsen was a *noaidi*, around 100 years old at the time of his trial by his own reckoning. His trial took place during Lilienskiold's term as governor of Finnmark, and he evidently took a particular interest in the trial.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly Lilienskiold's account of this trial is by far the most extensive in his compilation of seventeenth century witchcraft trials.

**Niels Knag** (1661-1737?) wrote the entry for the trial in the court register (*tingbok*) for Finnmark.<sup>25</sup> Yet even before the trial had reached court Knag conducted an interrogation of the accused at the start of December 1691 after his arrest (the trial was held in February of 1692, concluding on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of that month) and this interview has also been documented by Knag himself in a separate manuscript.<sup>26</sup>

Comparison of the two texts authored by Knag suggests that Anders moderated the indigenous content of his statements between the time of the initial interview and

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23 Knag was appointed first chief magistrate in 1685, and in 1688 bailiff of Finnmark, also serving as district governor Lilienskiold's assistant. In these capacities he authored several manuscripts, among them *Beskrivelse av en Reise til Malmis (Kola) på Grændserne mellem Norge og Russland 1690*, an account of an expedition he undertook to Kola for the purposes of collecting tax and staking the Danish king's claim to sovereignty over the disputed Norwegian-Russian border districts, which account accommodates observations of the economy, geography and culture of Finnmark, including the local Sámi culture.

24 Niemi 1993:61, cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:32.

25 *Tingbok for Finnmark sorenskriveri 1692–95* (nr. 21), in Statsarkivet, Tromsø.

26 His 'Relation [...]', dated Copenhagen 15<sup>th</sup> December 1693, edited by Just Knud Qvigstad as Knag [1693] 1903. Cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:34.

the subsequent court hearing, shifting in some cases to a Christian frame of reference when explaining the meaning of the symbols on the drum skin and their function.<sup>27</sup> Knag also adduces statements originating with all probability within local Sámi communities (though he does not name his informants), when seeking to substantiate the case for regarding Anders Poulsen's drum magic as having demonic origins.<sup>28</sup>

In the course of the trial Anders was interrogated regarding the *runebomme* and its use for two whole days by the deputy bailiff (*underfogd*) for Vadsø Olle Andersen, a hearing reflected in a written record covering sixteen folio sides in the court register.<sup>29</sup> Andersen's verdict was that Anders should be executed for the crimes of witchcraft and idolatry.<sup>30</sup> Andersen did not however have jurisdiction over the trial; that lay with chief magistrate for Finnmark Niels Knag, who as mentioned was more than adequately acquainted with the details of the case and with the defendant himself, having personally interviewed him three months prior to the court hearing. In contrast to Andersen, Knag was far from categorical in his appraisal of the case and of the nature of the defendant's crimes and guilt with respect to said crimes, a state of affairs which turned on the fact that the charge against Anders Poulsen originated wholly from the state authorities and had no basis in the local community. Put simply, no crime had been reported as having been committed by Anders against the residents of Finnmark; hence Knag's ambivalence.

Thus whilst a trial was brought by the authorities on the basis of Anders' possession of and use of his drum, the record of the trial notes that no one within the local community had accused him of committing any acts of harmful magic: 'Da som

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27 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:34-5. In the earlier text 'finner vi formuleringer som gir innblikk i en mer opprinnelig og utilsørt sjamanisme enn hva tilfellet er i det offisielle rettsreferatet.' (Hagen & Sparboe 1998:35)

28 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:34.

29 Tingbok for Finnmark sorenskriveri 1692-95 (nr. 21), in Statsarkivet, Tromsø. cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:33.

30 Source ref., cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:33.

dislig gierning er affguds dørchelse som Anders Polsen frivillig bekiender at haffue offvet oc er forfaren udj [...] (hourom [*sic.*] dog ingen klager at hand nogen haffver beskadiget paa lifff, helse eller godsiss mistelse)<sup>31</sup>. Therefore the case was referred to the higher judicial authority in Copenhagen.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless the inclination on the part of the authorities was that Anders ought to be made an example of in order to discourage the continued practice of the kind of magic to which he confessed and of which he gave such an apparently comprehensive and frank description. Their justification for seeking such a harsh punishment for the defendant is set out as follows, referring initially to Anders' magical competences as a whole:

'[...] Hvilchet alt er aff høy forargelse heldst paa disse vit affliggende stæder, huor een stoer deel mennisker gandske lidet er oplyst om den rætte Guds kundskab oc dyrchelse, aff hvilche naar een deell noget hænder oc vederfarris, langt heller spørger raad hos saadane Troldfolck end indfly til Gud med bøn oc paakaldelse, thj vaar der høyt fornøden at offver slig ugudelighed bleff *statuerit* it affskyeligt *exempel*, paa det Guds rætte paakaldelse kunde fornemmis.'<sup>33</sup>

This was not to be, however. Knag consulted Lilienskiold, and together the two men came to the decision that the trial should be adjourned, pending a judgement by the higher judicial authorities in Copenhagen, perhaps with reference to the precepts of King Christian IV's decree of 1609, on the basis that this was 'een usædvanlig *casus*',<sup>34</sup> given that there was at that time no legal precedent for the crimes of which

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31 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:273.

32 In the words of the court record: 'denne sag som er een usædvanlig *casus*, huorudj behøffvis de høye herrers betenchede oc skion' (Hagen & Sparboe 1998:273).

33 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:273. The editors add in the introduction to the text that 'Av de påfølgende rettsdokumentene går det fram at underfogden hadde ild og bål i tankene. Poulsen var ifølge Olle Andersen en trollmann og avgudsdyrker som hadde forbrutt sitt liv og som burde på "ilden opbrendis".' (Hagen & Sparboe 1998:33).

34 Lilienskiold [1690s] 1998:273, cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:33.

Anders Poulsen had been found guilty, besides the lack of any actual accusation of personal injury.<sup>35</sup>

The greater part of the information provided by Anders in his confession concerns the *runebomme*, detailing its construction, use and the images painted or drawn on its skin. His drum, which would have been confiscated from him except for when he was demonstrating its use before the court,<sup>36</sup> has been preserved to the present day.<sup>37</sup> Thus we are able to collate Anders' explication of the meaning of the images on the drum skin, row by row, with the actual surviving drum.<sup>38</sup>

Among the symbols on the drum skin is '*En vild reens skichelse, som hand neffner Gvodde betyder saa meget som vild reen, naar der spilles paa runnebommen, vill da ringen ej dandze till den reen, da faar hand som spørger god locke till skotterj, ingen reen den gang om hand end gjør sin yderste oc bæste flid dereffter*',<sup>39</sup> and here we have a clear example of the direct economic application of the magic drum and of drum magic.

Further in connection with hunting of wild reindeer and the herding of semi-domesticated reindeer, and with the warding off of their natural predators, Anders '*Sagde sig oc ved sin bon at kunde forskaffe god locke til reensdyr at de aff vlfue ej skulle dræbis oc saa vel udj andet erholde god lycke*.'<sup>40</sup>

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35 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:33.

36 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:32.

37 The drum was sent to Copenhagen in 1696, evidently on Lilienskiold's orders (Niemi 1993:62, cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:35), remaining there in the collection of Nationalmuseet up until the twentieth century. In 1979 it was repatriated to Finnmark when it was handed over into the keeping of De Samiske Samlinger (Sámiid Vuorká Dávvirat) in Karasjok (cf.

<http://www.riddoduottarmuseat.no/web/index.php?giella1=nor>).

38 For images of the drum see e.g. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:310-11;

<http://www.saivu.com/web/index.php?sladja=77&vuolitsladja=126&giella1=nor>.

39 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:259. And again later, summarising: '*Ved det dyr Gvodde [viz. the picture of this animal drawn on the *runebomme*] som er een vildreens skichelse kand Gud skaffe god lycke till at skyde vilde dyr.*' Hagen & Sparboe 1998:269.

40 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:267. And reiterated towards the end of the court record: (he) '*Kand oc skaffve god lycke till reensdyr oc bevare dem fra ullfve ...*' (Hagen & Sparboe 1998:271).

The reindeer herd also needed a secure supply of food in order to survive and flourish, of course, and this was likewise something over the provision of which a deity depicted on the drum skin could exert a positive influence, thus: 'Ved den runde *circel*, som er *solen* oc hand kalder Peive, kand erlangis got vejr oc solskin helst naar *renen* vill kalffve, oc korn oc høe skall voxe.'<sup>41</sup>

And not only indigenous spirits and deities but also assimilated Christian figures such as the Virgin Mary, and even churches, could be turned to for assistance in economic matters, in return for which they were promised a sacrifice: 'Till denne kirche [viz. that depicted on the skin of the *runebomme*] siger hand sig selff som oc andre at offre till baade voxlys, penge oc andet, ... *Item* når nogen er siug eller haffver modgang paa reen, eller andet ont er vederfaren da bedis oc loffvis till denne *kirche*, oc naar saa nogen bliffver hiulpen da faar kirchen hvis loffvet er.'<sup>42</sup>

The information Anders Poulsen supplied to Niels Knag in December 1691 represents a valuable source against which to compare the testimony he gave in court, and in so doing we can get an idea of the ways Anders moderates and adapts his statements concerning the images on the drum skin in an apparent attempt to connect with the frame of reference of his interrogators.<sup>43</sup>

The safeguarding of the local economy, in which reindeer represented the main source of food and livelihood (alongside fish), is but one of numerous uses to which Anders Poulsen (and we may assume other local *noaidit*) put his drum in the service of the community. Besides divining or engendering (the distinction is not wholly clear

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41 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:269. This might profitably be compared with the *hallæri* : *árbót* dichotomy we find in sources such as *Eiríks saga rauða* (see chapter 3).

42 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:263. It is later clarified—or potentially this is a rationalisation on the part of the mediators of Ander Poulsen's testimony—that 'Ved *kirchen* udj den *4de rad* [viz. on the drumskin] hielper hand de syge oc de som haffver nogen [viz. economic] modgang, huorfor hand saavelsom de der hielpis offerer til samme kirche voxlys, penger oc andet som leffveris till præsten ved den kirche hand boer ved, huaraff hans maalede kirche haffver sin bemerchning.' (Hagen & Sparboe 1998:271).

43 Manker 1950:430, cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:34-5.



and the two may be regarded as two sides of the same coin so to speak) the general fortunes of an individual, be they good or bad, the drum—and the drummer—could work weather magic, to bring about wind, rain, sunny weather or clear sky at night; help pregnant women through childbirth; heal the sick; remove a *gand* sent out by a malicious person from its victim and return it to its sender;<sup>44</sup> punish thieves; and attain knowledge of distant events.

Anders Poulsen was murdered in his sleep the day after his trial. His murderer, Villum Gundersen, was a servant on Lilienskiold's estate in Vadsø, and justified his crime on the basis that his victim was a sorcerer and therefore deserved to die. Lilienskiold gave a statement concerning his employee's character which made clear that that Villum had been showing signs of mental illness for a period of more than a year prior to the murder, and as a consequence of this testimony Villum was acquitted on the basis that he was as such *non compos mentis* in the eyes of the law.<sup>45</sup>

Lilienskiold's manuscript Thotts samling 950 fol. appears to have been a draft preliminary to the writing of his *Speculum Boreale*, the description of the people, flora, fauna and economy of Finnmark which was provisionally completed and dedicated to King Frederik IV in December 1701 and presented to the latter the following spring. Chapter 9 of *Speculum Boreale* describes 'den gamble tids hedenschab med den itzige tids galschab oc vanart', viz. that of both the Sámi and the Norwegian inhabitants of Finnmark.

In this chapter Lilienskiold addresses amongst other things the use of the *runebomme* by the Sámi of Finnmark, exemplifying these practices with what was evidently the best documented instance of such use known to him, namely by Anders Poulsen. Without actually naming Anders, the account given in *Speculum Boreale*

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44 Explain what a *gand* is, in Sámi and Scandinavian tradition (ref. e.g. Heide).

45 *Tingbok for Finnmark sorenskriveri 1692–95*, cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:33–4.

follows more or less that in Thotts samling 950 fol., and it is thus reasonable to regard the earlier work as a draft of the later, at least as regards this chapter,<sup>46</sup> with Lilienskiold revising his vision for the shape of the finished work (which while revised and expanded was however not completed to the full extent he had planned) in the intervening period.<sup>47</sup>

Besides the résumé he gives in *Speculum Boreale* of the witch trials treated so much more comprehensively in part 1, chapter 4 of Thotts samling 950 fol., Lilienskiold also makes more general comments in the former concerning 'Finnernis forige hædenske bruug oc væsen',<sup>48</sup> which seem to be based specifically on local practises, for he several times connects the practices he describes with specific sacrificial sites, e.g. in Varangerfjord.<sup>49</sup> These include rituals manifestly aimed at engendering fortune relating to economic activities, even if Lilienskiold does not always make (or articulate) this connection himself.

This same manuscript, Thotts samling 950 fol., was used by Knud Leem (on whom more later) when he composed part of the chapter concerning 'Lappernes Troldom ved Rune Bomme, Syges Helbredelse, Gan-Fluer, Juoigen og Igienviisning' in his work 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper [...]', to judge from phraseological and factual concordances between the two texts.<sup>50</sup> Leem would have had access to the manuscript in Denmark during the lifetime of its then owner Otto Thott.<sup>51</sup>

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46 Cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:24-7.

47 Cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:20. Concerning *Speculum Boreale*'s textual relationship to Thotts samling nr. 950 fol., Hagen & Sparboe characterize the former text as a 'Kort konsentrat av hans [viz. Lilienskiold's] heksestudier. Innledninga og avslutninga her [viz. in *Speculum Boreale*] svarer nesten helt til foreliggende kildekrift [viz. Thotts samling nr. 950 fol.]. I boka [viz. in *Speculum Boreale*] har Lilienskiold tatt med størstedelen av prosessen mot den gamle sammen Anders Poulsen i 1692, ellers er det ingen saker som beskrives i sin helhet.' (Hagen & Sparboe 1998:282)

48 Lilienskiold [1698] 1942:157.

49 Lilienskiold [1698] 1942:159.

50 Hagen & Sparboe 1998:24. Leem states only that he has made use of the work of an unnamed *skribent*, Leem 1767:464.

51 Cf. Hagen & Sparboe 1998:24. Thott (1703-1785) amassed what was at the time Denmark's largest

Hans Hansen Lilienskiold died just three years into the eighteenth century, the year after his manuscript 'Speculum Boreale' was presented to King Frederik IV of Denmark, whilst Niels Knag was in 1695 promoted to the office of judge in Bergen. We will now turn our attention to the men who, working and missionizing among the Sámi parishioners of the Finnmark districts, documented local religious practices in the century that followed.

### 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Ludvig Christenssøn Paus (1652–1707) was dean and parish priest and curate (*kapellan*) for the parish of Vadsø (which lies at the easternmost extremity of Finnmark and Norway as a whole) from 1682 until his death in 1707, viz. during the years Hans Lilienskiold and Niels Knag worked as government officials in Finnmark. After Dean Paus' death, his son Ludvig Paus the younger (**Ludvig Christian Ludvigssøn Paus**, ca. 1674–1745) in April 1707 applied for, and on 12<sup>th</sup> August the same year was appointed to succeed to, his late father's position as parish priest for Vadsø, arriving there first in 1708 and remaining until 1740 when he was appointed priest of Eidsberg in Østfold, taking up this post in May 1741.

In this capacity he was for more than three decades actively involved in the Danish Church's recently incepted and ongoing mission to the Sámi, working in cooperation with the missionaries sent to eastern Finnmark from the Missionary College in Trondheim, under the then direction of *rector* Thomas von Westen. Paus the younger had grown up partly in Bergen and Indre Sogn, partly in Vadsø, and studied in Copenhagen from 1695. On November 11<sup>th</sup> 1719 he consecrated the Mission's first church at Angsnes in Varanger.

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private library, a total of ca. 138,000 volumes, among them approximately 10,000 manuscripts dating from before the Reformation. Upon his death Thott's collection passed into the keeping of the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

Paus' brother-in-law Povel Resen, who married Ludvig's younger sister Anna the same year Paus' took up office in Vardø, had in 1706-7 undertaken an official journey through Finnmark for the purposes of investigating the possibilities for establishing a mission among the Sámi communities of Norway.<sup>52</sup> In the last years of his life dean Ludvig Paus the elder had worked in close cooperation with the teacher Isaac Olsen who from 1703 until 1716 was employed by the Mission to work as a travelling missionary among the Sámi communities in Varanger, and Paus' the younger inherited this working partnership. To a certain extent the field-worker Olsen effectively acted as an informant for Paus, not least with respect to information regarding indigenous religious practices among the local Sámi. Olsen's experiences are recorded in a text, 'Om Lappernes Vildfarelser og Overtro', written some time prior to 1715, presumably on the basis of notes spanning the whole of the period he pursued his vocation in Finnmark. Olsen had the advantage of being a competent speaker of the local Sámi dialect, a competence which Paus to all intents and purposes lacked.<sup>53</sup> Thus as witnesses, we can place Olsen and Paus' on a scale of proximity to source, with Olsen lying closer to the subject (*viz.* Sámi parishioner and religious phenomena s/he witnessed to), but Paus may preserve information from Olsen which he does not record in his own texts, and while it may lie at one remove further from the source, we have no reason to regard Paus' information as having less of an *intended* veracity or faithfulness; this notwithstanding the omnipresent Christian bias which colours both authors' texts. Nonetheless Olsen's presence may be said to loom large over Paus' published writings.<sup>54</sup>

Paus authored at least two texts, one co-authored with the then district

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52 Resen's observations from this journey are preserved in an account now deposited in the Norwegian Riksarkivet.

53 Kristiansen 2003b:214.

54 Kristiansen 2001c, 2003.

governor (successor to Hans Lilienskiold) Erich Lorch, entitled 'Instrux for Helligdags Vægterne. Underskrevet av Amtmann Lorch og Prosten Paus', a set of instructions for employees of the Church known as *helligdagsvektene* concerning how they were to go about their duties, such that they complied with Church protocol and kept within the bounds of socially acceptable conduct. This text is cited by Hans Hammond in his *Missionshistorie*.<sup>55</sup> The other extant text, this authored solely by Paus and drawing on the information supplied him by Olsen, is that entitled 'Relation om Lappernes Afguderie og Vildfarelser', which is preserved in several manuscript witnesses and is dated to 1715.<sup>56</sup> Paus continued to work with the ordained missionaries who were appointed by von Westen to succeed Olsen (after the former had deputized the latter and brought him to Trondheim in 1716) to work among the Sámi parishioners of eastern Finnmark (specifically Varanger and Tana), these being, for the years 1716–1732: Kjeld Stub, Elias Heltberg, Søren Gjessing and Peter Kaasbøl Rosenvinge.<sup>57</sup>

Regarding the more general climate of evangelism within the Mission, specifically here through the agency of Paus and his successive missionary assistants, in particular with respect to the confrontation with the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Sámi community of Finnmark, and how these agents viewed the task before them, the following remarks of Nissen's are of interest. When consecrating the Trinitatis church at Angsnes, Paus began his consecratory speech with words from 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6, 16–18 "And what harmony is there between God's temple and idols?" In this connection Nissen remarks that "dette tekstvalget [peker] på at han i meget så sin gjerning for og blandt samene som en hedningemisjonsvirksomhet. Og så meget

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<sup>55</sup> Hammond 1787:28–34.

<sup>56</sup> An extract from this latter text, corresponding to a text by Olsen which clearly served as Paus' exemplar, has been edited by Martha Brock Utne and Ole Solberg (together with Olsen's text). Utne & Solberg 1934:134–40.

<sup>57</sup> Nissen 1949b:625. I am not aware of these priests having penned any accounts of the religious activities of the Sámi communities to whom they proselytised. They thus do not contribute any data towards the present study.

av hedenske forestillinger, seder og skikker, som han under sin tjenestetid hadde opdaget blandt samene, er dette forståelig nok.”<sup>58</sup>

As already mentioned, it is considered doubtful whether Paus could speak and understand the Sámi language.<sup>59</sup> Olsen is thought to be a chief source for the statements contained in both of the texts Paus wrote concerning or touching upon the indigenous religious activity of the local Sámi communities.<sup>60</sup> Paus' work, along with Olsen's, was made use of by von Westen in his writings.<sup>61</sup>

Thus through this chain of transmission, Olsen's first-hand observations concerning religious activity in Varanger Sámi communities, first committed to paper by him, mediated then by Paus, and in turn Leem whose work was published in Norwegian with a parallel translation into Latin in 1767, this data finally reached a wider (doubtless chiefly learned) readership outside of Scandinavia a little over half a century after Olsen's work among the Varanger Sámi began.

Little is known about Paus' work after ca. 1727 since the account given by Hammond of the *finnmission* in his *Missionshistorie* ends after this year, viz. after the death of the director of the mission, Thomas von Westen, in the same year, von Westen being the principle focus of Hammond's work, which largely amounts to a biography of von Westen's career within Church and Mission.<sup>62</sup>

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58 Nissen 1949b:626.

59 Nissen 1949b:626.

60 Nissen 1949b:626. 'Isaac Olsen har nok vært en hovedkilde for P[aus ...] såvel når det gjelder opplysningene i instruksene som når det gjelder hans "Relation om Lapperne Afguderier og Vildfarelser".'

61 Kristiansen 2001c. Knud Leem likewise drew upon both Olsen's work and Paus' mediation of Olsen's work (Paus' 'Relation om Lapperne Afguderier og Vildfarelser') as sources for his 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper' (*ibid.*, Nissen 1949b:626, Bäckman 1975:36).

62 Neither the archives of the missionary college in Trondheim, nor the church archives from eastern Finnmark, which might prove enlightening in this respect, were accessible to me in the course of my research, and therefore these do not contribute anything to the picture presented here of the working life of either Paus' nor the other priests and missionaries employed in the Norwegian mission to the Sámi. Further research in this area may prove profitable.

Whilst benefiting from the information supplied to him by his subordinate Isaac Olsen, it should not be assumed that Paus confined himself to his parish seat at Vardø and to monitoring local indigenous religious activity solely from the comfort and the vantage point (or lack thereof) of his desk. Besides visiting the Swedish church in the Sámi district of Utsjoki in order to demonstrate that the spiritual welfare of the mountain Sámi who had seasonal residence there was a Norwegian concern and responsibility, Paus undertook journeys into the mountain Sámi districts, during which he sought out sacrificial sites used by the indigenous communities and vandalized them so as to make them unusable.<sup>63</sup> This tactic, simultaneously an expression of Christian zeal and a direct disruption of indigenous religious practice, is likewise resorted to by Norwegian missionaries working among Sámi communities further south.<sup>64</sup> Kristiansen assesses Paus' legacy as the establishment of Vadsø as a hub of activity for the work of the *finnmission* and its centre of operations within eastern Finnmark.<sup>65</sup>

**Isaac Olsen** (ca. 1680-1730) first came to Finnmark in 1702 in the capacity of private tutor to parish priest Trude Nitter in the village of Kjelvik (on Magerøya in the municipality of Nordkapp). The following year district governor Erich Lorch persuaded Olsen to come to eastern Finnmark to work as an itinerant teacher among the Sámi of Varanger, which appointment was approved by the then dean of Vadsø, Ludvig Paus the elder.<sup>66</sup>

Olsen proved so industrious in this vocation that Bishop Peder Krog in 1708 (during an episcopal visit he made through Finnmark in 1708), and later governor

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<sup>63</sup> Kristiansen 2003b:215.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. e.g. Henric Forbus' recollections of how Jens Kildal burned sacrificial altars during a period missionizing the Sámi of Kaitum in Sweden, arousing considerable hostility in the process (Forbus [1727] 1910b:42, Reuterskiöld 1910:xvi).

<sup>65</sup> Kristiansen 2003b:215.

<sup>66</sup> I.e. Ludvig Christensen Paus; his son Ludvig Christian Paus did not assume this office until after his father's death.

Erich Lorch and dean Ludvig Paus, elected to extend Olsen's area of work to encompass, besides Varanger, Sámi districts in the eastern part of western Finnmark, namely in Kvalsund, Laksefjord (in the municipality of Lebesby), Porsanger and Tana (Sámi Deatnu).<sup>67</sup> According to Thomas von Westen, Olsen spent his winters with the mountain Sámi communities of these areas.<sup>68</sup>

Olsen's teaching work met with such positive results that Paus' brother-in-law Povel Resen, who worked in Finnmark as an observer for the Crown, remarked in a letter to the king of 1<sup>st</sup> August 1707 that the Sámi parishioners who were his pupils surpassed even some Norwegians in their Christianity and civilized manner.<sup>69</sup> Notwithstanding this praise, the task set before Olsen was a nigh impossible one for one man alone to achieve, all the more so after his responsibilities and duties were extended in spite of his already heavy workload.<sup>70</sup> Until 1714 Olsen he worked without any salary whatsoever, and an allowance of just 20 *riksdalere* a year for the provision of essentials (such as new clothes),<sup>71</sup> and as he made his rounds pursuing his work as a teacher he was very much dependent on the charity of Sámi parishioners to provide him with food and lodging, without remuneration. Nissen remarks that during this period he lived 'som en stodder blandt lappene' (like a beggar among the Sámi).<sup>72</sup> Nor did he necessarily receive anything beyond the most perfunctory hospitality from the Sámi parishioners, who constituted his first and often only source of social security. Olsen's work for the Church led to coolness, tensions and ultimately hostility between

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67 Utne & Solberg 1934:134; Nissen 1949a:448; Kristiansen 2001c. NB Varangerfjord, Porsangerfjord and Laksefjord are, in that order, the three longest fjords in Finnmark.

68 As opposed to the coastal communities, 'Topographia Arctarchiæ Doniæ Ecclesiasticæ, conscripta 1717', cf. Qvigstad 1910b:3 ('hver vinter var han hos fjeldlapperne').

69 Nissen 1949a:448.

70 *Ibid.*

71 It was first in 1714, after making an application to the governor and the dean of Finnmark, that Olsen was granted a salary of 35 *riksdalere*, to be provided mutually by the churches in Kjøllevik, Kjøllefjord and Omgang (by the mouth of Tanafjord) and Vadsø.

72 Nissen 1949a:449.



Olsen and his pupils—perhaps understandably given the necessarily confrontational nature of his relationship with them—to the extent that he at times feared for his personal safety.<sup>73</sup>

As mentioned, Olsen's time in Finnmark came to an end when, in July of 1716, whilst visiting his former student of Sámi language dean Nitter in Kjelvik, he chanced to meet Thomas von Westen, who was at the time travelling through Finnmark on the first of his wide-ranging missionary expeditions. There and then von Westen persuaded Olsen to at once accompany him south to Trøndelag. Olsen did not even have time to return east to fetch his possessions or collect his salary. von Westen, who from 1715 was put in charge of the administration of the *finnmission*, saw a role for Olsen in pushing through his plans for the Mission. Perceiving Olsen's competence at the Sámi language as an asset indispensable to the Mission, von Westen enlisted his services as translator, teacher and informant for the recently-founded *Seminarium scholasticum* (later *Seminarium Lapponicum*) in Trondheim, which institution concerned itself with the education and training of missionaries and teachers who were to work in the Sámi districts (not only in Finnmark but also further south). Olsen spent the winter of 1716-17 at von Westen's residence on Veøy in Romsdal (where von Westen was parish priest from 1709 onwards). It was here that Olsen worked up the manuscript entitled 'Lappernes Vildfarelser og Overtro' on the basis of his experiences working among the Sámi of Finnmark in the years 1704-1715.<sup>74</sup>

Besides his work for the Mission, Olsen worked as a cartographer for the Norwegian Crown in the winters of 1713-14, 1714-15 and 1715-16, accompanying bailiff (*foged*) Soelgaard on a regular tax-collecting expedition to Malmis in the Kola

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<sup>73</sup> Kristiansen 2003a:142.

<sup>74</sup> Whilst on Veøy Olsen also produced translations into Sámi of Luther's Small Catechism and the Athanasian Creed.

peninsula. Olsen perhaps also had the role of interpreter, in addition to mapping the districts lying along the Norwegian-Russian border in order to establish into which of them the Crown could extend its statutory taxation.

In the summer of 1717 Olsen assumed his post at the Seminarium Scholasticum in Trondheim (which had been established the previous year), where his duties consisted of teaching Norwegian students Sámi and Sámi students Christianity, as well as producing Sámi translations of texts. He also had to be prepared to undertake a trip to Finnmark should the need arise. In return for this he received an annual salary of 200 *riksdalere*. The Misjonskollegiet was amalgamated with the cathedral school in Trondheim 13<sup>th</sup> February 1717 (the merger completed just a week after Olsen's appointment).

The very next year Olsen was summoned to Copenhagen to work in a linguistic capacity, teaching the Sámi language to students from the *seminarium* in Trondheim, who were now sent to Copenhagen to study at the university there, and translating extracts of biblical texts into Sámi. Olsen was furthermore to report to the Misjonskollegiet concerning conditions in Finnmark.<sup>75</sup> Olsen assumed this position in the summer of 1718.

Thomas von Westen came to Copenhagen the following summer (1719), but was not satisfied with Olsen's work there, and in the autumn of 1720, for reasons which remain obscure, von Westen sacked Olsen from the service of the Mission,<sup>76</sup> but was however subsequently obliged to find him another position within the Mission. Only first two years later, in May of 1722, did von Westen (under pressure

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75 Nissen 1949a:450.

76 Nissen (1949a:450-1) hypothesises that the root of the problem lay in the fact that, for all his competence with Sámi, this did not make Olsen a natural teacher of the language; nor did he have the aid of teaching materials, for there existed no such materials for the Sámi dialects at that time. His competence at producing linguistically sound and readable translations is also called into doubt (*ibid.*), competence von Westen was well placed to assess based upon his own knowledge of the Sámi language.

from the Misjonskollegiet), manage to secure Olsen a livelihood, when he was appointed parish clerk at Vår Frue kirke in Trondheim in 1722, a position he retained until his death in September 1730. Olsen was notably, in the years 1723–1725, teacher to Knud Leem, teaching him the Sámi language.

As is perhaps already apparent, **Thomas von Westen** (1682–1727), over and above his central role within the mission to the Sámi, as its sometime leader and the instigator of probably its most vigorous phase of activity, was himself very much active at the coal-face, as a missionary in the field, making extensive tours of the Sámi districts both in Finnmark and in northern Trøndelag and Nordland. In so doing he made significant contributions to the documentation of Sámi religious activity in this period; however, the greater part of von Westen's written records of these expeditions has since been lost, probably in the fire that engulfed a large part of Copenhagen in 1795. von Westen's lost texts are however accessible to us through other authors who made use of his manuscripts, and in some cases were in all likelihood (given their professional relationship with him) recipients of orally transmitted information from him regarding the Mission and its target population.

It is almost certain that von Westen's lost manuscripts contained information regarding the religion of the Sámi of Finnmark, given that his first two major missionary expeditions took him, first in 1716 (when he crossed paths with Isaac Olsen) and again in 1718–19, to that very *amt*.<sup>77</sup> It is not possible to verify this however, since, although von Westen displayed exemplary ethnographic method in noting down the local geographic provenance of each piece of religious activity he witnessed, he appears to have been exceptional in this respect, and those authors who have mediated his now lost journals and notes (by composing texts based upon or incorporating their content) have been significantly less conscientious with regard to

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77 Thrap 1904:421; Bäckman 1975:36 (citing Wiklund in Reuterskiöld 1910:xliv), 151.

this, disregarding the localization of each item of information, thereby conflating von Westen's carefully delineated material. This applies not least to the man who authored what represents the most extensive reconstruction of von Westen's expeditions and their ethnographic dividend gifted to posterity, Hans Skanke, in his text 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ'.

Thomas von Westen was assigned leadership of the *finnemission* in 1715, and undertook his first missionary expedition to Vadsø and Varanger in 1716. von Westen had some competence in spoken and written Sámi, at any rate he had acquired some by 1719–20, enough to be able to make a negative assessment of Olsen's competence as a teacher of Sámi and a translator into Sámi.<sup>78</sup> Notable among the strategies von Westen espoused was his stress on the need for missionaries to preach to and teach the Sámi in their own language, for which purpose relevant reading materials must be translated into Sámi. Bishop of Trondheim (and von Westen's great adversary during his time as leader of the mission) Peder Krog on the other hand subscribed to the policy that the Sámi ought to be instructed in Christian teaching (as in other things) via the medium of the Norwegian language.<sup>79</sup>

The fate of von Westen's so-called confession-books, the fruit of his missionary expeditions (and perhaps chiefly of his last of 1722–3), is unknown. They may have gone to ground in Trondheim some time after Skanke had made use of them in compiling his 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ', or they may (as several scholars suppose) have perished in the great fire of Copenhagen of 1795.<sup>80</sup> The ca. 100 *runebommer* collected by von Westen in the course of his expedition of 1722–3 are in any case thought to have met the same fate as those parts of Árne Magnússon's

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78 Nissen 1949a:450. 'Thomas von Westen var selv sprogmann og talte også lappisk, så han hadde på dette tidspunkt visse forutsetninger for å kunne bedømme O[lsen]s lappisk-undervisning og oversettelsesarbeider.'

79 Grankvist 2005:476.

80 Solberg 1945:177, Bäckman 1975:153, Kristiansen 2001c.

manuscript collection lost in the fire of 1728, a turn of events somewhat tragic given that other such drums had been actively burned by missionaries in their efforts to stamp out the Sámi *noaidit*'s 'devilish superstitions', while those sent to Copenhagen appeared to have been destined to survive the death of the ritual tradition in which they were the central tools; this was not to be. A number of Sámi drums do however survive in the collection of the Stockholm ethnographic museum.<sup>81</sup>

By no means all of von Westen's manuscripts were lost however, and among those that survive is the text entitled 'Vindiciæ missionis lapponicæ', which as the title suggests is a vindication of the work and the aims of the mission and its missionaries written in response to objections raised against it. Skanke incorporates this text (or its content) in part three of his 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ',<sup>82</sup> as the introduction to the account he gives there of von Westen's third missionary expedition among South Sámi communities in 1722-3, on which he was accompanied by another Norwegian missionary, Jens Kildal. Hammond incorporates the material from Skanke's account in the last chapter of his *Missionshistorie*.

The texts of von Westen's, via Skanke's, that are of chief interest to us are his lost 'confession-books', which are reflected principally in Skanke's work, but the content of von Westen's notes as well as verbally-transmitted information may also be the source for parts of Jens Kildal's writings, specifically his text 'Afguderiets Dempelse, og den Sande Lærdoms Fremgang', and in turn potentially also texts composed by other authors known to have made use of Kildal's text.

With respect to his politics and his working methods von Westen was very much gripped by Pietist currents within ecclesiastical circles of the period, and as parish priest for Veøy in Romsdal, he formed, together with the county's six other

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81 Cf. e.g. Kristiansen 2001c, Hansen & Olsen 2004:231.

82 Skanke [1728-31] 1945b.

priests (who all shared his Pietist tendencies), a group which went by the name *Syvstjernen* and met on a regular basis to discuss and criticise aspects of Church policy, and crucially the manner in which, as they saw it, priests and the church authorities had neglected the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants of 'Finneenes mark'.<sup>83</sup> The group pushed for reforms, which ultimately had concrete consequences for the nature of the religious encounter between the Church's missionaries and the Sámi parishioners, as indeed did von Westen's own zealotry when engaged in missionary work. Stress was laid on preaching and teaching in the native tongue of the object of the mission, viz. the Sámi, with von Westen deputizing the task of translating teaching materials into Sámi to the likes of Isaac Olsen and Jens Kildal.<sup>84</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1716 von Westen was appointed leader of the newly founded mission to the Sámi (without having ever as such applied for this position),<sup>85</sup> with the formal position of *lektor* (senior lecturer) of Trondheim cathedral, which provoked animosity from the bishop of Trondheim Peder Krog; this role had previously always been the preserve of the bishop, and notwithstanding this Krog and von Westen disagreed fundamentally on the matter of what strategies were to be adopted with respect to the conversion of the Sámi.<sup>86</sup>

von Westen had an 'open door policy' towards Sámi parishioners, sometimes

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83 Grankvist 2005:476.

84 The impact of von Westen's Pietism on the mission on the Norwegian side of the border may further be illustrated by a comparison of the *modus operandi* of the Norwegian mission with the contrasting strategies of Swedish missionaries in three periods broadly differentiated in this respect: the 1670s, 1710s and '20s, and the 1740s and '50s. The broad differences in this respect have been sketched by several commentators, e.g. Rydving 1999:172-4, 2000:20-1, Kristiansen 2001c. Others reckon with a bipartite rather than tripartite division, amalgamating the latter periods (e.g. Myrhaug 1997:111-5).

85 Besides the Sámi of Norway, the Missionary College established in 1714 in Copenhagen also concerned itself with missions to the peoples of the Dano-Norwegian colonies, including the Inuit of Greenland.

86 Alongside many other reasons, including the fact that the *lektor's* salary was effectively deducted from the bishop's, and that von Westen was granted such powers by the king that he was effectively the bishop's superior in certain matters, or in any case had the ultimate power of veto. See Boyesen 1957:448-9 for an account of the hostility between Bishop Krog and von Westen.

providing them with lodgings (e.g. in 1718 at his residence in Trondheim), and after he was effectively obstructed by Bishop Krog and his son Niels (who had been appointed headmaster of the cathedral school in 1709) from training missionaries at the school, trained Sámi boys to be teachers in his own home (which he called the 'Seminarium domesticum').

Upon von Westen's death in April 1727 the administration of the mission fell to the bishop; after Peder Krog passed away in 1731 the office thus fell to Eiler Hagerup, who shared Krog's policies regarding the mission to the Sámi—and was thus in opposition to von Westen's—crucially in subscribing to a policy that Sámi parishioners must learn Danish before they could be subjected to missionizing (in Danish), whereas Hans Skanke and von Westen had overseen the teaching of missionary priests and teachers the mother tongue of their subjects; Hagerup's will prevailed. For this reason it was not until 1752 that the Sámi language was once again taught to teachers and missionaries who were to work in the Sámi districts. It was Isaac Olsen's student (by now professor) and himself missionary to the Sámi Knud Leem who was put in charge of this programme of education.

**Hans Skanke** (1679–1739), whose text is the best surviving window we have into von Westen's lost writings, was a native of Trondheim and pupil at Trondheim Cathedral School, where he passed his *studentereksamen* in 1699. After taking a baccalaureate in 1700 and *teologisk embedseksamen* the following year, Skanke resided in Tromsø during the summer of 1701, where for a period of a fortnight he familiarised himself with the Sámi language sufficiently to be able to comprehend it.<sup>87</sup> Later he also learned to speak Sámi.

From 1701–5 Skanke worked as private tutor to Gert Lange at Torget on Brønnøy in the southern part of Nordland. From 1705 he became Bishop Peder Krog's

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87 Qvigstad 1903:88, Boyesen 1958:448; Kristiansen 2004:247.

secretary, and when the latter undertook a visit to Finnmark in 1708 Skanke accompanied him.<sup>88</sup> Skanke thus had some first-hand experience of the Finnmark *lappmarks*, even if he never authored any observations reflecting his experiences there (unless these perhaps fed into his editing and potential revision of von Westen's manuscripts which resulted in the manuscript 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ').

From 1716 onwards—that is from when Thomas von Westen was put in charge of the Misjonskollegium—Skanke served as von Westen's deputy during the latter's absence,<sup>89</sup> e.g. when undertaking missionary expeditions to Sámi districts and official journeys to the Missionary College in Copenhagen. However when the relationship between the College and von Westen deteriorated, the former began to communicate directly with Skanke. Despite this role, Skanke was not made von Westen's successor after the latter's death in 1727, the duties and authority pertaining to the latter's office passing instead to Eiler Hagerup.<sup>90</sup> Hagerup subsequently became bishop of Trondheim after Krog's death in 1731, with Skanke then stepping into Hagerup's shoes as *lektor* at the Cathedral School; yet this appointment was rescinded a mere month later by Hagerup, who harboured personal animosity towards Skanke, perhaps as a consequence of his close association with von Westen; Skanke himself was also one of the foremost proponents of the move to establish a separate mission to the Sámi and the use of the lectureship of the Cathedral School to this end. Hagerup brought this phase in the history of the *finnmission*, the lifespan of the Seminarium scholasticum (1716–27), to an end when he amalgamated said lectureship with the office of bishop. Upon Hagerup's death in 1743 the lectureship was entirely abolished.

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88 Qvigstad 1903:88.

89 'hans like kyndige som trofaste medhjælper' as Boyesen characterises the two men's working relationship, Boyesen 1958:448; and later 'i ett og alt ... v. Westens usvikelige støtte', *ibid.* p. 449.

90 Boyesen 1958:448.



One capacity in which Skanke notably did not serve was that of missionary; his duties were almost exclusively administrative. He did however occasionally accompany von Westen on journeys he made into the Sámi districts for the purposes of missionizing.

It was in the years 1728-1731 that Skanke, at the behest of the Missionary College, penned his work 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ', working from von Westen's notes and sending the manuscript piecemeal to the College as each part was completed.<sup>91</sup> This text is particularly valuable for its documenting of the very earliest years of the mission to the Sámi. Erich Johan Jessen-Schardebøll later used Skanke's text wholesale as the basis of his work '*Afhandling om de Norske Finners og Lappers Hedenske Religion*' (which thus essentially constituted a work of plagiarism, published as it was as Jessen-Schardebøll's own work).<sup>92</sup>

Skanke was a highly literate man with an extensive literary output encompassing praise poetry translations of Latin classics, who professed in one of his letters that 'Bog og Sang var mitt hele Liv'.<sup>93</sup> Another of his works to document Sámi culture was 'Om Qvænerne og de 3de fornemste Finners Sprogs Dialecter'.<sup>94</sup>

Another colleague of von Westen within the Dano-Norwegian mission to the Sámi, fellow missionary **Jens Kildal** (1683-1765), and his text '*Afguderiets Dempelse, og den Sande Lærdoms Fremgang [...]*' is, like Skanke's 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis

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91 Qvigstad 1903:88-9, Kristiansen 2004:247.

92 Boyesen 1958:450.

93 Boyesen 1958:450-1, Kristiansen 2004:247.

94 Of Skanke's value as a witness to and source for Sámi religion, as a mediator of von Westen's lost works, Boyesen makes the following assessment: 'S[kanke] var en lærd man med en svær produktivitet og vidtfavnende interessefelter. Til lappenes forhold hadde han et enestående kjennskap, og det var derfor naturlig at Thomas v. Westens etterlatte papirer og utkast blev overdradd ham for å forfatte et skrift om finnemisjonen [...] ['Epitomes missionis Lapponicæ'] er sammen med v. Westens egne optegnelser i "Missionsanstalter" og "Topographia" de eldste og påliteligste kilder om finnemisjonens grunnleggende år, ikke minst verdifulle fordi de er bygget på lappenes egne bekjennelser og utsagn.' Boyesen 1958:450.

Lapponicæ', a source for von Westen's lost writings.<sup>95</sup> Kildal, who was married to a Sámi woman and understood the Sámi language, accompanied von Westen on his missionary expedition during the winter of 1722–3. It is not known quite where or how he acquired his aptitude with the Sámi language, but the fact that his wife was a speaker of Sámi doubtless consolidated his grasp of the language immeasurably; in any case by the time he entered the service of the *finnmission* Kildal was sufficiently competent in Sámi to be able both to teach the language and undertake translations of spiritually edifying religious texts commissioned by von Westen.<sup>96</sup>

Jens Kildal's own missionary district consisted of the municipalities of Salten and Tysfjord and the parts of Ofoten settled by Sámi communities, all in the northern half of the county of Nordland. These districts and the adjacent districts of Sweden correspond to the Lule Sámi cultural and linguistic area. So when we attempt to disambiguate the data originating from Kildal from that in his text originating from von Westen (some of it potentially reflecting the religious culture of the Sámi communities of Finnmark)—so far as this it at all possible—it is information from these areas which, as far as the present study is concerned, represents the chaff from which the wheat is to be separated.

Kildal first took office in his calling in 1721, where he soon found himself playing host and to and subsequently accompanying Thomas von Westen on his missionary expedition of 1722–3, after which the plan was that he would take up

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95 Jens Kildal's text is furthermore a source for fellow Norwegian and Swedish missionaries Johan Randulf, Carl Solander, Henric Forbus and Jens' brother Sigvard Kildal (Myrhaug 1997:114). Randulf's writings are likewise sources for von Westen's observations, being largely based on information acquired from him verbally or in a written form, whilst Forbus, Solander, Sigvard Kildal and Lennart Sidenius, missionary for Ibestad in Troms, as well as an anonymous author quoted by Knud Leem, all made use of one and the same lost manuscript assumed to have been authored by von Westen (Rydving 2000:26–29).

96 Krekling 1945:99.

residence in Tysfjord.<sup>97</sup> He was instead sent to Vesterålen to Christianize the Sámi communities there. He was based in Saltdalen as of 1726 but made frequent journeys for the purposes of missionizing, including to the mountain districts and indeed across the border into the neighbouring districts of Sweden, where he liaised with the Swedish missionaries working there in an attempt to coordinate the missionary strategy with respect to those nomadic Lule Sámi communities whose annual reindeer herding territory spanned the Swedish-Norwegian border (running more or less perpendicular to it), spending as they did the summer months on the mountains, the winter at lower altitudes in the forests and the valleys. The Dano-Norwegian state, and thus by extension the Dano-Norwegian *finnmission*, regarded these Sámi as Norwegian subjects.

Krekling makes the following assessment of Jens Kildal's 'Afguderiets Dempelse, og den Sande Lærdoms Fremgang [...]' and its value as a source:

'i en elementær utredning Kildal meddeler resultatene av Lectors [viz. von Westen's] undersøkelser, og det at han stiller dem i lyset av sin egen erfaring forlener hans fremstilling med en særegen verdi. Hans skrift, denne hans preken, er derved blitt en av de viktigere kilder til forståelsen av sydfinnernes tro og kultus i begynnelsen av det 18. århundre og tør settes i rekke med Randolfs i flere henseender utførligere Nærømanuskript og den mere systematiske oversikt i Skankes Epitome.'<sup>98</sup>

One of the Swedish clergyman with whom Jens Kildal became acquainted in connection with this was **Henric Forbus** (1674-1737), dean of Torneå, who authored an account of the Sámi of his parish and the surrounding districts which draws on both von Westen's accounts and remarks relayed orally by Kildal.<sup>99</sup> Forbus' text is thus

<sup>97</sup> Krekling 1945:99-100.

<sup>98</sup> Krekling 1945:100.

<sup>99</sup> Rydving 2000:25; Forbus [1727] 1910a.

also a potential source for von Westen's observations of the religious culture of the Sámi of Finnmark.

**Johan Randulf** (died 1735) was parish priest of Nærøy in Trøndelag in the years 1718-1727. He wrote a manuscript, commonly referred to as the Nærøy manuscript (Nærøy-manuskriptet), in which he describes the religious culture of the Sámi local to Nærøy. Whilst it thus represents a source with a fixed and well-defined geographical provenance, use of the text is complicated by the fact that Randulf also drew upon information he received from Jens Kildal and Thomas von Westen when they visited Nærøy in January of 1723 as part of the latter's missionary expedition begun the previous year (the manuscript was completed after this date). Thus the text represents a source for the observations of all three authors, in strands which must be separated from one another.

**Sigvard Kildal** (1704-1771), younger brother of Jens, worked first as a missionary in the Sámi district of Ofoten, and was subsequently appointed parish priest variously in Kjøllefjord in Finnmark and Vågan in Lofoten. In 1730 he wrote a text entitled 'Efterretning om Finners og Lappers hedenske Religion', documenting the religious activity he had observed in his missionary work (in particular cosmological conceptions and the use of the *runebomme*), but also drawing to a significant extent upon parts of von Westen's material, specifically parts which were also used by other authors.<sup>100</sup> Rydving assigns those pieces of information preserved in Sigvard Kildal's manuscript which derive from his own experiences a geographical provenance in Salten, whilst those parts based on von Westen's notes are assumed to reflect the religious situation in northern Trøndelag.<sup>101</sup>

The missionary author who provides us with the second extensive account of

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100 Rydving 2000:23-4; Kristiansen 2001.

101 Rydving 2000:32.

the religion of the Sámi of Finnmark (after Isaac Olsen's) is **Knud Leem** (1697–1774). Leem showed an early interest in the mission to the Sámi, and after an early career as a private tutor and unordained priest in his home districts around Haram in Møre og Romsdal he applied to the Missionary College to become a missionary in Finnmark. His application was successful, pending a vacancy opening there; in the meantime Leem was taught the Sámi language by Isaac Olsen (as mentioned above), and in the spring of 1725 Thomas von Westen 1725 appointed Leem missionary in Porsanger and Laksefjord. He was subsequently, in April 1728, appointed parish priest for Talvik, Alta by the king, a position he held until 1735 when after ten years spent in Finnmark he became priest of Avaldsnes, on Karmøy, Rogaland.

It was during these ten years that Leem acquired the extensive knowledge of the Sámi language and wider culture (including indigenous religious culture) which was to become the basis for the work which after a gestation period of more than a decade was finally published in 1767 under the title 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper, deres Tungemaal, Levemaade og forrige Afgudsdyrkelse [...]', in which he devoted three chapters to indigenous Sámi religious culture, more specifically the religious activity he encountered among Sámi parishioners local to the districts of Finnmark in which he worked. Leem also here includes the text of an anonymous manuscript based upon material possibly authored by, and in any case among material used by von Westen,<sup>102</sup> in which the beings which comprise the pantheon of indigenous Sámi gods and/or spirits are divided into five categories. This same text was used by several other missionary authors,<sup>103</sup> and as a consequence came to form the basis of scholarly syntheses of indigenous Sámi cosmology for a long time.

'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper' in the form it was printed represents a

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102 Bäckman 1975:30; Rydving 2000:24–5, 32.

103 Grankvist 2005:476.

condensed version of a longer text which previously existed in draft form in several manuscripts.<sup>104</sup> The concise text was annotated by the then bishop of Trondheim Johan Ernst Gunnerus; it was also published in Latin and German and thereby reached a wide learned audience.<sup>105</sup>

Ludvig Harboe, who succeeded Eiler Hagerup as Bishop of Trondheim, diverged from the latter's policy on the crucial matter of the use of the Sámi language in missionary work, of which he very much approved, and the teaching of Sámi to priests and missionaries was consequently reinstated during his term of office. It was during the term of Harboe's successor Frederik Nannestad that the spiritual successor to the earlier *Seminarium scholasticum*, the *Seminarium lapponicum Fredericianum*, was proposed on the initiative of the Missionary College. Originally planned for Alta, it was at the suggestion of Leem—who had been nominated as the leader of the new college—that it came to be situated in Trondheim. The college was officially founded

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104 Kallske samling fol. 216<sup>II</sup>, Det kongelige bibliotek i København; a manuscript in Gunnerusbiblioteket, Universitetsbiblioteket i Trondheim (cf. Grankvist 2003a:34); and Ms. nr. 27 4to, Det kgl. norske Videnskabers Selskabs bibliotek i Trondheim. See also Kallske samling fol. 216<sup>I</sup>, Det kongelige bibliotek i København, a copy of Kallske samling fol. 216<sup>I</sup> written in several hands, none of them Leem's. A further manuscript, Thotts samling nr. 1736 4to, Det kongelige bibliotek i København, contains the greater part of the original drawings which would illustrate the final published version of *Beskrivelse over Finnmarkens Lapper*. The first draft was probably completed in Copenhagen in 1748. Correspondence between Leem and J. L. von Holstein and Erich Johan Jessen-Schardebøll at the Missionary College indicates that a decision had already been made to publish Leem's work in octavo format, at the mission's expense, as early as the early 1750's, although it was not to be published for another decade and a half. Leem was asked to revise the work to make it more specifically a description of the Sámi of Finnmark rather than of Finnmark as a whole. The missionary college suggested that certain sections on more general matters be excised from the text, and indicated which chapters they would like to see included (Nissen 1938:259, 261). In 1767 the work was finally published in a stately quarto format, parallel Norwegian and Latin text, notes by bishop Gunnerus, and 100 copper engravings illustrating cultural features documented on in the text. The Latin translation was made by then parish priest in Arendal, later bishop of Bergen Eiler Hagerup the younger (Nissen 1938:261-2). In the same volume, after Leem's text, was printed Jessen-Schardebøll's text 'Om de Norske Finners og Lappers Hedenske Religion', which to all intents and purposes constitutes an uncredited revision of Skanke's 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ' effectively presented by Jessen-Schardebøll as his own work.

105 The text was subsequently translated into English, appearing in 1808 in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*.

on 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1751.

Leem himself taught at the college, alongside his other duties. All did not run entirely smoothly however, and inner tensions within the college, between those who promoted and those who opposed the use of the Sámi language, came to a head during the term of Nannestad's successor Johan Ernst Gunnerus,<sup>106</sup> when in 1756 a regulation was introduced whereby only boys who could read and write Latin were to be admitted as pupils. This naturally mitigated against the admission of Sámi boys from rural districts.

Bishop Marius Frederik Bang, who succeeded Johan Ernst Gunnerus as bishop of Trondheim in 1773, like Krog and Hagerup before him strongly opposed the policy of teaching and preaching to the Sámi in their own language, and consequently, less than a year after Leem's death the *Seminarium lapponicum Fredericianum* of which he was professor was finally closed and dissolved for good.

Besides the contributions he made to Sámi ethnography, and crucially the documentation of Sámi religious culture, with 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper', Leem also produced works of Sámi grammar and lexicography that are among the very earliest of their kind. His *En Lappisk Grammatica efter den Dialect, som bruges af Fjeld-Lapperne udi Porsanger-Fiorden*, published in 1748, was the very first grammar of any Sámi dialect published in Norway, and only marginally preceded by the grammar authored by the Swedish missionary priest Olaus Graan; and this was followed in 1756 by *En Lappisk Nomenclator efter den Dialect, som bruges af Fjeld-Lapperne i Porsanger-Fjorden*.<sup>107</sup> Much of the remainder of Leem's working life was occupied with the completion of *Lexicon lapponicum bipartitum*, in which Sámi words were glossed to and

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106 Grankvist speculates that Gunnerus harboured a pejorative attitude towards the Sámi culture as a whole (Grankvist 2003). Gunnerus was notably among the founding members of Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab. Fellow founder Gerhard Schøning proposed a theory that the Sámi had migrated to Scandinavia long after the Germanic population, a hypothesis subsequent scholarship refutes.

107 Nissen 1938:260, Grankvist 2003a:34.

from both Danish and Latin; the first volume was published in 1768, the second, on which Leem had worked up until his death in 1774, appeared posthumously in 1781, co-edited by Leem's former student, and missionary to Varanger, Gerhard Sandberg.

#### ON THE INTERDEPENDENCY OF THE NORWEGIAN MISSIONARY AUTHORS' TEXTS

Isaac Olsen's text 'Om lappernes vildfarelser og overtro', tautological and repetitive as it so often is, is so far as is known based entirely on his own experiences and observations, and does not draw on the writings or oral accounts of other missionary or clerical authors. The same evidently goes for his text 'Finnernis Afgudssteder'.<sup>108</sup> Olsen's text may be assigned a degree of precedence over all others by the double-edged virtue of its own independence (its lack of dependence on other sources), and other sources' dependence upon (or partial derivation from) it.

Ludvig Christian Paus (the younger) draws on Olsen's observations almost certainly in the section of 'Relation om Lappernes Afguderie og Vildfarelser' edited by Utne and Solberg,<sup>109</sup> and probably also in the 'Instrux for Helligdags Vægterne'.

Those parts of Thomas von Westen's lost manuscripts which describe the religion of the Sámi of Finnmark are possibly dependent upon Olsen's text to some degree.<sup>110</sup> We have a knowledge of the contents of von Westen's lost work inasmuch as it is reflected in Hans Skanke's texts 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ' etc. Skanke's texts are regarded as almost wholly derived from von Westen's lost text.<sup>111</sup>

Long before Skanke's texts reached a wider readership (than those who consulted his manuscript prior to it being edited and published in the first half of the

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108 Thus: 'the only texts totally independent of von Westen are the manuscripts written by Isaac Olsen. There is independent material in the texts by Randulf, J[ens] and S[igvard] Kildal, and Forbus, too, but all these four authors had received most of their information from von Westen.' (Rydving 2000:29)

109 Paus [1715] 1934.

110 Rydving 2000:28 (Figure 3), Kristiansen 2001c.

111 Cf. e.g. Rydving 2000:23, 28, 31-2.



twentieth century), Erich Johan Jessen-Schardebøll's work 'Afhandling om de Norske Finners og Lappers Hedenske Religion, med en Tegning af en Rune-Bomme' was published (both as a work in its own right, and as an appendix to the 1767 publication of Leem's *Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper*). This text is essentially a copy, with minor amendments and additions from other sources, of Skanke's 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ', which itself was not first published in full until it was edited by Ole Solberg,<sup>112</sup> a short extract from it having previously been edited and published in 1910 by Reuterskiöld,<sup>113</sup> yet Jessen-Schardebøll passed this text off as his own original work.<sup>114</sup>

Knud Leem draws heavily on Olsen, as well as Paus' mediation of Olsen's fieldwork,<sup>115</sup> and quotes the anonymous manuscript of which Forbus, Solander and Sigvard Kildal made use.<sup>116</sup>

## 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The general scholarly consensus is that indigenous Sámi religious culture, at least in a fully vibrant and culturally-pervading incarnation, was to all intents and purposes

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112 Skanke, Hans [1728-1731] 1943a, [1728-1731] 1943b, [1728-1731] 1943c, [1728-1731] 1943d.

Partial editions were earlier published by Reuterskiöld 1910 and Falkenberg 1943a, 1943b.

113 Skanke, Hans [1728-1731] 1910.

114 Boyesen 1958:450. As regards the relative merits of Skanke's text versus Jessen-Schardebøll's as a witness to von Westen's lost manuscript(s), Håkan Rydving assesses the situation as follows: 'A comparison between the texts shows that Jessen-Schardebøll collected very little material from other sources. Apart from a few sections, there is in his text no information not found in Skanke.

Accordingly, Jessen-Schardebøll's text is of no value as a source' (Rydving 2000:28-29). Roald E. Kristiansen makes the following assessment of Jessen-Schardebøll's text: 'Jessens avhandling ... er et sammendrag av de beretninger som de norske misjonærene sendte til Misjonskollegiet i København og er i relativt stor grad basert på Skankes arbeid. Opplysningene er imidlertid redigert på en selvstendig måte og representerer et forsøk på å skape et helhetlig system av den samiske tradisjonelle religionen som i mindre grad enn tidligere arbeider er preget av et negativt og fordømmende syn på den tradisjonelle samiske religion.' (Kristiansen 2001c)

115 Nissen 1949b:626.

116 This manuscript definitely does not describe conditions in Finnmark, and thus falls outside the scope of this study.

extinguished by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and probably several decades earlier, and at different times in the various Sámi districts and cultural regions. This is certainly the state of affairs if one goes by the testimony of members of the cultures and communities themselves, such that, recalling the period of intensive missionary activity, during which the use of the *runebomme* or magic drum was among the most severely punished and urgently suppressed activities, a member of the Lule Sámi culture could speak in terms of a contrast between the era when drums could be used openly ('drum-time' in Rydving's formulation), and the span of decades 'when one had to hide the drums'.<sup>117</sup> Notwithstanding this, one must reckon with some form of continuity of traditional religious practices in a more covert context into the post-'drum-time' era, an assumption which is borne out by several of the younger sources.<sup>118</sup>

The youngest witness to late era indigenous religious culture in the part of the North Sámi cultural area coterminous with Finnmark, **Lars Jacobsen Hætta** (1834–1896),<sup>119</sup> wrote down his recollections of this religious culture almost a century after the publication of Knud Leem's 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper'. He did so whilst serving a prison sentence for the crime of having taken part in the so-called Kautokeino uprising of 1852, along with his elder brother Aslak Jacobsen Hætta (who was executed for his part in the events) and a number of other individuals from the Sámi community of Kautokeino.<sup>120</sup> Lars was himself initially sentenced to death, a sentence later commuted to long-term imprisonment; he was finally pardoned and released from prison in April 1867.

Lars' account of non-Christian Sámi religious activity forms part of a text, 'En

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117 Rydving 1995b:2.

118 Cf. e.g. Lundmark 1983, Kjellström 1987.

119 The Sámi form of Lars' name is Jáhkoš-Lasse.

120 See e.g. Zоргdrager 1989, 1997; Aarseth 2001a, 2001b.

beretning om de religiøse og moralske forhold i Kautokeino før den læstadianske vækkelse',<sup>121</sup> which sets out to describe the prevailing moral and religious circumstances in Kautokeino prior to the Læstadian revival which swept through the Sámi and Finnish (including *kvensk*) communities of this part of Norway and the neighbouring districts of Nordkalotten in the 1840s.<sup>122</sup> So it is against this background and from this interpretative standpoint that Lars, who is himself a devout Christian Sámi, compares aspects of his own faith with earlier non-Christian beliefs and practices. Yet that very fact, that Lars is a Sámi writing an account of Sámi religion in his own words, makes him virtually unique among the source material, other notable exceptions being the Sámi priest and missionary Anders Andersen Porsanger (1735–1780),<sup>123</sup> who first worked as a missionary in eastern Finnmark before being appointed parish priest of Vadsø in 1772,<sup>124</sup> and Olaus Sirma (a Sámi clergyman mentioned in disparaging terms by Olsen).<sup>125</sup> As such the calm and reflective tone in which he treats the traditional Sámi religious activity stands in contrast to the zealous and emotive register in which the missionary authors of the eighteenth century describe the same (or commensurable) activity.

Besides information regarding ritual praxis in connection with the *sieidi*, particular attention is given by Lars to the figure of the *noaidi* (or rather, specific individual *noaidit* of whom he knew traditions),<sup>126</sup> who in Lars' telling assumes a

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121 Hætta [ca. 1860] 1923. It was the scholar of Sámi language and linguistics Jens Andreas Friis who encouraged and stood as a kind of patron to Lars' literary endeavours, of which there are several other notable examples including a revision of the Sámi missionary Niels Vibe Stockfleth's translation of the New Testament into the North Sámi dialect. See further Aarseth 2001b:437; Mebius 2003:38.

122 Nordkalotten encompasses the Norwegian counties of Finnmark, Troms and Nordland, the Swedish county of Norrbotten, and the Finnish province of Lappi. For an account of the Læstadian movement, which was effectively a Pietist sect of the Lutheran Church, and its founder Lars Levi Læstadius, see e.g. Kristiansen 1993; Pentikäinen 2005a and 2005b and references therein.

123 Grankvist 2003a.

124 Steen 1954:249.

125 Cf. Olsen 1910:77 ff., Bygdén 1923–1926:2, 52.

126 Including notably a kind of typography of the different classes of *noaidi* (categorized according to

pronouncedly negative and threatening aspect. It should be noted that such an aspect is not inconsistent with the picture we get of the *noaidi* in sources dating to the heyday of the *finnemission*.<sup>127</sup> Nonetheless Mebius expresses understandable reservations concerning the use of Lars' account for the study of Sámi religious culture, stressing the relatively limited scope of his knowledge compared with earlier authors and the witnesses to and participants in living Sámi religious activity—including the clients of living, active, professional *noaidit*—whose testimony these authors document, compared to which Lars' testimony lacks detail and temporal and spatial proximity to the phenomena described.<sup>128</sup>

Be this as it may, Lars' remarks concerning the old religion will for the purposes of the present study be deemed admissible as a supplementary source for the indigenous religious culture of the Sámi of Finnmark, albeit with due caution and qualifications.

## TERMINOLOGY

In the course of what follows frequent reference will be made to elements of the Sámi religious culture documented in the conversion era, here denoted by native terms. The *noaidi* was the religious specialist within the Sámi community who was consulted in cases of personal or communal crises and enlisted to act decisively to resolve them. The *noaidit* (pl.) documented in the extant written sources for Sámi religious culture are almost all male, but this may reflect authorial bias more than actual circumstances: a reluctance on the part of adherents of a strongly patriarchal religion employing the nature of their abilities) as Lars perceived it, including the so-called 'eater-*noaidi*', cf. Mebius 2003:199-200.

127 Thus 'nåjden [framstår] som den kraftfulla personlighet han var under den tid då samisk religion i sin helhet var en levande realitet' (Mebius 2003:201).

128 Thus 'Det måste betonas att varken Hættas eller Turis framställningar i första hand är ägnade att ingående redegöra för samernas förkristna religion' (Mebius 2003:201).

exclusively male religious functionaries to acknowledge female religious functionaries. *Noaidit* are also referred to in post-conversion era oral traditions, on a pattern analogous to descriptions of magically-skilled priests from Icelandic popular tradition. In both cases the powers ascribed to the religious functionary go beyond their documented social roles into the realm of popular mythology, the difference being the prevailing positive view of priests versus the stigma commonly attached to *noaidit*. The *noaidi* has been equated with the religious specialists of other cultures who are collectively categorized under the somewhat problematic umbrella term 'shaman'. Shamans and shamanism as scholarly definitions and the debate surrounding them and how these concepts relate to the present investigation will be discussed further below. These definitions are problematic when they force homogeneity on heterogenous data. The native term for the *noaidi*'s vocation is *noaidevuohhta*, and this term and the set of duties and methods to which it refers have been discussed as equivalent to shamanism.

The *noaidi* was exceptional in his ability to initiate contact with supernatural entities in order to bring about, with their cooperation, resolution of crises. When a Sámi who was not a *noaidi* wished to interact with the supernatural for more quotidian purposes, most commonly intervention in everyday economic affairs, this would happen via the medium of a *sieidi*. A *sieidi* is in theological terms an idol, a physical object which represents, embodies and/or is the receptacle of a supernatural entity. Documented *sieidit* are predominantly rocks of a striking appearance or unusual shape or situation, for instance free-standing, or be made up of more than one rock, a cairn. Similar rocks are sometimes identified as petrified trolls in Scandinavian popular lore.<sup>129</sup> According to at least one tradition a *sieidi* could exert a direct physical influence, causing a person to become stuck fast to its surface when he reneged on an

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129 E.g. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 2003:168-9.

earlier agreement.<sup>130</sup> Typically the *seiði* provides conditions conducive to economic profit—an atypical abundance or concentration of economic resources in a given place and/or an unnatural docility on the part of wild animals, making them easier to catch—in return for the offering of an *ex-voto* e.g. fish or reindeer fat smeared on the *seiði*.

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130 'Manden, som var sin god utro (Fortælling fra hedenskabets tid)' ed. Qvigstad & Sandberg 1887:115-7, discussed in more depth in Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER ONE

**Magic applied to economic affairs: *seiðr* and *noaidevuohta***

I will now seek to exemplify ideas about a particular application of a particular brand of magic depicted in Scandinavian literary and popular traditions which acquired written form in the medieval and post-medieval period. This is magic which exerts a tractive force, and is applied in various contexts, including in economic affairs, specifically to acquire food. By way of contextualizing this application of this brand of magic within its broader context, examples will be presented of applications of magic given the same label but applied to other objects and resources than food, in other social contexts. More specifically still, what the examples have in common is the manner in which the act of magic achieves this end, which is namely by means of generating or invoking a tractive force to lure or gravitate the food towards the magical practitioner, in the most literal and physical terms.

All of the Scandinavian examples of acts of magic with an application and an effect or technique falling within the parameters set out above which will be discussed in what follows describe or denote it using the same vocabulary, the core term being the noun *seiðr*, the verb *seiða*, and phrases such as *at seiða til sín*, *að seiða að sér*, *seiða hingat* etc.

The further relevance of the discussion of traditions of this particular magical technique applied to this existential sphere within the context of the present study is that the examples from Scandinavian tradition have counterparts in Sámi oral traditions, with the latter similarly linked with the sphere of economic subsistence. This phenomenon thus presents itself as a nexus of Sámi and Scandinavian culture of precisely the kind which is the pervading focus of the present study.

In conclusion an attempt will be made to place different instances of the phenomenon within the respective broader socio-economic contexts within which they are embedded, as far as these contextual circumstances are indicated in or deducible from each tradition and the circumstances of its documentation (or production), transmission and preservation. Establishing an informed model of these contexts will be a simpler (though by no means wholly unproblematic) matter in the case of Sámi traditions, recorded near-contemporaneously, than is the case for Scandinavian traditions.

In the following chapter a case study will be presented of a literary depiction of a magical ritual incorporating a tractive element within the context of an attempt to resolve an economic crisis afflicting a community in Norse Greenland.

### ***seiðr per se***

There exists an extensive scholarly literature concerning the phenomena denoted by the Old Icelandic term *seiðr*, a literature which has since early on in the debate, and no less in recent years, encompassed discussion of its phenomenological kinship with the so-called shamanistic rituals of other cultures within the circumpolar and sub-Arctic area.<sup>1</sup>

*Seiðr*, as the idea is represented in textual sources, was resorted to in and applied to a range of social situations and cultural spheres and to various ends. Confining ourselves to those accounts of acts of magic in which the magical practitioner is referred to as a *seiðkona*, *seiðmaðr*, in which the verb *at seiða*, the noun

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<sup>1</sup> Fritzner 1877; Gering 1902; Lindquist 1923; Pipping 1926; Strömbäck 1935 [2000], 1970; Ohlmarks 1939a, 1939b; de Vries 1956:330–3; Kiil 1960; Ellis Davidson 1964 [1990]:82, 1976; Ström 1961:222–7; Buchholz 1968a, 1971; Grambo 1984a, 1989, 1991; Dillmann 1986, 1992, 1994, 2006; Simek 1993:326; Solli 1997–8, 1999a, 1999b, 2002; Mebius 2000; Price 2000, 2002, 2006a, 2008; Tolley 2009. See especially Price 2002:315, 324–8, and *passim* for a comprehensive survey of scholarly opinion for and against the interpretation of *seiðr* as (a) shamanism or shamanic.



*seiðr* or derivatives of these occur, the magic given this name could be employed to: effect divination of an individual or community's future fortunes or circumstances (*spá*);<sup>2</sup> ascertain the inclinations and requirements of tutelary spirits who could exert an influence over existential matters such as health, economic welfare;<sup>3</sup> locate the whereabouts of people or objects;<sup>4</sup> influence meteorological conditions (and thereby inflict injury or death), including bringing about 'landslides, tempests and avalanches';<sup>5</sup> more directly curse or bless a person to make them immune or,

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2 *Vatnsdæla saga* ch. 10, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1939:28-31 'Þeir Ingjaldr efna þar seið eptir fornum sið, til þess at menn leitaði eptir forlögum sínum' ('Ingjaldr and his companions worked *seiðr* in the traditional manner, so that the people there could find out about their futures') cf. the same tradition as it is transmitted in *Landnámabók* (Hauksbók 145, Sturlubók 179), in which text the term *seiðr* is however not employed 'Heiðr völvu spáði þeim öllum at byggja á því landi, er þá var ófundit vestr í haf' ('the *völva* Heiðr prophesied that they would all settle that land which had recently been discovered in the west across the sea'), ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:217; *Orvar-Odds saga* ch. 2, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:205-8 'Kona er nefnd Heiðr. Hún var völvu ok seiðkona ok vissi fyrir óorðna hluti af fróðleik sínum. Hún fór á veizlur ok sagði mönnum fyrir um vetrarfar ok forlög sín' ('there was a woman named Heiðr. She was a *völva* and a practitioner of *seiðr* and by dint of her skills she had knowledge of future events. She attended feasts and foretold people's fates and the weather for the coming season'); *Ynglinga saga* 7, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:8. Strömbäck reckons the description of a divinatory ritual described as being performed by an itinerant *völva* who prophesies the fate of the guests at a farm (note the term *seiðr* not used) in *Orms þáttur Stórolfssonar* (embedded in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, in *Flateyjarbók*), chs. 5-6, ed. Bragi Halldórsson et al. 1987:2192-3 'Það var þá tíska í þær mundir að konur þær fóru yfir land er völvur voru kallaðar og sögðu mönnum fyrir örlög sín, árferð og aðra hluti þá er menn vildu vísir verða' ('in those days it was common for women known as *völvur* to travel about the land and foretell people's fates, future economic prospects and other things which people wished to know about'), to be 'en trogen kopia' of the episode in *Orvar-Odds saga* ch. 2, cf. Strömbäck 1935:100. *Völuspá* 22, ed. Neckel 1983:5-6 'völu velspá, vitti hon ganda; seið hon, hvars hon kunni, seið hon hug leikinn' ('an accomplished prophetess, she roused *gandar*; she worked *seiðr* where she could, with *seiðr* she stole men's wits'), cf. Bø 1960:184. See also Hermann Pálsson 1997:90-4; Raudvere 2002:120-7.

3 *Eiríks saga rauða* ch. 4, ed. Jansson 1945:39-44. This episode will be discussed in Chapter Two.

4 *Hrólfs saga kraka* ch. 3, ed. Slay 1960:9-11 (describing how a certain Heiður, labelled *völva* and *seiðkona*, performs *seiður* atop a *seiðhjallr*).

5 *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*, ed. Larsson 1893:10-18, 43-9, 69-73; *Laxdæla saga* ch. 35, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:99-100 'Síðan lét Kotkell gera seiðhjall mikinn; þau færðusk þar á upp ǫll; þau kváðu þar harðsnúin fræði; þat váru galdrar. Því næst laust á hrið mikilli.' ('After that Kotkell had a large *seiðr*-platform erected; they all climbed up into it; and there they chanted intricate spells; those were *galdrar*. Then a great storm was unleashed.'). cf. Hermann Pálsson 1997:118-20, 172; Raudvere 2002:139-42. A fatal avalanche is brought about through an act of magic in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* ch. 18, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson & Guðni Jónsson 1943:59-60; and similarly in *Vatnsdæla saga* ch. 36, ed. Einar Ólafur

conversely, vulnerable to a given weapon or substance (commonly iron);<sup>6</sup> more directly still bring about a person's death;<sup>7</sup> enlist the assistance of supernatural beings to this same end;<sup>8</sup> enlist the assistance of the same to injure (non-combatant) people or livestock;<sup>9</sup> cause a person to fall ill;<sup>10</sup> instil mental confusion;<sup>11</sup> alienate potential future and/or existing allies;<sup>12</sup> sap a person's physical strength or aptitude;<sup>13</sup> initiate or

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Sveinsson 1939:96 (the term *seiðr* is used in neither text).

6 *Njáls saga* (Möðruvallabók redaction) ch. 30, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954:80 'Hallgrímr hefir atgeir þann, er hann hefir látit seiða til, at honum skal ekki vápn at bana verða nema hann' ('Hallgrímr had with him the spear which he had had enchanted with *seiðr* such that no other weapon could cause his death'); *Orvar-Odds saga* ch. 19, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:281 'Bjarmar [...] létu seiða at Ögmundi svá at hann skyldi engi járn bíta atkvæðalaus' ('Bjarmians worked *seiðr* on Ögmundur such that no iron weapon would injure him, unless it be an enchanted weapon'); *Dorsteins saga Víkingsonar* ch. 3, ed. Valdimar Ásmundarson 1886:61 'Kolr kroppinbagr lét seiða til þess, at ekki vópn skyldi at bana verða öllu hans afsprengi, utan sverðit Angrvaðill; ekki járn bítr þau annat' ('Kolr kroppinbagr commissioned an act of *seiðr* so that no weapon could bring about his death or that of his offspring except for the sword Angrvaðill; no other iron would wound them'); *Sögubrot af fornkonungum* ch. 4, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954a:349–50 'aflat var at seið miklum, ok var seiðat at Haraldi konungi, at hann skyldi eigi bíta járn, ok svá var síðan, at hann hafði aldregi hlíf í orrustu, ok festi þó ekki vápn á honum' ('a powerful act of *seiðr* was wrought, directed against king Haraldr, so that iron weapons would not wound him, and indeed after that, although he never wore armour in battle, nonetheless no weapon could wound him'). In *Kormaks saga* ch. 22 a similar act of magic is performed, by a certain Þórdís *spákona* (wife of Þórólfr who lives at Spákonufell), without the word *seiðr* (but rather *fjölkyngi*) being employed in the extant textual tradition of this saga: Einar glosses the phrase *vilja heilla* 'gera tilraun (með fjölkyngi) um hamingju sína' ('try one's luck by resort to magic' ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1939:282).

7 *Ynglinga saga* ch. 7, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:8; *Ynglinga saga* ch. 13, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:11 (see above); *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* ch. 28, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954a:239–40 (the *seiðr* here is intended to make people kill themselves by running in confusion and throwing themselves off cliffs and into bogs and lakes).

8 *Hrólfs saga kraka* ch. 32, ed. Slay 1960:111 (Queen Skuld works magic—the term used is *brögð*, perhaps suggestive of the conjuring of optical illusions, in any case some kind of trick or deception—from the top of a *seiðhjallr* to either summon, or herself take on the form of, a boar, 'einn ögurligur gallti', which decimates the ranks of her enemies); *Þiðreks saga af Bern* ch. 352, ed. Unger 1853:304 (discussed further below).

9 A collection of legal provisions dated to 1281 stipulate that 'ef þat verdr kent korllum eda konum at þau seide eda magne troll upp at rida monnum eda bufe, og verdur þat satt giortt [...] þa skal flytia utt aa sio ok sockua til gruna, og aa kongur og biskup hvern penning fiar þeirra' ('if a man or woman is found to have used *seiðr* or by other means conjured up a troll to ride people or cattle, and if this is proven [...] they will be taken out to sea and drowned, and all of their property goes to the king or bishop') *Diplomatarium Islandicum* II:223, cf. Strömbäck 1935:106.

10 *Ynglinga saga* ch. 7, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:8.

frustrate amorous relations between two people;<sup>14</sup> alter a person's physical shape or outward appearance.<sup>15</sup>

Strömbäck defines *seiðr*, and delineates its area of operation, as 'en sorts operativ magi, som avsåg antingen skadegörelse mot viss person (förgörande sejd) el. vinnande av kunskap om människors framtid, kommande väderleksförhållanden, äring

11 *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* ch. 28, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954a:239-40.

12 *Gísla saga Súrssonar* chs. 18, 21, 26, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson & Guðni Jónsson 1943: 56-7, 68-9, 84 (see more in-depth discussion on pp. 20-22).

13 *Ynglinga saga* ch. 7, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:8; *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* ch. 3, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954a:172 'Vér skulum seið efla láta ok seiða til þess, at Sörkvi skal engi vinna mega, hvárki í burtreið né einvígi, nema sá, er hefir öll herklæði Hreggviðar konungs' ('We should work have *seiðr* worked such that Sörkvi is unable to defeat anyone either in jousting or in single combat except the man who has all of king Hreggviðr's armour').

14 *Kormaks saga* 6, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1939:223 ('Þórveig seiddi til, at þau skyldi eigi njótask mega'); compare the curse placed upon Hrútr Herjólfsson by Gunnhildr in *Njáls saga* ch. 6, the intended effect of which is that 'þú megir engri munúð fram koma við konu þá, er þú ætlar þér á Íslandi' ('you will get nowhere with the woman you are courting on Iceland') ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954:21. A broadly similar motivation and its obverse may lie behind the act of magic commissioned by Drífa in *Ynglinga saga* ch. 13, when she 'keypti at Hulð seiðkonu, at hon skyldi síða Vanlanda til Finnlandz eða deyða hann at þörum kosti' ('hired the *seiðr* woman Hulð to use her powers to summon Vanlandi to Finnland or failing that to kill him'), ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:11. Cf. Strömbäck 1970:78-9; Hermann Pálsson 1997:112-3; Raudvere 2002:146-9.

15 *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*, ed. Larsson 1893:10-18, 43-9, 69-73 (Heiðr and Hamgláma, described in the prose of one redaction of the saga as *seiðkonur*, and in a verse as *tröllkonur*, who are hired to conjure a storm to drown Friðþjófr, and are subsequently recognised in the shape of *stórhvalr* attacking his ship. This episode will be discussed below); *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* ch. 28, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954a:239; *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* ch. 25 (King Framarr, with the help of some *seiðmenn*, assumes the appearance of a leper in an attempt to win the love of a certain Ingigerðr), ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954c:155-6; *Völsunga saga* ch. 7, ed. & trans. Grimstad 2000:92 'Þeð er nv getið eitt hvert finn þa er signy sat i fíkemmv sinne at þar kom til hennar ein seid kona. fiolkunnigh harla miok. þa talar signy vid hana. þat villda ek fegir hvn. at vid fkiptum homvm. hun í(egir) seið konan. þv skallt fyrir rada ok nv giorer hun sva af sinum b2ogðvm at þer fkitpa [sic.] litum ok sezt feið konan nv i rum signyiar at radi hennar ok féR i Rekkiu hia konungi vm kvelldit ok ecki finnr hann at eigi fe signy hia honum' ('It is said that on one occasion when Signý was sitting in her chamber a *seiðr* woman came to her, who was highly skilled in magic. Signý spoke to her. 'I want the two of us to swap appearance.' 'As you wish,' said the *seiðr* woman, and did as Signý had asked, by means of her arts so that they exchanged appearance, and as requested she took Signý's place, and she lay beside the king that evening, and he did not realize that it wasn't Signý beside him'). See further Hermann Pálsson 1997:98, Raudvere 2002:103-5.

A clear distinction can thus be made between magically effected shapechanging for the purpose of disguise and deception, and for the purpose of attacking someone. A textual tradition of an instance

m.m. (divinatorisk sejd).<sup>16</sup> Thus he distinguishes between two broad types—corresponding to contrasting ethical stances or intentions in the application of the magic—these being respectively malicious and divinatory *seiðr* (the latter by inference benevolent or at worst neutral compared with the former). This does not, however, account for a number of other applications which constitute neither divination nor inflicting harm, such as for instance an act of *seiðr* which protects an individual from physical harm (as opposed to inflicting harm), and a malicious but not strictly harmful application which acts to block amorous or carnal relations between two individuals. Both these applications function in some way passively, although the act of imposing the state of affairs by means of *seiðr* is of course an interventionist and active one.

These distinctions illustrate the variation in applications and effects discernible between the range of acts of magic described in the textual tradition using the term *seiðr* and its derivatives. Approaching the study of this matter primarily via the entry point of textual sources—and a study of the history of ideas which eschewed these sources, as loaded with interpretative pitfalls and cul-de-sacs as they can be, operates with a significant blind spot—lexica assume perhaps too great a significance. If one is going to attempt a typology of ideas as they are represented through the linguistic prism of a corpus of texts, a particular set of lexica, the referents of which are identified as relevant to one's investigation, is an almost unavoidable reference point. It is at any rate the obvious first port of call, consciously or otherwise. The referents of the lexemes which make up living languages are negotiable and subject to subversion,

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of the former, which does not employ the term *seiðr*, is found in *Eyrbyggja saga* ch. 20, when Katla disguises her son Oddr as various objects to conceal him from the lynch mob searching for him (ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:50-4). See Gísli Pálsson 1991:160-3 for discussion of the social dynamic which this episode may be read as articulating, and the politics at play. See also Raudvere 2002:88-9, 155-60.

16 'a kind of operative magic aimed at either injuring people (destructive *seiðr*) or acquiring knowledge of the future, future meteorological conditions, harvests etc. (divinatory *seiðr*)' Strömbäck 1970:76.

the lexemes themselves available for appropriation. In a sense so are the lexemes of 'dead' languages. In practice this is the case, and debates concerning the cultural referents of given lexemes in given texts and corpuses of texts, whether this is acknowledged or not, revolve on one level around negotiating and lobbying for particular referents to be assigned to particular lexemes, and for these pairs, these definitions, to assume what is the highest rank a definition can attain, namely the status of definitiveness.

Yet the ostensible task the scholar sets himself is to unearth objective truths according to and on the basis of the matter at hand, the textual matter, the substance of which is lexical matter. And in assembling a typology, we group together uses of a lexeme from varied textual and cultural contexts. In so doing we inevitably import the assumption that each use of the word, in each of the various instances, the referent is broadly the same. The establishment of this referent may ultimately derive from one or a minority of the extant instances of the lexeme's use, perhaps a particularly vivid and apparently lucid, explicit, three-dimensional, effusive, explanatory, detailed or illustrative instance.

If one is concerned with studying a particular aspect of culture, then a dictionary definition of a given lexeme, while elegant in its brevity and success in capturing an essence of the lexeme's referent in most if not all potential contexts, may not cut the mustard when it comes to achieving an understanding of the full ideological implications of the word's use in all extant texts and contexts. This is why we have encyclopedias (and encyclopedic dictionaries)—to extend the scope of definition to encompass a wider semantic and ideological range. And if we want to go further, we write an article, or a book. But in doing so we should not assume we have left semantics or lexicography behind, for the lexeme remains our portal, our link and

our anchor to the culture or particular cultural phenomenon we are concerned with. And on the whole we lack any kind of semantic or phenomenological Rosetta Stone to definitively (so we might presume) unlock the referent of the word before us, the word within a matrix of words, the referent within a matrix of referents.

The fact that given lexemes come to be used e.g. by historians of religion to denote a whole set of apparently interrelated ideas, in a way they may well not have been used by members of the culture which is being studied, partly explains the aim and the result of investigations into particular cultural phenomena, investigations which effectively entail the appropriation and assignation of a referent or often a range of referents to a given lexeme (or set of morphologically unrelated lexemes), and indeed the netting together of a set of ideas within the seine of a given lexeme. This is a process to which the lexeme *seiðr* (along with related lexemes *seiða*, *seiðmaðr* etc.) has been subject.

### ***at seiða til sín (seiðr as tractive magic)***

The application of *seiðr* which is of particular interest in the present connection, viz. as regards the economic sphere and securing subsistence on behalf of a group or individual, involves employing *seiðr* to a tractive effect, which is to say to attract, lure or draw objects—economic resources, specifically food—or living things (game animals, fish) to oneself, to facilitate a catch, or otherwise get one's hands on them. Sometimes this is done in such a way as constitutes theft of resources from another person, viz. antisocial applications of this magical technique, but in other cases the aim is communally beneficial.

Prior to undertaking a more thorough survey of traditions of the use of this tractive *seiðr*, some examples will be presented of the same magical effect applied to

objects which have no conventional economic value as such.

### 'love magic'

*Seiðr* could be used to effect an amorous or carnal attraction between people, usually directed at one by or on behalf of the other. This attraction is manifested both in an inclination to enter into relations with the other person, and initially in a very physical, directional way, such that the object of the magic is drawn to the commissioner or practitioner of the magical act, from some distance away.

An early tradition of this application of a magic denoted by the term *seiðr* is found in a verse by the poet Kormákr Ógmundarson, which appears to tell of how Yggr—that is Óðinn—by means of *seiðr* wooed, or seduced, a maiden by the name of Rindr. The key statement, *Seið Yggr til Rindar*, is construed by Finnur Jónsson to mean ‘Odin drev sejd til (for at vinde) Rind’.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in a later chapter of *Ynglinga saga* Snorri relates how a queen Drífa employs a *seiðkona*, Hulð, to lure king Vanlandi from Uppsala to Finland, or failing that to bring about his death:

Drífa keypti at Hulð seiðkonu, at hon skyldi síða Vanlanda til Finnlandz eða deyða hann at öðrum kosti. En er seiðr var framiðr, var Vanlandi at Upsölum; þá gerði hann fúsan at fara til Finnlandz, en vinir hans ok ráðamenn þönnuðu honum ok sögðu, at

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17 Ed. Finnur Jónsson 1932:116. Russell Poole also translates ‘Óðinn won Rindr by magic’ (Poole 1997:44). Concerning relations between Óðinn and Rindr, Snorri’s synthesis of mythological lore in *Skáldskaparmál* states, ch. 12, ‘Hvernig skal kenna Vála? Svá at kalla hann son Óðins ok Rindar, stjúpur Friggjar, bróður Ásanna, hefni-Ás Baldrs, dólg Haðar ok bana hans, byggvanda fǫðurtopta’ (‘By what titles is Váli known? He is called the son of Óðinn and Rindr, Frigg’s step-son, the brother of the Æsir, Baldr’s vengeance-god, Höðr’s enemy and his slayer, resident of the patriarchal estates’), ed. Faulkes 1998:19; and ch. 19 ‘Hvernig skal kenna Frigg? Svá at kalla hana dóttur Fjörgyns, konu Óðins, móður Baldrs, elju Jarðar ok Rindar ok Gunnlaðar ok Gerðar, sværa Nǫnnu, drottning Ása ok Ásynja, Fullu ok valshams ok \*Fensala’ (‘By what titles is Frigg known? She is called the daughter of Fjörgyn, the wife of Óðinn, the mother of Baldr, the rival of Jörð and Rindr and Gunnlöd and Gerðr, Nanna’s mother-in-law, the queen of the Æsir and Ásynjur, and of Fulla and the falcon-skin and Fensalir’), ed. Faulkes 1998:30.

vera myndi fjölkynngi Finna í fýsi hans;<sup>18</sup>

It is perhaps not wholly certain that Drífa's motive here was amorous, and the order to Hulð to 'deyða hann at qðrum kosti' may indicate that murder was in fact the primary objective, with only the manner of death being left open. This instance of tractive *seiðr* would then have more in common with an instance described in *Laxdæla saga*, discussed below, in which a boy is lured to his death.

In any case, this literary Drífa is probably meant to be of at least part Sámi origin. This is suggested by the statement that 'ráðamenn þönnuðu honum ok sögðu, at vera myndi fjölkynngi Finna', while Hermann Pálsson argues that women bearing names derived from words for frost, snow and the colour or radiance of snow, were of Sámi origin.<sup>19</sup> Both Drífa and the name of her father, Snjár, mean 'snow'. This coupled with the fact they reside in Finnland (where the element *finnr* should be taken to denote 'Sámi') supports the assumption that Drífa is meant to be Sámi, a Sámi practitioner of tractive magic, a type of which we will meet further examples below.

These traditions of magic used to cause one person to be attracted to another may imply a specifically sexual attraction, although in neither of the instances cited above—viz. those that label the act of magic as *seiðr*—is this made wholly explicit (although it is reasonable to make this assumption in Óðinn's case, given the context). These may be contrasted with traditions in which magic is employed to bring about the *inversion* of a preexisting and natural (as opposed to *supernatural*, magically-induced) attraction between two individuals. Three instances of this are given below, and the term *seiðr* is used in only one, but all entail the disruption, obstruction and thereby the negation of attraction. The ultimate repercussion may be repulsion,

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<sup>18</sup> *Ynglinga saga* ch. 13, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:11.

<sup>19</sup> Hermann Pálsson 1997:144-52, 174-5.



although this is never itself the direct effect. To categorize this as the inversion of tractive magic accords with a symmetry conventional in traditions of magic that the circumstance brought about by one magician can be negated by another magician (sometimes the very same magician). In these latter instances, the attraction which the act of magic negates is more concretely indicated as being sexual in nature.

*Kormaks saga* describes such an episode, and this will be discussed below. It may be compared with the acts of magic with a similar aim described in *Njáls saga* when Gunnhildr curses Hrútr Herjólfsson so that he will be unable to enjoy the love of his bride Unnr Marðardóttir,<sup>20</sup> and Ragnhildr tregagás, who directs a magical curse at Bárðr, through the medium of 'gönduls öndu',<sup>21</sup> in order to similarly frustrate or disrupt marital bliss, according to records of a court hearing from 1325.<sup>22</sup> In both cases the intended aim is that the victim will be unable to enjoy sexual intercourse with their respective wives.<sup>23</sup>

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20 'Hon tók hendinni um háls honum ok kyssti hann ok mælti: "Ef ek á svá mikit vald á þér sem ek ætla, þá legg ek þat á við þik, at þú megir engri munúð fram koma við konu þá, er þú ætlar þér á Íslandi, en fremja skalt þú mega vilja þinn við aðrar konur.'" (ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954:20) Hrútr travels to Iceland and marries Unnr, 'En fátt var um með þeim Hrúti um samfarar, ok ferr svá fram allt til várs.' (*op. cit.* p. 22). Unnr eventually explains to her father Mörðr the reason for the palpable disunion in her and Hrútr's marriage, namely that "'Þegar hann kemr við mik, þá er hqrund hans svá mikit, at hann má ekki eptirlæti hafa við mik, en þó hqfum vit bæði breytni til þess á alla vega, at vit mættim njótask, en þat verðr ekki. En þó áðr vit skilim, sýnir hann þat af sér, at hann er í æði sínu rétt sem aðrir menn.'" (*op. cit.* p. 24). It is tempting to see a wordplay in Unnr's name apt to the literary context, given the sense of the noun *unna* 'permission; a thing granted', and of the verb *unna* 'allow, permit', but primarily 'love', and that the act of magic brings about a negation of these very same things, effectively forbidding her to enjoy lovemaking. In other words the magic obstructs the joining of two bodies otherwise attracted to one another.

21 Discussed by Tolley, 2009 vol. I:255-6, where he explores the term *göndull*, a derivative of *gandr*.

22 Cited by Tolley, 2009 vol. I:255.

23 Cf. Tolley 2009 vol. I:255-6, citing Mitchell 1997. The episode in *Egils saga*, when the pining sickness suffered by Helga Þorfinnsdóttir is investigated by Egill and diagnosed as resulting from the magical use of runes, may constitute another example of an attempt to instil in the victim an amorous attraction towards the (alleged) perpetrator, an attempt which has however in this instance faltered due to the rune carver's imperfect knowledge of runes and/or rune magic, *Egils saga* ch. 74, ed. Bjarni Einarsson 2003:136-7.

### **Tractive *seiðr* used to draw a person to oneself or a particular location**

From Icelandic folk traditions recorded in the nineteenth century, preserved in Jón Árnason's collection, we have further examples of *seiðr* used to draw people towards a particular place. In the tale 'Peysan og prestsdóttir að norðan', a priest by the name of Eiríkur inflicts such an act of magic on a woman who has herself attempted to work an act of malicious magic upon him.<sup>24</sup> In common with many priests of folk traditions of this era, Eiríkur has a reputation for being something of a master of magic, and the woman, who is herself the daughter of a priest, wants to test this reputation:<sup>25</sup>

Miklar og margar sögur fóru af Eiríki presti um landið og sögðu menn að enginn mundi standa honum jafnfætis í listum sínum. Þetta heyrði prestsdóttir ein fyrir norðan; hún vildi reyna hvort engin ráð væru til að yfirbuga Eirík. Vann hún þá nærpeysu mjög vandaða og sendi Eiríki hana að gjöf. Eiríkur tók við sendingunni og leit á án þess að segja neitt og lét hana síðan ofan í kistu. En nokkru síðar fór hann eitthvað frá bænum í brunagaddi og kulda; tekur hann þá peysuna og fer í hana. Hann hafði mann með sér. Eiríkur biður hann að muna sig um það að ef hann sjái nokkur missmíði á sér þá skuli hann rista af sér fötin hið allra bráðasta og ná sér úr peysunni. Síðan fara þeir á stað, en þegar þeir koma út að vallargarðinum fellur prestur af baki hestinum með froðufalli. Fylgdarmaðurinn þrífur þegar til klæða prests, ristir þau af honum og nær honum úr peysunni; raknar Eiríkur þá undireins við og þakkar manninum hjálpina, tekur síðan peysuna, snýr heim aftur og læsir hana niður í kistu sem áður.<sup>26</sup>

24 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:521-2.

25 'sögðu menn að enginn mundi standa honum jafnfætis í listum sínum' ('people said that no one could match him in his mastery of the magical arts'), ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:521.

26 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:521.

The priest's daughter's act of magic is thus achieved through the medium of a piece of clothing, which is described as a *sending*, which must refer to the magic placed into it as much as the object itself. A *sending* is typically a projection of magic, in the form of an object or supernatural animal such as a fly, aimed at inflicting harm on a living thing lying at a distance from the sender.<sup>27</sup> Eiríkur exacts his revenge upon the woman by means of an act of *at seiða til sín* which impels her to make her way to his farm through a fierce blizzard dressed only in her underclothes and acting as if catatonic. She remains with him and the two swap magical knowledge, teaching or learning according to their respective fields of expertise.<sup>28</sup> An analogue of this tale, entitled 'Kölski ber á völlum fyrir Hálfðan', recounts more or less the same events but without explicitly indicating anything going by the name *seiðr* to be the agent of attraction.<sup>29</sup>

In the tale 'Jóhanna', the *troll* Hildigrímur, son of the *kerling* Hildigerður who is described as 'hinn mesti seiðskratti', attempts, unsuccessfully, to *seiða til sín* the king's daughter:

[...] og af því hún var í húsum dvergsins þá gat hann ekki náð henni, því þangað mátti hann ekki koma og komst hann því ekki nema að dyrunum, og því gat hann ekki tekið hana með valdi svo hann varð með göldrum að reyna að seiða hana til sín, en það tókst heldur ekki af því dvergurinn hafði svo um búið að ekkert óhreint gat komið inn fyrir dyr hjá honum.<sup>30</sup>

As we can see there are variations in motivation between these two acts of magic, but the common feature is the tractive force exerted by means of a magical act, labelled as

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27 Cf. Bø 1970:125-6.

28 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:521-2.

29 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:500.

30 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. V:95.

*seiðr*, upon a human being. Later we will discuss other examples of tractive magic directed at both humans and livestock, intended to bring about the death of the victim, or the victim's capture for the purpose of slaughter.

### **Tractive *seiðr* as a means of mustering supernatural allies**

In the legendary *Þiðreks saga*, *seiðr* is used to a tractive but not malicious end, to summon supernatural allies. King Hertnið is preparing to go to war with king Ísungr of Bærtangalandi and his allies, who have an army of 5000 men. In an attempt to even the odds, Hertnið's queen Ostacia, who is accomplished in magic, works *seiðr* to attract lions, bears and dragons to assist in the battle:

Her eptir samnaz saman með Hertnið konungi mikill hær. Oc hans kona Ostacia fær út oc rærði sinn gand. þat kollom ver at hon færi at sæiða sem gort var i forneskio. at fiolkungar konor þær er ver kollum volor skylldo sæiða honom sæið. Sua mikit gerði hon af ser i fiolkyngi oc trollskap. at hon sæiddi til sín margskonar dyr. leona oc biorno oc flugdræka stora. hon tamði þa alla þar til at þær lyddo henne oc hon matti visa þeim a hændr sinom uvinom. Sua sægir i kvæðom þyðærskom. at hennar hærr væri likr fiandom sialfom. hon siolf var ok sem æinn flugdreki.<sup>31</sup>

This may be compared with the manner in which a Sámi *noaidi* summons zoomorphic assistant spirits prior to embarking on particular errands and confrontations. When he is to enter into a duel with another *noaidi*, he summons (via an intermediary in the form of an anthropomorphic assistant spirit, *sáivo almmái*) a supernatural reindeer bull, SáN *sáivo sarvvis*.<sup>32</sup> When setting out to negotiate with the spirits of the dead to return

31 *Þiðreks saga af Bern* ch. 352 ed. Unger 1853:303-4.

32 Forbus [1729] 1910:34, 67; Kildal [1730 and later] 1945:137-8; Leem 1767:415-16, 420; Sidenius [1728] 1910:58; Skanke [1728-1731] 1945a:191.

the soul of a living person, which could often turn into a violent struggle if the former were not amenable to the *noaidi*'s overtures, s/he summoned and was assisted by a supernatural fish, SáN *sáivo guolli*.<sup>33</sup>

There are also instances of the inversion of both 'love magic' and the summoning of allies through the application of *seiðr*. In *Kormaks saga* nuptial relations between a betrothed man and woman are frustrated by *seiðr* worked by a woman named Þórveig:

Kormákr bað Steingerðar, ok var hon honum fóstnuð ok ákveðin brulaupsstefna, ok stendr nú kyrrt um hríð. Nú fara orð á milli þeira, ok verða í nokkurar greinir um fjárfar, ok svá veik við breytiliga, at síðan þessum ráðum var ráðit, fannsk Kormáki fátt um, en þat var fyrir þá sök, at Þórveig seiddi til, at þau skyldi eigi njótask mega.<sup>34</sup>

In *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, a tradition is presented of how a certain Þorgrímr nef works *seiðr* such that attempts by Gísli's allies to assist him through the period of his outlawry are frustrated or alienated, a state of affairs which potentially hastens his death, by neutralising forces which might have averted it.<sup>35</sup> Viewed more abstractly, this magical curse works in a tractive manner, drawing Gísli inexorably towards his ultimate fate, death at the hands of his enemies, almost as if pulled by an invisible thread. If Scandinavians sometimes conceived of fate as something woven, as some commentators conclude from texts describing *nornir* weaving the entrails of men on a loom, a magical force whose effect was to tug decisively on the threads of a man's life

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33 Forbus [1729] 1910:34, 67; Kildal [1730 and later] 1945:137-8; Leem (quoting the anonymous manuscript possibly authored by von Westen) 1767:416-17; Sidenius [1728] 1910:58; Skanke [1728-1731] 1945a:191-2; von Westen [1723] 1910:2.

34 *Kormaks saga* ch. 6, ed. (from *Möðruvallabók*) Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1939:223.

35 *Gísla saga Súrssonar* ch. 18, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson & Guðni Jónsson 1943:56-7, ch. 21 *ibid.*:68-9, ch. 26 *ibid.*:84.

and thereby warp it in a given direction towards a given conclusion would not be wholly out of sorts in the context of practical Scandinavian magic.<sup>36</sup>

In another respect the *seiðr* worked by Þorgrímr nef exerts a tractive effect, seemingly drawing Gísli's enemies to him, even when they do not succeed in finding him due to his being concealed by his hosts, or in disguise. Gísli cannot counteract this magnetic attraction but only through guile, and working within the parameters the magic has imposed upon his reality, postpone its dénouement.

### **Exerting magical traction via manipulation of weather to wreck ships**

An act of *seiðr* could be used to bring about particular weather conditions, for instance to raise a wind for beneficial or destructive purposes. Of the latter there are a number of examples from Old Icelandic literary tradition. In these instances a tractive force is exerted, typically upon a ship (and thereby the men manning it), by magical means and specifically through the medium of and the manipulation of the kinetic force of the wind and waves, and are therefore reckoned here among acts of tractive magic.

In *Laxdæla saga*, a tradition is preserved of how a Hebridean family of magicians recently emigrated to Iceland, Kotkell, Gríma and their sons—who are elsewhere identified as the murderers of a teenage boy by use of the same magic—make use of *seiðr* to raise a blizzard which brings about the sinking of a ship with all hands, including a man named Þórðr Ingunnarson who had, immediately prior to putting to sea on the fatal voyage, brought charges of sorcery and theft against the family:

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36 See now Bek-Pedersen's challenge to the received notion of *nornir* as weavers or spinners of fate, Bek-Pedersen 2006, 2007. The texts discussed in this connection are stanza 1 of the poem *Vǫlundarkviða*, 2-4 of *Darraðarljóð* and stanzas 2-4 of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*. See also further discussion of this matter in Bek-Pedersen 2009. Concerning the conception of the mechanics of tractive *seiðr* as entailing a thread, see Heide 2006a, especially pp. 235-58; 2006b; 2006c:356.

sagði Kotkell þá sonum sínum, hvat þar hafði í görzk. Þeir bræðr urðu óðir við þetta ok kváðu menn ekki hafa fyrr gengit í berhogg við þau um svá mikinn fjándskap. Síðan lét Kotkell gera seiðhjall mikinn; þau færðusk þar á upp öll; þau kváðu þar harðsnúin fræði; þat váru galdrar. Því næst laust á hríð mikilli. Þat fann Þórðr Ingunnarson ok hans fõrunautar, þar sem hann var á sæ staddr, ok til hans var gort veðrit. Keyrir skipit vestr fyrir Skálmarnes. Þórðr sýndi mikinn hraustleik í sæliði. Þat sá þeir menn, er á landi váru, at hann kastaði því elli, er til þunga var, útan mǫnnum; væntu þeir menn, er á landi váru, Þórði þá landtǫku, því at þá var af farit þat, sem skerjǫttast var. Síðan reis boði skammt frá landi, sá er engi maðr mundi, at fyrr hefði uppi verit, ok laust skipit svá, at þegar horfði upp kjǫlrinn. Þar drukknaði Þórðr ok allt fõruneyti hans, en skipit braut í spán [...] <sup>37</sup> Þessi tíðendi spyrjask víða ok mælask illa fyrir; þóttu þat ólífismenn, er slíka fjǫlkynngi frǫmðu, sem þau Kotkell hǫfðu þá lýst. <sup>38</sup>

This is presented then as a malicious act of vengeance by an already guilty party. The act of magic is described as *galdrar*,<sup>39</sup> and is performed atop a *seiðhjallr*.

A comparable act of tractive wind magic is accomplished by Gunnhildr, wife of Eiríkr blóðǫx, then occupying the throne at York, when through the use of *seiðr* she causes Egill's ship to be wrecked at the mouth of the Humber:

37 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:98-9.

38 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:100.

39 Space does not permit me to undertake a thorough contextualized survey of all acts of magic designated as *galdr* in the Old Norse-Icelandic literary corpus and post-medieval folk tradition here (see however e.g. Dillmann 2006), but the term is thought to be derived from the verb *gala* 'to crow' and to refer to an act of magic involving spoken or sung incantations (see Flowers 1993:399). There is a temptation to attempt to disambiguate acts of magic described respectively as *seiðr* and *galdr* within an overarching typology of pre-modern Scandinavian magic. Insofar as such a typology is at all helpful, we may observe that the *\*varðlokka* which is indicated as being a key element of the act of *seiðr* described in *Eiríks saga rauða* (discussed in Chapter Two) was conceived of as a kind of magical song, which would then make it a typological bedfellow of *galdr*. This serves to illustrate the potential folly of embarking on such a typological systematization of the evidence of the sources, when the terms are by no means mutually exclusive in their respective connotations and referents.

Svá er sagt at Gunnhildr lét seið efla ok lét þat seiða at Egill Skalla-Grímsson skyldi aldri ró bíða á Íslandi fyrr en hon sæi hann. En þat sumar er þeir Hákon ok Eiríkr hófðu hizk ok deilt um Nóreg þá var farbann til allra landa ór Nóregi ok kómu þat sumar engi skip til Íslands ok engi tíðendi ór Nóregi. [...] Egill varð ekki snemmbúinn ok er hann lét í haf þá byrjaði heldr seint, tók at hausta ok stærði veðrin; sigldu þeir fyrir norðan Orkneyjar; vildi Egill þar ekki við koma, því at hann hugði at ríki Eiríks konungs mundi allt yfir standa í eyjunum. Sigldu þeir þá suðr fyrir Skotland ok hófðu storm mikinn ok veðr þvert; fengu þeir beitt fyrir Skotland ok svá norðan fyrir England. En aptan dags er myrkva tók var veðr hvasst; finna þeir eigi fyrr en grunnföll váru á útborða ok svá fram fyrir. Var þá engi annarr til en stefna á land upp ok svá gerðu þeir, sigldu þá til brots ok kómu at landi við Humru mynni. Þar heldusk menn allir ok mestr hluti fjár, annat en skip; þat brotnaði í spán.<sup>40</sup>

The spell is principally directed at bringing about a state of restlessness in Egill's circumstances, almost as if he had been outlawed by supernatural means. The shipwreck can reasonably be interpreted as a circumstantial outcome of the general 'curse' Gunnhildr has lain upon Egill, but given that Egill is not only drawn ashore by the bad weather in the estuary, but ultimately drawn to the court of Eiríkr and Gunnhildr herself, there is good reason to see a tractive magical force at work here, on the model of other instances of tractive *seiðr* which draw a person to a given place. Egill discovers how close he has been brought to Eiríkr, how his road has lead inexorably thither, upon coming ashore: 'Ok er þeir hittu menn at máli spurðu þeir þau tíðindi er Agli þótti háskasamlig, at Eiríkr konungr blóðøx var þar fyrir ok Gunnhildr, ok þau hófðu þar ríki til forráða, ok hann var skammt þaðan uppi í

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40 *Egils saga* ch. 61, ed. Bjarni Einarsson 2003:101.



borginni Jórvík.<sup>41</sup>

An Icelandic folk tradition tells of similar acts of magic worked by two magicians, Galdra-Antoníus and Jón Halldórsson, who perpetrated malicious acts of weather-oriented *seiðr* upon one another during and prior to sea voyages, specifically by conjuring blizzards (*hríðarbyl*, *hríð*), just as Kotkell and his family do:

Jón leitaðist við að komast úr Grímsey, en Antoníus hindraði ætíð ferð hans með því að gjöra á hríðarbyl áður hann fór. Að lyktum hafði Jón leynilegan viðbúnað á náttarþeli, komst á stað með skipverjum sínum við dögum og nær því fram á mitt sundið, þá fréttir Antoníus til ferða hans, fyllist forneskju og fer á seið.

Nú vikur sögunni til Jóns; hann sér hvar upp gengur hríðarbakki ógurlegur að baki sér. Hann snýr sér við og sezt móti hríðinni, en hvað hann hefur tautað veit enginn, en eigi skall á hríðin. Þeir héldu til Flateyjar, en þá er þeir voru skammt frá landi skipar Jón öllum að skinnklæðast, en svo fór að þá þeir voru lentir varð að bera einn heim að kominn dauða, en eigi bar á Jóni.<sup>42</sup>

In *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*, we read of how a magical storm is conjured, evidently with the aim of sinking a ship, a storm which is clearly indicated to have been the product of a *seiðr* ritual, performed on a *seiðhjallr*,<sup>43</sup> by two *seiðkonur*, Heiðr and Hamgláma.<sup>44</sup> Knud Leem discusses the alleged magical activity of female magicians

41 *Egils saga* ch. 61, ed. Bjarni Einarsson 2003:101.

42 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:590.

43 Besides *Laxdæla* and *Friðþjófs saga*, *seiðhjallar* are mentioned in *Eiríks saga rauða*, *Göngu-Hrólf's saga*, *Gísla saga Súrssonar* and *Hrólf's saga kraka*.

44 *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna*, edited from Holm papp 17 4to by Larsson 1893:10. The act of magic is commissioned by Helgi and Hálfðan. AM 510 4to relates the same tradition thus: 'Epter það keyptu þeir at fiolkunnigum konum at þær giorde ædi vedur at þeim Friðþiofe . og monnum haní . Nu fem þeim kvomv íkamtt fra lande þa okyrði íioen og giorde ftormm micin' ('After that they hired woman skilled in magic to conjure a storm against Friðþjófr and his men. Now when they were close to land the sea suddenly turned rough and a great storm blew up'), Larsson 1893:43. The AM 568 4to text is somewhat defective at this point, and what is legible neither the term *seiðr* or *seiðhjallr* is used, ed. Larsson

documented in seventeenth century court records for the county of Finnmark, including examples of women who conjure storms whilst (like *Heiðr* and *Hamgláma*) in the shape of various animals including sea mammals, birds and fish.<sup>45</sup> These same magicians could reportedly also work charms to protect people from misfortune at sea.<sup>46</sup>

Other examples of manipulation of weather by magical means from the Old  


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 1893:69-70.

We subsequently learn, in the AM 510 4to redaction (in a notice omitted by the remainder of the textual tradition), how 'það orðit til tíðinda at hínar fiolkunnígv konur hófdu fallit ofan at féidhíalle fínun' ('it was reported that the women skilled in magic had fallen down from their *seiðr* platform'), ed. Larsson 1893:51. This comes very much as an oblique interjection in the immediate narrative context in which it is embedded.

Thus only the AM 510 4to redaction (and in turn those of the manuscripts reckoned to be descended from it) employs the term *seiðhjallr* (Holm papp 17 4to lacks the latter notice, and earlier refers to 'hiallinu', the definite article suggesting the nature of the *hjallr* would be familiar to scribe and audience, while AM 568 4to does not), while only Holm papp 17 4to and its descendants refer to the magical practitioners as *seiðkonur* (AM 510 4to has 'fiolkunnigum konum', ed. Larsson 1893:43, AM 568 4to likewise 'fiolkyngar konur').

All redactions at some point refer to the act of magic as *seiðr*, Holm papp 17 4to and its descendants in the phrase *at efla seið* (absent in AM 510 4to and AM 568 4to), as do Holm papp 17 4to and its descendants in Friðþjófr's statement 'munu þær vallda þefsum ófriðar ftormi með sínum vefta seid og gölldrum' ('it must be them who have conjured this fierce storm with their foul *seiðr* and *galdr*'), which is lacking in the text of AM 510 4to; the text of AM 568 4to is defective at this point.

The term *úfriðarstorm* used of a magical act evidently involving the emanation of the magical practitioner (or her soul) in order to launch an attack upon a person or persons (the enemies of the commissioner) brings to mind the term *ófriðarfylgjur*, used of spirits which assist a person in battle, *Þórðar saga hreðu* ch. 7, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson 1959:194-5 'Þórðr kvað sér svefnhöfugt ok kvað sækja at sér ófriðarfylgjur' ('Þórðr said he was sleepy and that the *fylgjur* of his enemies were attacking him'). The element *ófriðr* seems particularly apt to describe an act of magic directed against Friðþjófr.

According to Friðþjófr what then ensues is a contest between the magical practitioners' *tröllskapur* and he and his companions' 'hamingja' (Holm papp 17 4to), 'gípta' (AM 510 4to) or 'Giæfa' (AM 568 4to): 'nu fkulu vær til reyna huørt meira má hamingja vor eða tröllfkapur þeira' ('now we will test which is stronger, our *hamingjur* or their witchcraft'), ed. Larsson 1893:17, cf. 47, 72. This may indicate the idea of a struggle between the respective protagonists' tutelary spirits, according to how one chooses to interpret the respective terms, which are synonymous as terms for an abstract concept of luck. An interpretation of *hamingja* along these lines would find support in the related ideas this term appears to denote in other Old Norse-Icelandic texts, cf. Mundal 1974:86-91.

Besides the term *fjolkunnigar konur* used in AM 510 4to and AM 568 4to, all redactions employ the term *tröllkonur* (in a verse attributed to Friðþjófr, ed. Larsson 1893:17, 47, 72) to describe the practitioners of said magic, and *tröllskapur* the act of magic, except for AM 510 4to which substitutes the synonym 'trolldomur'. This brings us back to the question of the validity of delimiting

Norse-Icelandic literary corpus include the skill attributed to Óðinn in *Ynglinga saga*: 'Þat kunningi hann enn at gera með orðum einum at slökva eld ok kyrra sjá ok snúa vindum, hverja leið er hann vildi' ('He also knew how to put out fires and calm the sea and turn the wind in whichever direction he so choosed, with words alone').<sup>47</sup> *Ynglinga saga* lists separately the skills Óðinn has acquired as a result of his mastery of *seiðr*, so even notwithstanding Snorri's systematization of his sources for mythological and magical tradition, it would be artificial to associate Óðinn's magical influence upon weather conditions as exclusively falling within the sphere of the branch of magic here designated as *seiðr*.<sup>48</sup>

One final instance of shipwreck allegedly brought about by supernatural means bears mentioning in the present connection. In *Kristni saga* it is related that, affronted by the overbearing behaviour of the Saxon missionary Þangbrandr, and after his ship has been driven out to sea, badly damaged and washed ashore again, the poetess Steinunn recites a verse in which she attributes responsibility for what she clearly sees as a happy accident to Þórr.

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the parameters of a study according to the use of a given term or given lexemes, when different versions of the same traditions could and did employ different terms for the same ideas.

*Friðþjófs saga ins frækna* has been edited a number of times, by respectively Björner, Valdimar Ásmundarson, Larsson, Wenz and Guðni Jónsson (ed. Björner 1737; ed. Valdimar Ásmundarson 1886; ed. Larsson 1893; Wenz 1914; and ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954c). Larsson edits the texts of AM 510 4to (dated to c. 1550); AM 568 4to (c. 1600-1650) together with Holm perg 20 VI 4to (c. 1500-1525, identified as Holm perg 10 VI 8vo by Degnbol et al. 1989), as this pair variously run parallel and diverge; and Holm papp 17 4to (1671) as his main witnesses with variant readings from AM 342 4to, AM 109 a 8vo, GKS 1006 fol., ÍB 43 fol. and ÍB 65 4to. Valdimar presents a single-witness edition of JS 27 fol.

45 Leem 1767:453-5.

46 Leem 1767:458. See also Lilienskiöld [1690s] 1998.

47 *Ynglinga saga* ch. 6, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:7.

48 The skills or powers associated with *seiðr* in Snorri's presentation are: foreknowledge of people's fate and of future events (divination); bringing about illness, accident and death in others; and 'bewitchment' of people such that they were deprived of their mental or physical faculties, which same faculties could also be transferred into others (*Ynglinga saga* ch. 7, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:8).

Þann vetr tók út skip Þangbrands ór Hítará ok braut mjök ok rak á land fyrir sunnan Kálfalæk. Þar um orti Steinunn, móðir Skáld-Refs, þetta:

Þórr brá Þvinnils dýri  
 Þangbrands ór stað lǫngu,  
 hristi blakk ok beysti  
 brands ok laust við sandi.  
 Muna skíð á sjá síðan  
 sundfært Atals grundar,  
 hregg því at hart nam leggja,  
 hǫnum kennt, í spónu.

Braut fyrir bjǫllu gæti,  
 bǫnd meiddu val Strandar,  
 mǫgfellandi mellu  
 mǫstalls vísund allan.  
 Hlífði ei Krístr, þá er kneyfði  
 kólgu hrafn með stǫfnum,  
 lítt hygg ek at Guð gætti  
 Gylfa hreins it eina.<sup>49</sup>

Steinunn thus contrasts the power and influence of Þórr, who is perhaps her *fulltrúi* (judging from the praise she heaps upon him in these verses), with Christ's lack of

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49 *Kristni saga* ch. 9, ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson & Peter Foote 2003:24 (see edition for variants). Grønlie translates these verses: 'Þangbrandr's long ship, from land, / shook the prow's horse and hit it, / and hurled it against the sand. / On sea the ski of Atall's land / will not swim henceforth, / for a harsh tempest sent by him / has hewn it into splinters. // Before the bell's keeper (bonds / destroyed the beach's falcon) / slayer of the giantess-son / broke the ox of the seagull's place. / Christ was not watching, when / the wave-raven drank at the prows. / Small guard I think God held / —if any—over Gylfi's reindeer' (trans. Grønlie 2006:43-4).

vigilance and intervention with respect to the missionary, God's man. Either Christ has no regard for Þangbrandr, or he is impotent. This is by no means a case of active tractive magic, rather this instance of shipwreck by supernatural agency contrasts with the examples of *seiðr* performed to the same end cited above.

It is congruous that it should be Þórr who brings about bad weather at sea, given that in other circumstances, such as the tradition connected with the figure of Helgi inn magri, it is the same deity to whom appeal is made for good weather for ocean voyages. Þórr himself is evidently fearless in the face of stormy seas, setting out to fish for sea monsters,<sup>50</sup> besides more conventional catches, a circumstance to which the tradition related in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, in which the red-bearded Grímr (i.e. Þórr) is spotted by Ingjaldr fishing from a rowing boat in a squall, also attests.<sup>51</sup>

Hetta, described as *tröllkona*, kills Ingjaldr's livestock and, feigning an offer of conciliatory compensation, tricks him into sailing out to sea to a bountiful fishing ground. The motif of the supernaturally bountiful fishing ground is elsewhere found in folk traditions such as the Norwegian tale 'Skarvene fra Utröst',<sup>52</sup> and the traditions of Þuríðr *sundafyllir* and Ásólfur *alskik* in *Landnámabók*, both of whom will be discussed below. Like other spirits in this saga, including Bárðr himself, Hetta is immanent in a local landscape feature, residing in a mountain. Ingjaldr's fishing expedition does not go at all smoothly and ultimately proves fruitless.<sup>53</sup> Ingjaldr is nearly drowned in the storm which subsequently blows up at the fishing grounds, but

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50 Namely Jormungandr, the second element of whose name, *gandr*, associates him perhaps with malicious magic. This episode is recorded in the AM 748 I 4to in the poem *Hymiskviða*, and appears to be depicted on memorial and pictorial stones in Denmark (Hordum), Sweden (Altuna), and possibly also the British Isles (Gosforth) and Gotland (Ardre), cf. Fuglesang 1993:696, Simek 1993:324.

51 'Hvarf Grímr þá á bátinum, er Bárður kom; þykkir mönnum sem þat muni Þórr verit hafa.' ('Grímr disappeared on the boat as soon as Bárður arrived; people think he must have been Þórr') *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* ch. 8, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:127.

52 Ed. Asbjørnsen & Moe 1975 vol. I:92-7.

53 Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:126.

Bárðr, in his incarnation as guardian spirit, intervenes to save him in the nick of time.

Hetta has tricked Ingjaldr, either knowing that bad weather was typical at the fishing grounds she has directed him to, or having herself brought about the storm that blows up upon his arrival there. The latter seems in fact to be the case given the circumstances of the verse heard spoken outside the window of Ingjaldr's farm at the same time, while Ingjaldr is still at sea and close to death, thought to have been spoken by Hetta, in which the speaker describes his voyage and expresses the hope he will not return,<sup>54</sup> and that Ingjaldr himself considers the storm to be Hetta's doing: 'Þóttist hann þá vita, at hann mundi ekki at landi ná sakir fjölkynngis Hettu ok þetta mundu allt hennar ráð verit hafa.'<sup>55</sup>

Thus weather magic is a central element in this tradition, with Hetta conjuring

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54 'Það bar til um daginn heima at Ingjaldshváli um miðdegi, at komit var upp á skjá um máltíð í stofu ok kveðit þetta með dimmri raust:

Út reri einn á báti  
 Ingjaldr í skinnfeldi,  
 týndi átján önglum  
 Ingjaldr í skinnfeldi  
 ok fertugu færi  
 Ingjaldr í skinnfeldi;  
 aptr kom aldri síðan  
 Ingjaldr í skinnfeldi.

Mönnum brá mjök við þetta, en þat hafa menn fyrir satt, at Hetta tröllkona muni þetta kveðit hafa, því at hon ætlaði, sem hon vildi, at Ingjaldr skyldi aldri aptr hafa komit, sem hon hafði ráð til sett.' ('It happened that day at Ingjaldshváll around midday that someone came to the window while people were eating in the living room and recited the following verse in a hollow voice:

A man road out alone in a boat  
 Ingjaldr in his leather cloak  
 lost eighteen hooks  
 Ingjaldr in his leather cloak  
 and a fishing line forty yards long  
 Ingjaldr in his leather cloak  
 may he never come back again  
 Ingjaldr in his leather cloak.

The people there were very shaken by that, and it was thought that it must have been the witch Hetta who recited the verse, because she hoped and believed that that Ingjaldr would never return, just as she had planned.') ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:127.

55 Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:126.

the storm, which however Grímr (i.e. Þórr) is, characteristically, undaunted by. Perhaps Þórr has brought about the storm, though scarcely to spite Ingjaldr. Ingjaldr asks Grímr if they should head for land, Grímr in response 'kveðst eigi búinn, – "ok máttu bíða, þar til er ek hefi hlaðit bátinn."<sup>56</sup> Hetta appears to invoke Þórr in a verse spoken in Ingjaldr's presence—it is this same verse in which she tells him where to fish—when she interjects the statement 'Thor has love for Frigg' (*Þór er vís til Friggjar*).

### **‘kleptomagic’: theft effected through the application of tractive magic**

Approaching the sphere of acquiring economic resources through tractive magic are instances of theft effected through the application of the same, or an analogous, magical technique. In the fantastical *Sqrla saga sterka*, in an episode said to take place in Bláland, an old woman (*kerling*) named Mana boasts to the protagonist, Sqrli, that:

“Höfum vit Skrímnir minn haldit helli þennan í förutigi ár ok æ nokkut til matfanga orðit, því at á hverju ári höfum vit seitt hingat þrjú skip með mönnum. Höfum vit ok einninn byggðir rændar hestum, úlföldum ok ösnum allra mest. Þar með höfum vit ok töfrat hingat marga góða gripi frá ýmsum herrum, ok get ek nú,” sagði hún, “sýnt yðr hér til nokkur merki.”

Sörli kvað hana kunna sér margt at greina. Klæddist hann síðan skjótt. En er hann var klæddr, settist hann undir borð, ok bar kerling fram dýrliga fæðu með alls konar ilmandi drykk. Dúkar váru þar af pelli ok purpura, en ker ok skálir af gulli með gimsteinum sett. Ok er Sörli hafði etit ok drukkit sem hann lysti, leiddi kerling hann í afhelli einn ok sýndi honum þar stóra nægð gulls ok gimsteina, ok þar af gat hún honum eitt tafl af gulli gert, ok þóttist hann aldri þvílíkt sét hafa annat.<sup>57</sup>

56 Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:126

57 *Sqrla saga sterka* ch. 4, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954c:376-7.

It seems a possibility that the tractive force exerted upon the ships has been exerted via the medium of wind and wave, although it may also have been thought of as targeting and affecting the ships directly. A clearer example of an act of magically-empowered theft targeting an object directly, viz. accomplished by means of something akin to the 'tractor beam' of science fiction imagery, is described in an Icelandic folk tradition recorded by Jón Árnason, entitled 'Rauðkufl, Blákufl og Grænkufll', which describes a sword being stolen by means of *seiðr*, the technique described as 'að seiða til sín'.<sup>58</sup>

### **Tractive magic in the context of farming**

So far we have seen how tractive magic could be used in various contexts to affect the movement of objects and people, to destroy property and to bring about loss of life. Before we turn to the numerous examples of the use of tractive magic for the acquisition of food, often in a domestic context, we will first note some examples of use of this same magical technique in the day-to-day economic activity of farm work. These traditions showcase the magical skill of the protagonist against the backdrop of what seems to be a broader culture of harnessing magic in the service of productivity.

In a tradition concerning a certain Ólöf í Lónkoti and a priest named Hálfðan, both of whom are skilled in magic, it is told how on one occasion Hálfðan needs some hay gathered into a haystack, and to accomplish this task he bewitches Ólöf to gather up the hay, evidently by means of kinetic magic, causing the bundles of hay to fly up into Hálfðan's hayloft, where Hálfðan himself receives them and by means of a magical force he himself implements lays them down:

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58 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. V:173. 'Sagði hún honum að hann yrði fyrst að seiða til sín svervið hans Grænkuflls því að væri allra sverða bezt og ekkert biti á hann annað en það.' And here again we encounter the motif of the weapon that—by virtue of being enchanted by means of *seiðr*—possesses the unique power to harm a given individual.



Einu sinni átti Hálfðan prestur úti sæti mikið. Lætur hann síðan Ólöfu kerlingu binda allt sætið um nóttina, en lét sjálfur niður heyið. Kerling sagði við hverja sátu sem hún batt: “Upp, upp og heim í tóft til Hálfðanar prests!” Flugu þá sáturnar til Hálfðanar, en hann tók við og sagði: “Niður – eins og þú átt að liggja!” Þetta létu þau ganga alla nóttina þangað til heyið var buið. Sagt er að ein kerling hafi komið út um nóttina og orðið vitstola.<sup>59</sup>

Notably, and in common with other traditions of the working of magic, it would seem that the act of magic itself—over and above its specific aim or focus—and the very presence of magic in the air around, is potentially dangerous to people, such that Hálfðan finds it necessary that he 'Bannar [...] þá heimamönnum strengilega að koma út um nóttina og segir þar mikið við leggja' ('gives the local people strict orders not to go outside during the night and said that much depended on it').<sup>60</sup>

Similarly in *Laxdæla saga* when Kotkell, Gríma and their sons 'fóru á bæ Hrúts ok gerðu þar seið mikinn',<sup>61</sup> Hrútr alone 'kenndi þessi læti ok bað engan mann út sjá á þeirri nótt, — “ok haldi hverr vöku sinn, er má, ok mun oss þá ekki til saka, ef svá er með farit.”'<sup>62</sup> Despite his efforts, tragedy is ultimately not averted, when Hrútr's son Kári 'spratt upp ok sá út; hann gekk á seiðinn ok fell þegar dauðr niðr'.<sup>63</sup> Here, however, the magic seems very clearly directed at achieving the intended outcome, viz. of luring one, some or all of the inhabitants of the farm outside to their death, and the debilitating effect of the magic is not as such a side effect or 'operational hazard' of the use of *seiðr* impacting on those who find themselves in the vicinity, even if the magic

59 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. I:501.

60 'Hálfðan prestur og Ólöf í Lónkoti', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. I:501.

61 *Laxdæla saga* ch. 37, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:105.

62 *Laxdæla saga* ch. 37, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:106.

63 *Laxdæla saga* ch. 37, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:106.

seems perhaps to have had a blanket, somewhat indiscriminate effect.

In the tradition of Þórhallr knappr,<sup>64</sup> the overnight convert to Christianity Þórhallr, on the prompting of a spirit he meets in a dream,<sup>65</sup> has his local temple torn down. His neighbour Þórhildr (of whom we are told 'hon var mikil fyrir sér ok mjök fjölkunnig',<sup>66</sup> and who, it soon becomes apparent, has the gift of second sight) then tells her farmhands to take the following precautions:

"Þér skuluð fara sem skjótast at reka saman ok heim ór høgum allt kvikfé vart, bæði naut ok sauði ok hross, byrgja síðan í húsum eða réttum, því at þat mun ekki líf hafa er hér er úti í høgum várum í dag, því at Þórhallr nábúi minn á Knappsstöðum er ærr orðinn ok vitlauss, svá at hann sendir til menn sína at brjóta ofan þat virðuliga hof er þar stendr, ok þar fyrir verða in ágætu goð er þar hafa áðr dýrkuð verit at flýja nauðig ok í grimmum hug ok ætla sér hælís at leita ok bústaðar allt norðr á Siglunes. Nú vil ek eigi at minn fénaðr verði á vegum þeirra, því at þau eru svá reið ok í beiskum hug at þau munu engu eira því sem fyrir þeim verðr." Nú var svá gort sem hon mælti fyrir, at öll hennar kykvendi váru heim rekin ok varðveitt, utan einn kapalhestr hafði eptir staðit í haganum ok fannsk hann síðan dauðr.<sup>67</sup>

Here it is made explicit that the damage to livestock would be inflicted by the spirits worshipped through the medium of the recently-demolished temples' idols (with which they were functionally identical, and in which they were presumably thought immanent). It is these spirits' indiscriminate wrath, rather than collateral damage

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64 *Þórhalls þátr knapps*, embedded in the versions of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* preserved in four medieval manuscripts: GKS 1005 fol. (Flateyjarbók), dated to 1387-1395; AM 61 fol. (ca. 1350-1375; AM 54 fol. (ca. 1375-1400); and Holm perg 1 fol. (ca. 1400-1425).

65 'Þat hof skaltu láta ofan taka þegar snemma í dag er þú ríss upp.' ('You must have that temple pulled down as soon as you get up tomorrow') *Þórhalls þátr knapps*, ed. Foote et al. 2003:157.

66 'She was well-to-do and very skilled in magic.'

67 *Þórhalls þátr knapps*, ed. Foote et al. 2003:157-8.

resulting from the potency of an individual act of volatile magic, that wreaks the fatal consequences for Þórhildr's old horse.

Louise Bäckman discusses a tradition concerning a Sámi man by the name of Madter-Trorie who was said to be able by magical means to summon his herd of reindeer cows home to be milked:

Madter-Trorie, a respected *noajdie*, was once able to drive home a heard of reindeer-cows and calves from a distance by manipulating his drum while singing a *joik*. Unfortunately, the narrator, who was then just a little boy, was unable to understand the words of the song. After some initial preparations at the site of his *kota* (hut), we are told, the old Madter-Trorie beat his drum and performed his *joik*. Very soon, to the boy's astonishment, the cows and calves come running to the hut, behaving as if they were haunted by some monstrous thing. The boy and Madter-Trorie were then able to milk the cows [...]<sup>68</sup>

That the reindeer behave as if pursued by an invisible presence suggests that the thing driving them is something akin to the spirits described as wreaking destruction in *Þórhalls þáttr knapps*, and on the basis of what we can learn about the nature of the magic performed by other *noaidit*, it is quite reasonable to assume these are tutelary spirits (*gázzit*) enlisted expressly for the task by Madter-Trorie.<sup>69</sup>

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68 Bäckman 1982a:124-5.

69 Bäckman seeks to get to the bottom of the matter of the involvement and role of tutelary spirits in the act of magic: 'The *noajdie* of former days, my informant told me, had "powers" that we know nothing of today, because they took their secrets with them. Madter-Trorie had, according to him, asked his "powers" or "spirits" for help, but he did not know the nature of these "powers/spirits"; they belonged, however, to "the other world". To my question about »a *noajdie* sending out his alter ego or free-soul, which could be visible to the onlookers» my man answered that he had never heard of that kind of skill. A dead *noajdie* could show himself to a living person, he knew for sure, but not a *noajdie* in a trance: he used his "helpers from the other world".' (Bäckman 1982a:125).

For further examples of traditions of *noaidit* drawing to themselves reindeer and other objects

The employment of spirits—be they in this instance separate entities to the magical practitioner or projections of him or herself—to seek out and drive someone or something back to where they are perceived to belong or one wants them to be, is something we perhaps find in an episode with which *Hrólfs saga kraka* opens. King Fróði wishes to locate his nephews Helgi and Hróar, who are in hiding, harboured by a man named Vífill, and to accomplish this end enlists the help of:

galldra menn sem eptir öllu gieta rijnt, þui sem þeir vilia, en þeir seigia honum ad eij muni þeir áá landi fæddir, enn þö muni þeir eij fiærri konginum. K(ongur) s(uaradi), vÿða höfum vær þeirra leitad, og þiki mier það sijst von ad þeir sieu hier nærri. Ein ey er það er vier höfum ecki þrätt vm leitad, og nær einginn bygd j, nema einn fätækur kall byr þar.<sup>70</sup>

It becomes clear when the narratorial perspective shifts to Vífill and the boys that the *galdramenn* undertake their search via the medium of supernatural entities which may either be conceived of (or interpreted) as tutelary spirits assisting the magicians, or as emanations of the magicians themselves:

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by magical means whilst in a trance or asleep, either with the assistance of tutelary spirits or more directly via an emanation of their own free-soul, see Itkonen 1960, especially pp. 16–18. Itkonen (1960:4) links this practice with the SáN verb (recorded specifically in the dialects of Karasjok, Karesuando and Polmak) ‘juovsátit [...] by means of witchcraft get a thief to bring back what he stole (obj.: what was stolen), or get some evil which is the fault of a magician to recoil on himself (obj.: the magician) [...] 2. [...] (a casual informant), employ magic to make wild reindeer assemble and come to the place where one is lying asleep oneself (of *noai’de* in old days’ (Nielsen 1934:446). Cf. Heide’s summary of scholarship on this phenomenon (Heide 2006a:132–3); Almqvist’s reference to a tradition of *noaidit* who take turns in dragging to themselves, back and forth between them, by means of a kind of tractive magic, various animals, including ‘björnar som fått benen nedslitna till knäna genom att bli sända fram och tillbaka mellan två tävlande nåjder’ (‘bears who have their legs worn down to the knees from being sent back and forth between two rival *noaidit*’), Almqvist 2000:266; and my discussion of the traditions of the *noaidi* Kutavuorok, and of ‘Villrenene på Akkoberget’, pp. 88–93, below.

70 Ed. Slay 1960:4.

Það var einn morgun snemma að kallinn Víjfill vaknar og m(æ)lir, margt er kinligt á ferd og flugi, og miklar fylgiur ok máttugar eru hingad komnar í eina. Standid vpp Hald(anar) sinir, og halldid yckur í skögar runnum m(ijnum) í dag.<sup>71</sup>

The arrival of these *fylgjur* precedes that of the king's messengers who undertake an unsuccessful manhunt on the island upon which the boys are hiding out.

As in the episode in *Þórhalls þáttur knapps*, spirits are here perceived to be abroad in the air around, something perhaps also intimated in the episode from *Laxdæla saga*. Similarly explicit in the first two instances but not in the latter is the magical expertise possessed by those who are able to perceive these spirits, in *Þórhalls þáttur Þórhildr*,<sup>72</sup> in *Hrólfs saga kraka Vífill*. In *Laxdæla* it is Hrútr who 'einn kenndi þessi læti ok það engan mann út sjá á þeiri nótt' ('alone knew that art, and told people not to look outside that night'),<sup>73</sup> but it is unclear whether his understanding of the sounds derives from specialist knowledge, or past experience of *seiðlætin*.

A further point of contrast is that these last-discussed examples, in which the supernatural force acts to drive rather than to drag, thus stand in contrast to acts of tractive magic *per se*.

### **Tractive *seiðr* used to acquire food**

Having looked at some instances of the application of tractive magic to day-to-day farming activities, as well as cases of the appropriation of economic resources including sources of food, examples will now be discussed of the direct acquisition of

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71 Ed. Slay 1960:4.

72 'Hon var mikil fyrir sér ok mjök fjölkunnig' ('She was well-to-do and very skilled in magic'), ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson & Peter Foote 2003:157).

73 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:106.

food by similar means, in a sequence according to the type of food: milk, cooked meat, living livestock, fish, and sea mammals.

The Scandinavian practitioners of these acts of magic are referred to by various terms, including: *seiðkona*,<sup>74</sup> *kerling*,<sup>75</sup> *galdramaðr*,<sup>76</sup> *prestr*,<sup>77</sup> *tröll*, *skessa*.<sup>78</sup> Analogous examples from Sámi tradition, along with occasional Scandinavian traditions in which the magical activity is attributed to Sámi magicians, will be presented on an *ad hoc* basis and in a comparative perspective.

### Milk

Two narratives recorded by Jón Árnason describe how milk is taken from cows situated in Iceland, while those milking are situated at a remote location abroad. In the tale 'Mjólk seidd af Íslandi' the perpetrator is a *finnska frú* in Norway, who might well then be Sámi in ethnicity:

Þegar Kristján konungur fjórði réði Danaríki fór hann oft í dularbúningi um lönd sín. Kom hann í einni þeirri ferð til Norvegs. Heyrði hann getið um eina finnska frú göfuga og gestrisna, en það var honum sagt undarlegt í háttsemi hennar að hún hefði alltaf mjólk án þess þó að hafa nokkurn mjólkurpening. Til þeirrar sömu kom hann og fekk meðal annars mjólk hjá henni. Fór hann að spurja [*sic.*] hana um þetta, en hún skeytti því ekki. Aftur seinna kom hann til þessarar sömu frúr án þess að leynast, spurði hana enn hins sama. Feilaði hún sér fyrir honum og lét uppi allt hið sanna. Gekk hún að tré einu, tók úr því tappa, setti pípu í gatið og bunaði þar úr mjólk þar til full var fjórðungsskjóla. Konungur bað hana að mjólka meira. Hún fór til aftur

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74 'sorceress, witch' (a female practitioner of *seiðr*)

75 'old woman'

76 'wizard'

77 'priest'

78 'giantess, (female) monster'

sárnauðug og fyllti aðra. Konungur bað hana að mjólka meira, en hún mælti ákaft á móti, fór þó enn til fyrir ótta sakir. En er sopakorn var komið í skjóluna var mjólkin blóðblönduð og því næst tóm tómt blóð. Sagði hún þá vera dauða þá beztu kú á Íslandi. Sagt er að konungur léta áflífa hana fyrir fjölkynngi sína; aðrir segja að hann hétu henni lífi ef hún segði sér hið sanna.<sup>79</sup>

In the tale 'Enn seidd mjólk frá Íslandi' a similar scenario is described, although without specifying where it takes place—the crucial aspect here is that the thieves are alien to Iceland (a cultural otherness certainly shared by the practitioner of magic in the previous tale)—and once again the cows milked are 'the best in Iceland', emphasising that the severity of the crime is in the realm of grand larceny:

Utanlands bjuggu systkin tvö ein sér. Einu sinni komu gestir til þeirra og voru hjá þeim nætursakir. Um kvöldið sáu þeir að fjórir þráðarspottar hangdu niður úr loftinu, og fyrir háttur fór stúlkan að toga í spottana. Þar kom mjólk og svo mjólkaði hún fulla fötu. Þegar gestirnir komu til byggða sögðu þeir frá, og þókti mönnum þetta undarlegt. Kom það fyrir yfirvöldin. Tóku þau systkinin undir rannsókn og kröfðu þau til sagna. Jæja, það kom þá upp að þau völdu beztu kýrnar á Íslandi og toguðu til sín með fjölkynngi sinni mjólkina úr þeim.<sup>80</sup>

Both of the traditions cited above, current in and evidently in circulation during an austere period of Iceland's history, seem to reflect rationalisations of the poverty suffered by the nation's farmers and an expression or projection of the circumstance of the theft of economic resources by foreigners—historically Danes, Norwegians and the British. Equally they constitute an attempt to explain or rationalise the less readily

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79 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:622.

80 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:622.

explicable or directly attributable causes of economic hardship—a barren cow—by attributing them to malicious supernatural intervention from abroad.

Simultaneously these traditions serve to explain one community's lack and another's prosperity, the latter explained as having come about at the expense of the former, by direct and underhand appropriation of the former's resources. The grass may not in fact be viewed as greener on the far side of the sea by the narrators of these traditions (regardless of the true economic circumstances of contemporary Sámi or Scandinavian farmers and pastoralists, who certainly suffered hardships of their own); worse than that, the sneaky foreigners are creaming off the end product of verdant Icelandic pastures upon which these exceptional specimens of bovinity graze.

Similar ideas that magically-gifted women would steal milk by resort to witchcraft were current in Finnmark in the seventeenth century, as details of trials brought against alleged witches show. Knud Leem cites an instance of such activity when he relates how 'Een [Troid-Qvinde] paastod, at hun kunde skaffe sig Melk af andres Køer, ved at sette et Horn under Koens Bug, og malke den i den Ondes Navn; hvorefter den først gav Melk, siden Blod, og derpaa døde.'<sup>81</sup>

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81 Leem 1767:457. A less malign act of magic along similar lines could cause a cow deemed insufficiently productive to produce more milk, or cure a cow which had fallen ill: 'Som Troid-Qvinderne gave sig ud for ved deres Hexe-Kunst at kunde beskadige Folk og Fæ, saa foregave de iligemaade, sig en allene at kunde helbrede syge Mennesker ved 3 Ganges Haands Paalæggelse, ved at røge med tændt Knøsk under Skiorten paa den Syge etc. men endogsaa at kunde hielpe med Svaghed behæftet Qvæg til rette, saasom: ved at tage paa en Søndag Salt med sig i Kirken, naar Qvæget ey vilde trives, ved at læse over det, naar det ey vilde give Forraad af Melk, en bespottelig, meget absurd Bøn, hvis Indhold jeg ey vil anføre.' ('Just as these witches professed to be able to harm people and cattle with their witchcraft, so they claimed likewise to be able to heal sick people by laying their hands upon them 3 times, by fumigating with burning knøsk [a.k.a. Bjørke Sop] under the shirt of the sick person etc. but also being able to help cattle afflicted by weakness back to health, for example: by taking a salt to church on a Sunday when the animal is not fattening up well; by reading over it a blasphemous and quite absurd prayer, the content of which I do not wish to repeat, when the animal does not give sufficient milk.'). Leem 1767:458).



## Cooked meat

Also from post-medieval Icelandic folk tradition a number of traditions are recorded of individuals who were able to acquire by the application of tractive magic cooked meat: that is, food which has in some way been prepared, both caught and cooked in contrast to raw foodstuffs such as milk; in other words, food into which others have already invested an effort in acquiring or preparing by non-supernatural means. Thus we have the same element of the magician 'piggy-backing' on the economic endeavours of the victim—as indeed is the case in all cases of theft.

This group of traditions all follow more or less the same pattern, in which a priest exercises magical skills in acquiring the food, sometimes on behalf of others, and typically in the context of an ongoing rivalry or game of magical one-upmanship between the priest and a local elderly woman possessed of comparable faculties.

'Hálfðan prestur og Ólöf í Lónkoti' has already been discussed above as an example of a kind of tractive magic employed in speeding up laborious farm labour. The same tradition has it that Hálfðan, out fishing with his men, and having already landed a large flounder, offers to rustle up a hot sausage for his men, which he then does so, pulling it up on the hook of his fishing line, and which it would appear he has stolen by means of *seiðr* from Ólöf's cooking pot. Ólöf has her revenge soon afterwards by purloining the flounder from the boat, likewise with the help of *seiðr*.<sup>82</sup>

The tradition of 'Kerlingin á tjörnum' seems connected to this same Hálfðan and an old woman who must then be identical with Ólöf. In addition to the blood sausage and flounder episode, it relates an act of tractive magic performed by the *kerling*, when she moves her whole farm to a different spot.<sup>83</sup> Another version of this tradition concerning Hálfðan and the *kerling* substitutes the sausage for boiled meat,

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82 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. I:500.

83 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:536-7.

and the flounder for a halibut, but the acts of magical theft are otherwise identical.<sup>84</sup>

A tradition connected to a priest, Jón Þórðarson, describes a similar magical theft of cooked meat, a side of roast lamb, on behalf of himself and a boy who accompanies him, explaining to the boy (who has his eyes shut while the theft is accomplished) that “Það hvarf frá kokkinum þegar hann var að bera inn á kóngsbordðið.”<sup>85</sup> In none of the texts of latter three traditions are the words *seiða*, *seiðr* or their derivatives used.

That it should be cooked meat, and specifically (in several of the cases cited) boiled meat, that are the object of these acts of tractive magic which—where they are given a name—are labelled *seiðr*, is congruous with a proposed etymological derivation of the term from the verb *at sjóða* ‘boil, cook’. Lamb (and mutton) being by far the most commonplace meat available on Iceland in this era and indeed down through the centuries since settlement, there is cause to wonder whether the use of *seiðr* (*at seiða*) in acquiring the same meat has some conceptual link with the cluster of words MIcel. *að seyða* ‘bake, roast’, *seyði* ‘broth’, *sauður* ‘wether’, *sauðfé* ‘sheep’, *sauðkind* ‘lamb’.

### **Living animals (livestock)**

As tempting as it clearly was to make use of one's magical skills to opportunistically filch a ready-cooked meal, traditions also abound of what we may group under the umbrella term cattle-rustling, although the type of animal appropriated in this way are not restricted to cows, and include sheep, horses, more exotic land mammals not endemic to Scandinavia, sea mammals, fish and even, according to one fantastical late-medieval tradition, human beings.

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84 'Fiskiveiðin', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:537.

85 'Steikin', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:553. 'It disappeared from the cook as it was being carried out to the king's table.'

From a saga text already discussed we have examples of the theft of cows from a neighbour. Among the magically-empowered crimes attributed to the family of Kotkell in *Laxdæla saga*, besides those already mentioned—manipulating the weather to bring about shipwreck, murder—circumstances presented in the saga in the form of hearsay bear witness to a belief that they have also stolen cattle from a woman named Ingunn Þórólfsdóttir, whose son Þórðr they subsequently cause to drown. It is by no means explicit, but the juxtaposition of the statements 'kvað hon Kotkel ok konu hans ok sonu gera sér óvært í fjárránum ok fjölkynngi' ('She said that Kotkell and his wife and sons are up to no good, cattle-rustling by means of witchcraft'),<sup>86</sup> alongside the other acts of malicious magic described later in the text (discussed earlier), gives reason to suspect that the *fjárrán* has likewise been accomplished by resort to magical means, and perhaps also, consistent with the nature of the other acts of *seiðr* the same family of magicians commit, specifically a tractive application of *seiðr*. But this can of course be no more than informed speculation based upon text-internal juxtapositions. The traditions of Kotkell and his family preserved in *Laxdæla saga*, at least, show how this technique of tractive *seiðr* was thought to be applied to various purposes and ends, self-aggrandising and murderous.

*Sqrla saga sterka*, discussed earlier as an instance of the theft of precious objects by means of *seiðr*, also describes how the same *kerling* and her partner Skrímnir have *seitt til sín* three shiploads of men. The fate of these men would appear to be that they are eaten by Mana and Skrímnir, to judge from Mana's statement that they always have a well-stocked larder.<sup>87</sup> As with the report of Kotkell and family's theft of Ingunn's cattle, there is a suggestion that the theft of the camels, donkeys and horses

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<sup>86</sup> *Laxdæla saga* 35, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:98.

<sup>87</sup> *Sqrla saga sterka* ch. 4, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954c:376 (see the foregoing discussion of this episode, p. 33).

has been accomplished by means of the same act of magic which has *seitt hingat þrjú skip með mönnum*.

These are not the only traditions concerning the luring and trapping of humans as meat for one's cooking pot. Perhaps in a manner more congruous with more ubiquitous conceptions of man-eating beings—viz. that they tend to be monsters, trolls, as opposed to old women—*Hálfðanar saga Brǫnufóstra* in fact presents a *kerling* with a more trollish aspect, Sleggja, along with her partner Járnefr.<sup>88</sup> Hálfðan overhears Járnefr ask Sleggja ““Er nokkut eftir Sleggja,” segir hann, “af þeim hálfum þriðja tigi manna, er ek seidda hingat í fyrra vetr?” Hún segir allítit um þat. Hún gekk þá innar eftir hellinum ok kom svá aftr, at hún hafði sinn mann undir hvorri hendi sér, ok leggr niðr hjá eldinum ok segir, at eigi váru fleiri eftir.”<sup>89</sup>

Hálfðan subsequently rescues one of the abductees, Hildir, daughter of earl Angantýr of Skotland, who is yet to be eaten, and for whom Járnefr in fact has other plans, namely to marry her and kill his *kerling* Sleggja. She corroborates the act of magically-empowered abduction (or trapping of prey) to which Járnefr has earlier referred, telling Hálfðan how she, her two brothers and their crew 'héldum fyrir land fram í fyrra sumar. Seiddi Járnefr mik hingat ok öll oss, ok ætlaði hann sér at eiga mik, en drepa kerlingu sína, en ek vilda þat ekki.’<sup>90</sup> Thus in this instance, and in keeping with other Scandinavian and especially Icelandic traditions, it is not solely for their meat that trolls covet humans.<sup>91</sup>

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88 *kerling* is variously glossed 'woman', 'old woman' (Sverrir Hólmarrson, Sanders & Tucker 1989), 'witch' and 'troll-hag'. *Skrímnir* may also be a *troll*, in one or another sense of the word (e.g. 'evil creature').

89 *Hálfðanar saga Brǫnufóstra* ch. 4, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954d:298.

90 *Hálfðanar saga Brǫnufóstra* ch. 5, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954d:300.

91 See e.g. Solrún who is abducted by the *troll* (or in any case certainly troll-like) Kolbjörn and offered in marriage to Þórðr as a bait to lure him to his home in a cave in Brattagill. 'Þórðr spurði, hvárt hon væri dóttir Kolbjarnar. Hon sagðist eigi hans dóttir vera, segir hann hafa numit sik í burt af Grænlandi undan Sólarfjöllum, – "frá Bárði, föður mínum, með fjölkynngi, ok ætlar mik sér til handa ok frillu, en

A later Icelandic tradition tells of how an old man who lives with his *kerling* in a hidden valley, farming sheep, and apparently rustling rams to supplement his flock,<sup>92</sup> lures a shepherdess named Valgerður to the valley to be their servant girl. This he does, by his own admission, by means of tractive magic, specifically *að seiða til sín*: 'Sagðist hann búa þar með kerlingu sinni, en vera barnlaus og hefði hann seitt hana til sín og skyldi hún þar vera og þjóna þeim.'<sup>93</sup> The old man is evidently an outlaw,<sup>94</sup> who maintains the secrecy of his hideout by resort to magical means,<sup>95</sup> and with the help of an apparently supernatural entity, Skeggalvaldur, to whom he makes a vocalized and formulaic appeal.<sup>96</sup> Skeggalvaldur, who protects his client ("Skeggalvaldur, skjólið þitt

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nú hefi ek ekki viljat samþykkjast honum, ok því hefir hann jafnan illa haldit mik, en þó verst, síðan hann játaði mik þér. Fyrirman hann hverjum manni at eiga mik, hverjar glósur sem hann gerir þar á." ('Þórðr asked if she was Kolbjörn's daughter. She said that she was not his daughter, and that he had abducted her in Greenland under Sólarfjöll, - "from Bárður, my father, by means of sorcery, and intends to have me as his whore, and up to now I have not assented to this, but he has often treated me badly, and still worse since he agreed to let you marry me. He begrudges any man to marry me, in spite of all of his claims to the contrary.") *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* chs. 14-16, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:151-2.

92 'Stúlka nokkur átján vetra gömul, að nafni Valgerður, sat hjá kindum húsbónda síns er bjó á Hofi í Skagafjarðardölum. Það vildi til að hana vantaði seint um sumarið sex ær og leitaði hún þeirra langt á fjöll upp, og þegar hún var nær því yfirkominn af þreytu varð fyrir henni dalverpi nokkurt og sá hún þar kotbæ lítinn.' ('A certain girl, eighteen years of age, by the name of Valgerður, sat by the sheep of her master, who lived at Hof in Skagafjarðardalur. It happened that summer that she was short six ewes and searched for them far up in the mountains, and when she was almost overcome with tiredness she came across a small valley and saw there a small farm.') ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61 vol. IV:392-3.

93 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61 vol. IV:392-3. 'He said he lived there with his old lady [*kerling*], and they were childless and he had *seiðed* her to him and she had to remain there and serve them.'

94 To judge from the covert circumstances of his home, and the title given to the tale by the editor Jón Árnason 'Þórálfrur útilegumaður', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61 vol. IV:392-3.

95 'ekki auðnaðist mönnum að hitta á dal þennan aftur, því þegar leit var gjörð kom svo mikil þoka að leitarmenn fýstust að snúa heimleiðis aftur, og var það eignað fjölkynngi Þórálfs.' ('they were unable to find the valley again, because when they searched for it such a thick fog arose that the search party was forced to return home again, and this was put down to Þórálfrur's magic.') ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61 vol. IV:393.

96 'á hverju kvöldi las karl bæn þessa að henni sýndist mjög trúaræknislega:

"Skeggalvaldur, skjólið þitt  
skíni yfir landið mitt  
svo enginn geti á það hitt  
af öllum landsins lýðum;

skíni yfir landið mitt [...] forða þú oss hríðum"), appears to exert a function analogous to that of a *gázzi* or *fylgja*. The old couple appear to subscribe to an unorthodox, non-scripture-based religion.<sup>97</sup>

We have already discussed a number of traditions of priests who practice tractive magic for economic benefit or simply immediate culinary satisfaction.<sup>98</sup> The tale 'Mjóafjarðar-skessan' tells of priests who are themselves the victims of the same kind of magic. The perpetrator is a *skessa* ('giantess'):

Fyrir framan Fjörð í Mjóafjarði er gil eitt sem kallað er Mjóafjarðagil. Þar hafðist fyrir meir við skessa sem síðan hefur verið kölluð Mjóafjarðarskessa og var hún vön að seiða til sín í gilið prestana frá Firði; gjörði hún það á þann hátt að hún fór til kirkjunnar þá er presturinn var uppi í stólnum, og brá til annari hendinni fyrir stólglugganum utanverðum; urðu prestarnir þá ærir og sögðu:

“Takið úr mér svangann og langann;  
nú vil eg að giliu ganga.  
Takið úr mér svilin og vilin;  
fram ætla eg í Mjóafjarðagilið.”

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forða þú oss hríðum,  
forða þú oss hríðum.”

(every evening the old man spoke the following prayer, which seemed to Valgerður showed great devotion:

"Skeggalvaldur, your protection  
shines over my land  
so that no one can find it  
out of all the people in the land;  
you save us from the snowstorm,  
you save us from the snowstorm." ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61 vol. IV:393.

97 'Sá Valgerður þar engar bækur og ei vissi hún hverja trú þau höfðu' ('Valgerður saw no books there and did not know which faith they subscribed to'), ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61 vol. IV:393.

98 Another tradition of a priest said to have used *seiðr* per se, if not a tractive kind, is that of 'Snorri á Húsafelli og sendingin', ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61 vol. V:467. 'Síra Snorri var hinn seinasti maður er hafði seið hér á landi svo menn viti.' ('Master Snorri was the last person known to have used *seiðr* here in Iceland')

Hlupu þeir að svo mæltu út úr kirkjunni fram að gilinu og sagði eigi af þeim úr því.<sup>99</sup>

Over and above the use of tractive *seiðr* in this tradition, the tale depicts a confrontation between representatives of 'heathendom' and Christianity, a confrontation in which former initially has the upper hand. 'Prestarnir fóru þannig hver á fætur öðrum og til vandræða tók að horfa því prestar urðu tregir til að fara að Firði er þeir vissu hver meinvættur var í gilinu. Þar kom loks að enginn ætlaði að fást'.<sup>100</sup> Eventually a priest equal to the challenge arrives in Fjörður, and the *skessa's* tractive magic is overcome by the wily priest who drills his parishioners to pin him down and ring the church bell if and when the *skessa* works her magic, which she does on cue and is banished permanently by the sound of the church bells.

Taken together, the widespread traditions of churchmen with magical aptitudes and the surviving heathen spirits in the Icelandic landscape alike making use of tractive magic (often identified as *seiðr*) show how at least in the popular conception magic was there to be used by 'good' and 'wicked' beings alike, each to their own ends, and that the acquisition of food by magical means was at least in certain circumstances a legitimate activity, if even (indeed especially) priests were not above doing such things on behalf of themselves and their employees and parishioners.

### **Fish**

In the tale of 'Seiðkerlingar í Kaupmannahöfn' two traditions are related which the collector says refer to one and the same woman, who, in common with the woman who was supposed to have *seidd mjólk af Íslandi* (in the tradition discussed earlier), is said to be *finnsk að ætt*, i.e. perhaps Sámi by extraction. This woman's neighbour is an

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99 'Mjóafjarðar-skessan', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. I:146.

100 'Mjóafjarðar-skessan', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. I:146.

Icelandic student, who the tale presents as the ostensible witness to the acts of magic which have thereby found their way into Icelandic oral tradition. The student notices that there is always fresh herring on the table in the old lady's home, and asks her daughter how this was possible:

Hún fór til móður sinnar og mælti fram með honum. Kerling kallaði á hann inn í eldhús og sýndi honum holu ofurlita ofan í öskustóna. Þar ofan í dorgaði hún og dró upp silung. Hann spurði hana að hvaðan hann væri. Hún sagðist seiða hann til sín úr Vatnsdalstjörn fyrir sunnan land á Íslandi. Fór hann að loknum lærdómsiðkunum sínum til Íslands. Lagði hún þá á tjörnina að allur silungur úr henni skyldi verða að hornsílum og aldrei frammar í henni veiðast.<sup>101</sup>

The somewhat inexplicable 'curse' placed by the old woman on the pond she had previously pilfered herring from, after she has revealed her source to the student and he has returned to Iceland, is perhaps explained by the circumstance in the sister tradition concerning the student and the *kerling* that the former has revealed to the locals in Vatnsdalur what the old woman has been up to. In this second tradition it is not herring from Vatnsdalstjörn but 'the fattest sheep in Vatnsdalshellir' which she has rustled from the Icelandic valley to feed herself and her daughter in Copenhagen.<sup>102</sup> As with the traditions of 'Mjólk seidd af Íslandi' and 'Enn seidd mjólk frá Íslandi', this tradition seeks to explain an otherwise inexplicable economic dearth or failure—and the disappearance of sheep left to graze the valleys of Iceland would have been something of a commonplace—by attributing such circumstances to a supernatural cause, and according to the rule of every action having an equal and opposite reaction,

101 'Seiðkerlingar í Kaupmannahöfn', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:621-2.

102 'Seiðkerlingar í Kaupmannahöfn', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:622.



the explanation involves another's gain at the Icelandic farmer's expense, in a distant place, via a kind of 'wormhole' created through which the animals are *seitt til sín*.

Perhaps unsurprisingly for a culture surrounded by sea and so dependent on fish as a source of subsistence, there are a number of other traditions of the magical acquisition of fish, either by drawing shoals of fish to one's own lake or fishing grounds, or directly from the sea. The traditions of Hálfðan prestur and Ólöf í Lónkoti (including the tales 'Kerlingin á tjörnum' and 'Fiskiveiðin'), in which freshly caught fish are stolen in this manner, have already been discussed. Probably the earliest traditions of this kind are recorded in *Landnámabók*. Perhaps the most well-known example is that of Þuríðr *sundafyllir* ('sound-filler'), who 'seiddi til þess í hallæri á Hálogalandi, at hvert sund var fullt af fiskum'.<sup>103</sup> She appears to have been of further assistance to her community in establishing the basis for economic security, when 'Hon setti ok Kvíarmið á Ísafjarðardjúpi ok tók til á kollótta af hverjum bónda í Ísafirði'.<sup>104</sup> Like *noaidit* who assist their communities in various matters including economic crises equivalent to the *hallæri* afflicting the farmers of Hálogaland, Þuríðr does not work for free, taking livestock in payment, ewes where *noaidit* are paid in reindeer.

Consideration of Þuríðr *sundafyllir's* act of magic and the nickname she has acquired evidently as a direct consequence of it, gives cause to wonder if the nickname of the father of another settler of Iceland, Þórólfr Mostrarskeggr, who was known as Þórólfr *fiskreka*,<sup>105</sup> also refers to a tradition of him having performed a singular or habitual act of magic along the same lines as that attributed to Þuríðr, except that it was conceived as harnessing or exerting not a tractive but a driving kinetic force to

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103 *Landnámabók*, Hauksbók ch. 116, Sturlubók ch. 145, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:186. The Hauksbók and Skarðsárabók redactions have 'síld' (herring) for 'fiskum'.

104 *Ibid.*

105 *Landnámabók*, Hauksbók ch. 73, Sturlubók ch. 85, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:124.

herd fish towards a particular fishing ground, or e.g. a bay, allowing for intensive fishing to take place there. Perhaps fish were even driven onto the beach. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards gloss *fiskreka* as 'fish-driver', the verb *at reka* interpreted in the sense 'to drive'.<sup>106</sup> Cleasby and Vigfússon list as the first example of usage of the word the phrase 'reka hross, fé, svín, naut, *to drive horses, cattle*' (examples found in e.g. *Grágás*, *Egils saga*, *Gísla saga*, *Njáls saga*), attesting to a clear association of the act of driving with economic exploitation of animals.<sup>107</sup>

Alternatively the nickname *fiskreka* may refer to a wholly non-supernaturally-empowered activity along the same lines. The traditional Faroese method of beaching and slaughtering whales by driving them into inlets with boats, whales known as *grind*, which is practised to the present day in the Faroes and was probably prevalent more widely across the North Atlantic in early centuries, and the similar Icelandic method involving throwing stones into the water to drive whales inshore,<sup>108</sup> attest to a potentially pan-Nordic technique of driving (followed by a slaughter) as the principle method of landing a catch of meat from the sea.

Ǫrnólfr *fiskreka* is mentioned both in *Landnámabók* and *Eyrbyggja saga*,<sup>109</sup> neither of which texts give any indication of him having undertaken any putative act or activity which might explain the conceptions which led to him being assigned this intriguing nickname in Icelandic folk tradition—in fact they say very little about

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106 Hermann Pálsson & Paul Edwards 1972:45.

107 Cleasby, Richard & Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1957, s.v. 'reka'. Cf. also the corresponding noun 'reki', the Icelandic term for anything which washed up on land, including both driftwood and whales, and a commodity the entitlement to which was carefully stipulated in law, divided according to the discoverer of the *reki*, the owner of the particular strip of shoreline on which the *reki rak*, and other factors. Cf. Magnús Már Lárusson 1969.

108 Magnús Már Lárusson 1962:168, Nedkvitne 1993:196.

109 In both texts not in his own right but as the father of Þórólfr (né Hrólfr) Mostrarskeggr. *Landnámabók*, Hauksbók ch. 73, Sturlubók ch. 85, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:124; *Eyrbyggja saga* ch. 2, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:6.

Ǫrnólfr at all, only mentioning him in connection with his son Hrólfr, subsequently Þórólfr Mostrarskeggr Ǫrnólfsson, after the latter adopts Þórr as his *fulltrúi*. It is not impossible that Þórr has himself played a role in the hypothesised act of driving magic. He seems to have exerted a driving force on the *ǫndvegissúlur* which Þórólfr throws overboard on his approach to the coast of Iceland, in the mouth of Breiðafjörður, and which are promptly driven ashore on a peninsula Þórólfr accordingly names Þórsnes. Þórólfr explicitly states that Þórr himself is the force driving the *ǫndvegissúlur* through the water and directing their passage to where they beach:

Þórólfr son Ǫrnólfs fiskreka bjó í Mostr; því var hann kallaðr Mostrarskegg; hann var blótmaðr mikill ok trúði á Þór. Hann fór fyrir ofríki Haralds konungs hárfagra til Íslands ok sigldi fyrir sunnan land. En er hann kom vestr fyrir Breiðafjörð, þá skaut hann fyrir borð ǫndvegissúlum sínum; þar var skorinn á Þórr. Hann mælti svá fyrir, at Þórr skyldi þar á land koma, sem hann vildi, at Þórólfr byggði; hét hann því at helga Þór allt landnám sitt ok kenna við hann. Þórólfr sigldi inn á fjörðinn ok gaf nafn firðinum ok kallaði Breiðafjörð. Hann tók land fyrir sunnan fjörðinn, nær miðjum firðinum; þar fann hann Þór rekinn í nesi einu; þat heitir nú Þórsnes.<sup>110</sup>

Þórr has thus, according to more than one tradition, acted as the supernatural agent driving objects through the sea and ashore (perhaps, if we need delve into the ontology of the conception, because he was the deity assigned as the personification of tidal energy).<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the episode described in *Eiríks saga rauða* in which

110 *Landnámabók*, Hauksbók ch. 73, Sturlubók ch. 85, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:124-5, cf. *Eyrbyggja saga* ch. 4, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:7-8 for another, more expansive version of the same anecdote. The Melabók redaction of *Landnámabók* omits this anecdote.

111 See Perkins 2001 (especially chapter one) for a more in-depth discussion of appeal made to the supernatural to influence wave and wind power, and Þórr as the deity medieval Scandinavians turned to with respect to such matters. An example of an Icelandic tradition indicated Þórr as a patron of seafarers is that of Helgi inn magri: 'Helgi var blandinn mjök í trú; hann trúði á Krist, en hét á Þór til sjófara ok

Þórhallr *veiðimaðr* appeals to Þórr to provide him and his fellow Vinland explorers with food, when they find themselves short on provisions, and the subsequent appearance of a dead whale washed up on the beach, attests to Þórr's sometime role as the supernatural agent in a magical ritual aimed at driving whales ashore.<sup>112</sup> When we consider the attested Icelandic method of driving whales ashore by throwing stones into the water, alongside conception that peculiarly-shaped stones, so-called 'thunderstones',<sup>113</sup> are thrown to earth by Þórr, we may not be going too far to take this as the missing causal link explicating the manner in which Þórr beaches whales (and perhaps then also fish).<sup>114</sup> Clearly this hypothesis rests on a good deal of speculation. Þórr himself assumes the role of a kind of fisherman (or perhaps whaler) in the mythological tradition which describes him attempting to hook and land Jǫrmungandr, the *miðgarðsormr*. It does not take too much of a stretch of the imagination to conceive of Jǫrmungandr as a kind of monstrous whale. Hymir, the giant who is persuaded by Þórr to row him out in his boat to catch the Jǫrmungandr, is himself clearly portrayed as a whaler, catching two on the same voyage which Þórr ultimately hijacks for his own purposes.<sup>115</sup> We will return to the magically-induced

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harðræða.' ('Helgi held very mixed beliefs; he believed in Christ but invoked Þórr on sea voyages and fishing expeditions') *Landnámabók*, Sturlubók ch. 218 (ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:250), 'Hann var mjök blandinn í trúnni; hann trúði á Krist, en þó hét hann á Þór til sáfara ok harðræða ok alls þess, er honum þótti mestu varða' ('He held quite a mixture of beliefs; he believed in Christ, but all the same he invoked Þórr when before sea voyages and fishing expeditions and in all affairs over which it seemed to him Þórr gave his protection'), Hauksbók ch. 184 (ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:253). Helgi also consulted Þórr concerning which stretch of coastline he should settle upon sighting Iceland (much like Þórólfr Mostrarskeggr), and (whether due to maintaining good relations with the supernatural sphere or not) has good fortune in his economic affairs, in any case with respect to the growth of his herd of pigs (ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:250-2).

112 *Eiríks saga rauða* ch. 8, ed. Jansson 1945:65-6 from AM 557 4to Skálholtsbók 33r-33v. Discussed further below.

113 Sw. *thornkile*, *thorensten*; No. *torelod*; Da. *tordenkile* cf. Almqvist 1974.

114 Alternatively the thunder- and more generally weather-god may influence the wind and tide directly to drive the animals up onto the beach.

115 In stanza 21 it is stated 'Dró mærr Hymir móðugr hvali einn á ǫngli upp senn tvá' ('Great Hymir pulled up a whale on his hook, and then another'), and in stanza 26 Hymir asks Þórr, as they row in to

beaching of whales later.

The *Kristinn rétr* section of the Icelandic law-code *Grágás* stipulates which food was permissible to eat during particular fast days. Here there is a clear distinction made between on the one hand the flesh of particular animals considered equivalent to meat, including not just reindeer and other deer but also polar bears and other bears, but also the meat of specific sea mammals—walrus and seal—and on the other avian and mammalian meat considered equivalent to fish. Into the latter category falls, notably, besides 'Fogla [...] þa er a vatni fliota',<sup>116</sup> whale meat: 'þat a maþr oc at eta. ef hann fastar. fiska allz kyns. oc hvala. aþra en rosmal oc sel. þat scal eta þa er kiot ætt er. Ros hval scal eta. oc ná hval. oc ravþ kembang.'<sup>117</sup>

Also from *Landnámabók* we have the tradition of Ásólfur alskik. Wherever Ásólfur settles, the river or stream which runs by his house teams with fish, invoking the envy and spite of his non-Christian neighbours, who on repeated occasions drive him from his homestead, until he finally settles at Kirkjubólstaðr:

Ásólfur hét maðr. Hann var frændi Jörundar í Gørðum; hann kom út austr í Ósum. Hann var kristinn vel ok vildi ekki eiga við heiðna menn og eigi vildi hann þiggja mat at þeim. Hann gerði sér skála undir Eyjafjöllum, þar sem nú heitir at Ásólfsskála enum austasta; hann fann ekki menn. Þá var um forvitnazk, hvat hann hafði til fœzlu, ok sá menn í skálunum á fiska marga. En er menn gengu til lækjar þess, er fell hjá

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shore with the catch of whales (but a distinct lack of Jormungandr), "Mundu um vinna verc hálf til við mik, at þú heim hvali haf til bæiar" ('You will have half the fruits of our labour, I the other, in return for carrying the whales to the farm'), *Hymiskviða* 26, ed. Neckel 1983:93. The verb used here to describe the act or technique of catching both whale and *miðgarðsormr* is, quite naturally, one that expresses a tractive action: *draga*. 'Dró diarfliga dáðraccr Þórr orm eitrfán upp at borði' ('Bold Þórr quickly pulled the poisonous serpent up onto the deck'), *Hymiskviða* 23, ed. Neckel 1983:92.

116 *Grágás*, *Kristinna laga þátr*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen 1852:34.

117 *Grágás*, *Kristinna laga þátr*, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen 1852:36, trans. Dennis, Foote & Perkins 1980:50. See Dennis, Foote & Perkins 1980:50, footnote 94, for speculation on what species the terms *hrossvalr* and *rauðkembangr* may refer to.

skálunum, var hann fullr af fiskum, svá at slík undr þóttusk menn eigi sét hafa. En er heraðsmenn urðu þessa varir, ráku þeir hann á brutt ok vildu eigi, at hann nyti gœða þessa. Þá færði Ásólfur byggð sína til Miðskála ok var þar. Þá hvarf á brutt veiði ǫll ór læknum, er menn skyldu til taka. En er komit var til Ásólfis, þá var vatnfall þat fullt af fiskum, er fell hjá skála hans. Var hann þá enn brutt rekinn. Fór hann þá til ens vestasta Ásólfsskála, ok fór enn allt á sǫmu leið.<sup>118</sup>

While there is no explicit indication that Ásólfur makes use of magic, there is once again reason to suspect that, like the priests of later Icelandic folk tradition, and presumably in a similar manner to Þuríður *sundafyllir*, he has actively brought about desirable economic circumstances for himself—here a local, abundant source of food to exploit—by resort to magic. The other possibility is that we are meant to infer that the economic abundance enjoyed by Ásólfur wherever he makes his home is a gift bestowed by God upon a man who is described at the conclusion of the tale as 'the holiest of men'.<sup>119</sup>

An episode from the *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups ǫnnur* describes how two Christians row out to fish, twice landing what is described as 'heilagr fiskr', and on both occasions the fish slips away again, the first time due to the fishing line snapping. They then decide to appeal to a kind of divine intervention, 'inn sæla Þorlák byskup' (and via him presumably God's agency), to help them catch the same fish again, promising that if they succeed they will donate part of their catch to the poor:

Síðan hétu þeir á inn sæla Þorlák byskup, at þeim skyldi aftr koma þat, er týnt var, ok

118 *Landnámabók* (Sturlubók redaction) ch. 24, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:62, 64. Cf. Hauksbók ch. 21, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:63, 65.

119 '[...] ok er hann enn helgasti maðr kallaðr.' ('and he is thought the most fortunate of men') *Landnámabók*, Sturlubók ch. 24, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:64.

sungu fimmtán sinnum *Pater noster*, ok hétu þeir at gefa fátækum mönnum af veiði sinni Þorláki byskupi til þakka. Tekr hann þá inn þriðja öngul ok lét þann fyrir borð, ok beit fiskr á, þegar er þess mætti fyrst ván vera, ok þurfti þá báða til, áðr sá yrði dreginn.<sup>120</sup>

This practice of promising an offering of part of one's catch or haul from a hunting expedition is of course very similar to that which pertained in 'pagan' Scandinavian and Sámi relations with the supernatural within the economic sphere. One obvious difference is that the food offered does not 'go to waste', being donated to hungry mouths rather than to an inanimate (yet animistically conceived) idol. This was naturally a crucial and fundamental distinction in the eyes of the Church, not least because it left the Church itself with fewer paupers' mouths to feed.

Thereby the offering takes on the substance of an act of compassion and Christian generosity. Except, of course, that it is not as altruistic a gesture as that, since the offering is only made conditionally in return for the temporal, earthly economic remuneration received by the offerer. To receive a payment for one's good deeds in life in the hereafter was one thing; earthly gain consistent with Christian teaching, and it is therefore tempting to read a narrative like this as reflecting a syncretism of a popular approach to persuading supernatural powers to intervene in economic affairs, with the 'pagan' object of sacrifice, the idol (*sieidi*, *høgr* etc.) substituted with a beneficiary approved by Christian ideology, and the supernatural intercessor (the spirit immanent in the *sieidi*, the *ármaðr*/*spámaðr*) naturally replaced by a Christian bishop.

A clause in the Icelandic law code *Grágás* attests to an obligation to give to the needy, stipulating that part of a catch of fish landed on a fast day or Sunday be given

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120 Ed. Guðni Jónsson 1953, vol. II:210-11.

to paupers:

Þat er mellit vñ drottins daga veiþi all. oc messv daga veiþi. þar scal gefa af inn .v. hlvt. oc hafa gefit a .vij. nottvm envm næstvm. fra þvi er veitt er. Þat scal gefa innan hreps maunvm. þeim er eigi gegna þingfarar kaupi. Ef maþr gefr eigi sva. oc verþr hann sekr vñ þat .iij. morkvm. sa a sok er vill.<sup>121</sup>

Although the text of *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups 9nnur* does not state that the two men were fishing on a fast day, the offer they make to donate part of their catch in return for being allowed the opportunity to land the catch in the first place (after their initial attempts seem to suggest that higher powers are against their being able to), seems to reflect the same principle of Christian charity, and could potentially be a 'heretical' interpretation of the same principle according to the causal logic of the belief, carried over from the non-Christian religion which predated the conversion era.

The tradition surrounding the figure of Galdra-Antoníus, mentioned earlier in the discussion of *seiðr* used to bring about bad weather at sea, also ascribes to him an instance of *seiðr* used to catch fish. Antoníus, after years spent working malicious acts of magic upon the poor of his district, who he has caused to lose their way and fall to their deaths from cliffs (presumably into the sea), has apparently become infirm and paranoid to the point that he dares not put to sea nor even to wade further out into the surf than to his ankles. Perhaps he is afraid that the men he has brought to their deaths have become *draugar* and will seek vengeance. In any case, Antoníus must still eat, even if he has lost the nerve to fish by conventional methods. 'Þá tók hann það ráð að hann renndi færi ofan fyrir Grímseyjarbjarg þar sem sjór féll upp undir; þangað seiddi

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121 *Grágás, Kristinn rétt* ch. 8, ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen 1852:25-6.



hann fiskana með fjölkynngi og dró þá upp á bjarg.<sup>122</sup>

A tradition current in the nineteenth century, which perhaps sheds some light on the manner in which Ásólfur alskik's neighbour may have imagined he came to be blessed with a stream full of fish wherever he made his home, is the tradition of Api á Apavatni, of whom it is told that:

Þegar Api bjó á Apavatni var galdramaður einn við Þingvallavatn; hann seiddi allan fiskinn úr Apavatni upp í Þingvallavatn. Þetta líkaði ekki Apa og seiddi á móti, en silungurinn snéri allur móti Þingvallavatni og rann nú á sporðinn til baka. Af þessu segja menn að allur silungur í Apavatni komi upp á sporðinn. Þar er enn silungsveiði.<sup>123</sup>

The explicitness of this account clearly stands in contrast to what is at most intimated in the tradition concerning Ásólfur, which in the terms in which it is couched seems concerned with stressing that as a Christian pioneer Ásólfur is deserving of economic prosperity, whatever its source or the manner of its acquisition, and his neighbours' covetousness of the same only reflects badly upon them.

The opening chapter of the fantastical *Gríms saga loðinkinna*—in common with the traditions of Galdra-Antoníus and Kotkell and his family in *Laxdæla saga*, and those of the priests Einar and Göldrótti who each 'seiðir að sér hval'—recounts a tradition in which acts of *seiðr* as weather magic (here, as is typical, a snowstorm) and *seiðr* used to acquire food are ascribed to one and the same magician.<sup>124</sup> More than in the other traditions, the two acts of magic are here united in one and the same episode, and indeed seem to have a direct causal connection. As in the tradition of

122 'Galdra-Antoníus', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:590.

123 'Api á Apavatni', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. II:84.

124 Einar and Göldrótti will be discussed below.

Þuríðr *sundafyllir*, the ecological and economic context of these acts of magic is a *hallæri* in Hálogaland. Grímr has therefore headed north along the coast of Finnmörk, in search of economic resources. He comes to Gandvík,<sup>125</sup> where, in contrast to the dearth of food in Hálogaland, he and his two companions find fish in abundance—but not for long. A blizzard blows up in the night, and come morning the bay which had teemed with fish the day before is found to be empty. It subsequently transpires that their disappearance has been brought about by an act of *seiðr* perpetrated by a *troll*. The economic, geographical and environmental context of the scenario is set out in detail as follows:

Þat bar þá til sem oftár, at hallæri mikit kom á Hálogaland. Grímr loðinkinni bjóst þá heiman ok fór á ferju sinni við þriðja mann. Hann helt norðr fyrir Finnmörk ok svá austr til Gandvíkr. Ok er hann kom í víkina, sá hann, at þar var nógr veiðifangi. Setti hann þar upp skip sitt ok gekk síðan til skála ok kveykti upp eld fyrir sér.

En er þeir váru í svefn komnir um nóttina, vöknudu þeir við þat, at kominn var með svartahrið. Svá mikil grimmd fylgdi veðri þessu, at allt sýldi, bæði úti ok inni. Um morguninn, er þeir váru klæddir, gengu þeir út ok til sjóvar. Sáu þeir þá, at á burtu var allr veiðifangi, svá at hvergi sá staði. Þóttust þeir nú ekki vel staddir, en ekki gaf á burtu. Gengu þeir nú heim til skála ok váru þar um daginn.

Um nóttina vaknar Grímr við þat, at hlegit var úti hjá skálanum. Hann spratt upp skjótt ok tók øxi sína ok gekk út. Hann hafði ok með sér sem ávallt endrarnær orvarnar Gusisnauta, er Ketill hængur, faðir hans, hafði gefit honum. En er hann kom út, sá hann tvær tröllkonur við skip niðri, ok tók í sinn stafninn hvár þeira ok ætluðu at hrista í sundr skipit.<sup>126</sup>

125 Cf. Hermann Pálsson on the geographical and legendary referents of Gandvík, Hermann Pálsson 1997:28-31, 164.

126 *Gríms saga loðinkinna* ch. 1, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:186.

Grímr and the *tröllkonur*, who are sisters, then exchange verses. One states: 'fædd var ek norðarla, / Hrímnis dóttir / ór háfjalli',<sup>127</sup> congruous with prevailing mythological and popular ideas of the origins and home of the variously named creatures conventionally classified as 'giants'. Origins in the north and in the mountains could also be taken to indicate that the sisters and their father are of Sámi ethnicity.<sup>128</sup> Grímr threatens them that he will 'vǫrgum senda víst til bráðar',<sup>129</sup> a choice of figurative imagery quite fitting for a story taking place in Norway, where wolves were endemic; wolves were a threat to domesticated livestock but especially to wild and semi-domesticated reindeer, so this threat might be particularly apt directed at people of Sámi origins, and seen in the context of the *trollkona's* response, would be an appropriately like-for-like threat to damage the opposing party's base of economic resources—resources which are, as the text makes plain, the pretext for Grímr and his companions' journey north into what would have been culturally Sámi territory. The *trollkona* Kleima recites the following lines, boasting of the denial of said resources to the interlopers, by means of an act of tractive magic directed at the fish in the bay: 'faðir okkarr / burtu seiddi / báru hjarðir. / Skuluð aldrigi, / nema skǫp ráði, / heilir heðan / heim of komast'<sup>130</sup> The attempted destruction of Grímr's ship would further rob him of the means to exploit these resources.

As well as visualising a magical, and here monstrous, root cause of economic dearth, as with the traditions of 'Mjólk seidd af Íslandi' (etc.) discussed above, the story of Grímr's encounter with the *tröllkonur* in Gandvík also presents an instance of economically oriented *seiðr* performed in a time of economic hardship, a *hallæri*, which is a pattern of circumstance and response which we will meet again when we

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127 *Gríms saga loðinkinna* ch. 1, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:187.

128 See Hermann Pálsson 1997:29, 165.

129 *Gríms saga loðinkinna* ch. 1, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:187.

130 *Gríms saga loðinkinna* ch. 1, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:188.

examine the tradition of the *seiðr* ritual performed in similar circumstances at Herjólfssnes, Greenland, in the following chapter. In *Gríms saga* the act is attributed to a *troll*, perhaps a representative of natural forces, and more abstractly still of the caprice which bears upon human affairs and specifically human economic endeavours; further, this act of magic is presented as motivated by spite—the *tröllkonur* make clear (in a verse) their approval of the fact a human will suffer want as a direct corollary of their own family's gain. Grímr is the human victim and is opposed to, and subsequently defeats, these spirits of nature. As we will see, the tradition of the *seiðr* ritual at Herjólfssnes is, by contrast, carried out by a representative of a human community, with whom we are invited to sympathise (irrespective of whether they are 'pagans'); this *seiðr* practitioner is not presented as a *troll* (a term by which a female practitioner of magic is described in another saga tradition, that of the rival *seiðkonur* Geirríðr and Katla in *Eyrbyggja saga*);<sup>131</sup> indeed the act of *seiðr* is carried out effectively in a state of harmony with (and the direct help of) a representative of an other and in principal opposed religious tradition, itself a nemesis of trolls and 'pagan' spirits of nature of all kinds.

The *tröllkonur*, as noted, attempt to wreck Grímr and his companions' ship. This act of sabotage is not effected through the medium of a magically-induced storm—as is the case in the traditions of the shipwreck of Þórðr Ingunnarson in *Laxdæla saga* and Galdra–Antoníus who sought to drown Jón Halldórsson on another voyage across Breiðafjörður—and is more reminiscent of the attempt of two other *tröllkonur*, Heiðr and Hamgláma, who attempt to sink a ship by more direct, albeit still very much magically-empowered means (*hamskipta*) in the episode from *Friðþjófs saga ins*

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131 *Eyrbyggja saga* chs. 15–16 and 20, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:26–30, 50–4. See Ármann Jakobsson 2006 for a discussion of the various referents of the word *tröll*, and what, taken together, they tell us about precisely the qualities the word could be used to signify.

*frækna* discussed above.

## Whales

Finally, medieval and post-medieval traditions relate instances of whale meat acquired by means of *seiðr*. Whales, accidentally stranded or actively caused to beach by human intervention, represented a far from insignificant element of the diet of the settlers of the Scandinavian Atlantic diaspora, particularly as a supplement to, and sometimes substitute for, the regular source of subsistence consisting of foods derived from animal husbandry (dairy and meat). Whale meat became crucial when for one reason or another the farm failed to produce food, or failed to produce a sufficient quantity to sustain the community through the long winter.

We have already encountered priests who practice magic, and *seiðr* used to secure a supply of food in times of economic hardship. A tradition which combines these two motifs is that of a priest named Einar. Furthermore he acquires food by magical manipulation of the weather, conjuring a storm.

Það var eitt sinn þá hart var í ári að prestur vildi seiða hval að sér á Skinnastaðareka [...] En er prestur kom á rekalandið tók hann það ráð að hann lét grafa sig í sand niður við sjó og hafði þar hjá sér Þórarin son sinn að gæta þess ef hann sæi skýja nokkuð til hafsins því veður var heiðríkt. Prestur starfaði að fjölkynngissærinum niður í sandgröfinni um hríð, en Þórarinn gætti veðrabrigða. Að lyktum sá hann að syrti til hafs og segir föður sínum. Lét prestur þá nokkurs af von og gól enn ákafar galdrana. Því næst dró ský upp í hafi og bakka mikinn; rak þegar á æsings norðanveður með brimróti miklu. Kastaði þá hval miklum upp. Við það skreið prestur úr sandinum og bauð mönnum að skera hvalinn, lét til sín heim flytja og sjóða áður aðrir fengi neins af neytt. En prestur lét niðurstetning sinn éta fyrsta bitann og datt hann dauður niður, át

sjálfur síðan og sakaði ekki. Kvað hann þá öllum óhætt að neyta. Sakaði hann og öngan mann síðan. Er talið að mjög byrgi hann sveit sinni með hval þessum ókeypis.<sup>132</sup>

The priest here fulfils a conventional role of providing for the poor, and does so by resort to magic, described with the terms *seiða* and *galdur*—the latter referring specifically to the singing of magical songs—and yet Einar cannot be thoroughly altruistic since the 'guinea pig' whom he selects and who dies from eating the first piece of meat, which is evidently 'unclean' in some respect, is a pauper.<sup>133</sup>

The idea of whale meat as unfit for human consumption is also found in the Icelandic tradition recorded in *Eiríks saga rauða*, in the episode of Þórhallr *veiðimaðr* and his appeal to Þórr to provide food on behalf of an expedition of Norse Greenlanders to parts of North America. Like Einar they boil the meat, but unlike the meat he cooks, the meat from the whale beached (allegedly) by Þórr, while it does not kill anyone, does make all who eat it ill:

litlu sidar kom þar hvalr ok drifv menn til ok skaaru hann . enn þo kenndu menn eigi huat hual þat. var. karl kunni mikla skyn a hualnum ok kenndi hann þo eigi. þenna hval sudu matsveinar ok atu af ok vard þo aullum illt af. þa gengr . þorhallr at ok mællti . var eigi svo at hinn raud skeggiadi vard driugarr enn kristr . yduar þetta . hafda ek nu firir skalld skap minn er ek a orta um þor fulltruan . sialldan hefir hann mer brvgdizt [...] ok er menn uissu þetta villdv avnguir nyta ok kaustudu firir biavrg ofan ok sneru sinv maali til guds miskunnar . Gaf þeim þa uut at roa ok skorti þa eigi birgdir.<sup>134</sup>

132 'Einar seiðir að sér hval', ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. I:513.

133 'Það var eitt sinn þá hart var í ári að prestur vildi seiða hval að sér á Skinnastaðareka [...] Lét prestur þá nokkurs af von og gól enn ákafar galdrana.' Further concerning *galdur* see footnote 40 above.

134 *Eiríks saga rauða* ch. 8, ed. Jansson 1945:65–6 from AM 557 4to Skálholtsbók, folios 33r–33v.

Meat procured with the aid of a pagan 'demon', as Þórr was considered to be in a Christian frame of interpretation,<sup>135</sup> was naturally considered unclean. Recalling the clauses in *Grágás* concerning which animals it was permitted to eat the meat of, one might ask whether, by contrast, it was in later popular tradition, as against earlier scribal tradition, considered morally and spiritually legitimate to eat the meat of a whale brought to land by supernatural means.

These traditions of tractive magic employed to procure food must then be seen as resolving an area of uncertainty or insecurity (and consequent anxiety and tension) in the popular understanding, vis-à-vis the prescribed code of Christian conduct, by rubber-stamping meat procured in this way as approved by the Church by virtue of it being procured by priests on behalf of the impoverished community (in keeping with the Church's role as administrator of social welfare). These were priests skilled in magic, arguably channelling a comparable supernatural force to that tapped by Þórhallr *veiðimaðr*, and yet the ends to which these supernatural forces were applied—serving the duty of compassion to the poor which it behoved Christians to perform—legitimizes them, at least in the popular conception. And whale meat, according to *Grágás' Kristinn réttir*, was a meat which was itself approved by the Church for consumption on fast days.<sup>136</sup>

Another priest of whom it is suspected, by the crew of the ship on which he is travelling, that he has brought about bad weather at sea, is described in the tale 'Göldrótti presturinn'. The crew are so convinced of this that they go so far as to

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135 Cf. the tradition of Óláfr Tryggvason's encounter with an alias of Þórr (going by the moniker 'hit rauða skegg', 'red-beard') onboard a ship off the Norwegian coast, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd Munk Snorrason*, Flateyjarbók redaction ch. 51; redaction edited from AM 53 fol., AM 54 fol., AM 61 fol. and AM 62 fol. ch. 61 (ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 2006:289).

136 With the exception of the three species of whale (if they are indeed all whales according to modern taxonomy) stipulated.

attempt to throw him overboard, but to no avail; each time they discover they have inadvertently thrown a member of their own crew into the sea instead.<sup>137</sup> Now fearing him, the crew hand him control of their ship. He saves the ship from being wrecked, evidently with the help of a book retrieved from a cave within a mountain.

The book which Göldrótti retrieves from the cave must presumably be a book of magic, consistent with traditions of priests who seek magical knowledge via so-called 'black books'. That he retrieves the book from a mountain is interesting when considered in the light of ideas of esoteric and numinous knowledge, including knowledge of magic, being acquired from the inhabitants of mountains, spirits immanent in mountains, as is the case in the case of Sámi *noaidit* who consult with *basse almmái* ('holy mountain-men'),<sup>138</sup> and of figures such as Bárðr Snæfellsáss who resides in Snæfell and from time to time imparts knowledge to local people. Bárðr himself is a student of Dofri, another mountain-dweller. According to another tradition Dofri fosters the future king Haraldr hárfagri. Another example of the type is Esja, foster-mother of Búi, the protagonist of *Kjalnesinga saga*, and synonymous with a volcanic mountain and described by their enemies as a *tröll*,<sup>139</sup> a nature her name hints at.<sup>140</sup> Búi also has dealings with Dofri and his daughter Fríðr.<sup>141</sup>

To Göldrótti is also ascribed the beaching of a whale on his strip of shoreline.

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137 'Göldrótti presturinn', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:619.

138 Olsen [after 1715] 1910:22-3, referred to by the term 'passe alma' (SáN *basse almmái*); cf. Leem 1767:415, citing an anonymous author whose information may derive from outside of Finnmark and the North Sámi cultural collective, discussing *sáivoalmmái*, with the element *sáivu* (*sáiva*, *sájva*) here more or less analogous to *bassi*, denoting sacrality.

139 'Þorsteinn mælti þá: "Nú er við raman reip at draga, er bæði er at eiga við hund og tröll' ('then Þorsteinn said "Now we have our hands full having to deal with both a dog and troll') *Kjalnesinga saga* ch. 3, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson 1959:11.

140 Sharing a name with the mountain Esjuberg: 'Þar var ok kona sú, er hét Esja, ekkja og mjök auðig. [...] settist hún þá at Esjubergi.' ('There was also a woman there called Esja, a widow and very wealthy. [...] at that time she dwelt at Esjuberg.') *Kjalnesinga saga* ch. 2, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson 1959:5.

141 *Kjalnesinga saga* chs. 13-14, ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson 1959:29-34.



It is possible, given the control of the weather with which he is otherwise associated, that the manner in which Göldrótti was believed to have caused this whale to beach was the same as that employed by his fellow clergyman Einar. Like Einar, he feeds the local poor with the meat, such that the beaching of the meat alleviates economic hardship in the winter season, and this happens (presumably on all occasions by Göldrótti's hand) several winters in succession:

Um vetturinn rak hval á reka hans. Sögðu menn hann mundi hafa seitt hann. Margir voru þurfandi og kom því mikill fjöldi fólks er báðu hann að gefa sér og selja, en hann skipti upp öllum hvalnum og gaf hann allan og tók ekkert til sín af honum. Annan og þriðja vetrana ráku hvali, en hann gaf þá alla, en þegar þeir fátæku og hungruðu báðu guð að launa honum fyrir gjafir sínar sagði hann: “Guð blessi ukkur [*sic.*], en fyrirgefi mér.” Hafði prestur þessi verið hugljúfi hvers manns og dó í góðri elli.<sup>142</sup>

According to another tradition a whale is washed ashore by the agency of the Devil, after a priest promises the latter his son if this prayer were to be answered. In a common motif found in various popular traditions of encounters with the Devil, including those of the so-called 'black school' (*svarteskolen*), the priest tricks the Devil, his son having been already dead when he was pledged in payment:

Það er sagt að séra Hálfðan hafi einu sinni lofað kölska að fá honum son sinn sem þá var nær því fullorðinn ef hann færði sér hval. Morguninn eftir er hvalur rekinn á rekanum prestsins. Rétt þar eftir rær prestur fram á sunðið og hefir son sin á bátnum. Kom þá upp úr sjónum grá hend loðin og grípur drenginn út og hverfur hann þar. Litlu síðar finnast mannsbein rekin hjá hvalnum. Segir þá prestur: “Það var ekki von

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142 'Göldrótti presturinn', ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:619-20.

hann vildi skrokkinn þegar hann fékk ekki sálina.”<sup>143</sup>

Having surveyed Scandinavian traditions of tractive magic, the following chapter will examine some Sámi traditions of analogous acts of magic for purposes of comparison.

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143 'Hvalurinn', ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III:537. In a footnote it is remarked that 'Þó að þessi sé ekki greinilega sögð sýnist auðráðið að sonur prestsins hafi verið dáinn þegar prestur lofaði kölska honum.' ('Although it is not explicitly stated, it seems clear that the priest's son was already dead when he promised his corpse to the devil.'), *ibid.*

## CHAPTER TWO

**Tractive magic in a broader perspective: Sámi comparanda**

We will now survey some examples of acts of magic performed by Sámi magicians to acquire food, commensurable with the Scandinavian examples discussed above. These include examples of whales drawn ashore, fish drawn into nets and to a given lake or fishing ground, and to summon reindeer to a given place.

In Book Four of Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* Adam describes the Skritefingi, 'skiing Finns' (i.e. Sámi),<sup>144</sup> of Wärmilani. Amongst other matters he discusses their use of magic, as follows:

Eos adhuc ferunt magicis artibus sive incantationibus in tantum prevalere, ut se scire fateantur, quid a singulis in toto orbe geratur; tunc etiam potenti murmure verborum grandia cete maris in littora trahunt, et alia multa, quae de maleficis in Scriptura leguntur, omnia illis ex usu facilia sunt.<sup>145</sup>

It is reasonable to assume, even if these 'sea monsters' (*cete maris*, cf. Lat. *cētus*) are conceived of as fantastical creatures by the author,<sup>146</sup> that if the statement has a basis in popular conception and magical tradition (as opposed to classical learned geographical tradition), it is whales that are the object of the magic.<sup>147</sup>

Although much of what Adam reports is clearly apocryphal, and other

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144 *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, book 4, chs. 24-5, ed. Schmeidler 1917:255-6.

145 *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, book 4, ch. 31, ed. Schmeidler 1917:265-6.

146 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3Dcetus>.

147 See now Perkins 2000, especially pp. 225-8.

statements are couched in pejorative terms, at least some of what he reports appears consistent with what other traditions report about Sámi magic, and likewise Scandinavian magical practices. His statements concerning the subsistence strategy of the Skritefingi also seem congruous with what we would expect for this culture in this environment, in this era, e.g.:

In eisdem montanis agrestium ferarum tanta est multitudo, ut plurima pars regionis ex solis vivat silvaticis. Ibi capiuntur uri, bubali et elaces sicut in Sueonia [...]<sup>148</sup>

In another medieval source for historical or pseudo-historical lore concerning Scandinavia and its peoples, *Historia Norwegie*, there is mention of tractive magic employed by Finni (i.e. Sámi) to attract variously 'desirable objects' and fish:

Et de longinquis prouinciis res concupiscibiles miro modo sibi alliciunt, nec non absconditos thesauros longe remoti mirifice produunt.<sup>149</sup>

This may correspond to the location and retrieval of objects from distant locations described in later traditions, as for instance attempted (albeit unsuccessfully) by the *semsveinar* enlisted by Ingimundr Þorsteinsson to undertake such an errand in an episode in *Vatnsdæla saga*.<sup>150</sup> The use of magic in the context of fishing activity which the same text describes seems to have more in common with the examples enumerated in the foregoing of tractive magic employed by Scandinavians:

Item dum Finni unacum christianis gregem squamigeram hamo carpere attemptassent,

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148 *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, book 4, ch. 32, ed. Schmeidler 1917:266-7.

149 Ed. Ekrem & Mortensen in Ekrem, Mortensen & Fisher 2003:60.

150 *Vatnsdæla saga* ch. 12, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1939:34-5.

quos in casis fidelium pagani perspexerant, sacculis fere plenis unco suo de abyssis attractis scapham cum piscibus impleuerunt.<sup>151</sup>

A later tradition recounts how a *noaidi* named Linke-Ola employs magic to both increase his own prosperity and hinder that of others. It appears that Ola is extorting a kind of tax from the local people, demanding a share of the fishermen's catch, and if they are not forthcoming he would impose a forfeit. This accords to some extent with what we know of the fiscal relationship between *noaidit* and the communities they served:<sup>152</sup>

Der var i gamle dager en gammel noaide, som var en overmåte stor noaide, og han het Linke-Ola. Han pleide å fiske på sjøen og undertiden å få litt fisk, sild og annen fisk. Engang hadde hans granner drept en liten hval og holdt på å belegge den i land. Da kommer Linke-Ola roende; han hadde en båt som lignet en lappepulk, og den het Gushærga (Piss-Okse). Linke-Ola spør: "Har I en lot til mig i denne fisken?" De sa: "Vi gir dig ikke lot i den; for det er vår egen døde fisk." Da begynte Linke-Ola å ro med båten sin rundt om (hvalen), og da han hadde rodd tredje gang rundt, sa han: "Havets døtre (havfruene) får dele eders fisk." Da slet hvalen båndene av og satte ut gjennom fjorden.

Så kom Linke-Ola hjem og reiste med kona si ut på sjøen; de begynte å fiske, og det var så lite fisk, at de ikke fikk kokning engang. Der var sild og fisk i mengde i en fjord; men det var ikke der hvor Linke-Ola bodde. Han reiste for å hente sig sild og fisk hjem og kom til den fjorden hvor der var sild, og han gandet.<sup>153</sup> Silden og

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151 Ed. Ekrem & Mortensen in Ekrem, Mortensen & Fisher 2003:62.

152 Cf. Olsen's informants' statements characterising the relationship as one of a 'protection racket' in which the *noaidit* exploited people's fear of the harm they could inflict on people and livestock to extort material goods from them (Olsen [after 1715] 1910:13, 49-50, 67, 89-93, 97).

153 'gand' here in Qvigstad's Norwegian translation denotes Sámi magic, as distinct from Norwegian *gand* or Old Icelandic *gandr*. In the original Sámi version of the tale related to Qvigstad, the verb used

fisken drog bort derfra og gikk til den fjorden hvor Linke-Ola bodde, og det blev storfiske. Linke-Ola hadde ingen med sig uten kona; med henne måtte han ro på sjøen og fikk litt fisk, og han gandet så at andre folk næsten ikke fikk noget. Hans kone het Gedomelli.<sup>154</sup>

The second episode described here is very much reminiscent of the Scandinavian traditions describing how a magician has transferred or attracted fish from one (distant) fishing ground or lake to another where s/he is in a better position to exploit them, especially those of *Api á Apavatni* and *Þuríðr sundafyllir*, 'Seiðkerlingar í Kaupmannahöfn' and the *seiðr* episode in *Gríms saga loðinkinna*.

Court records for cases brought against alleged witches in the county of Finnmark purport to document Norwegian and Sámi magicians who have performed similar acts of magic to Linke-Ola. Both Lilienskiold and Leem mediate these traditions, the latter deriving the information he presents from either Lilienskiold's text or his source, *Finmarkens Amts Justitsprotokol for 1692* (the Finnmark county court records for the year 1692).<sup>155</sup> At this point in their respective texts both authors present examples of magical activity in Finnmark, not confining themselves to instances in which the practitioners were from a Sámi background by for instance segregating the records according to the race of the accused. The witch trials in

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is *noaidot* (ed. Qvigstad 1929b:354), 'practise sorcery, witchcraft; (trans[itive]) bewitch, put a spell on (people or animals), use sorcery to bring some evil (obj[ect]: ghosts, devils, disease etc.; upon people or animals' (Nielsen 1938:115).

154 'Noaiden Linke-Ola', ed. Qvigstad 1929b:353-5. This tradition originates in Lyngen in the north-eastern part of the modern Norwegian county of Troms.

155 Lilienskiold [1690s] 1998, Leem 1767:452-63. This section of Leem's text recounts the magical practices of Norwegians—principally women, who were labelled as witches during the Finnmark witchhunts and trials of the seventeenth century—as opposed to Sámi, although some Sámi women were certainly among those tried as witches. The account is derived either from the court records of these trials, or the syntheses of these court records presented by Lilienskiold either in his 'Speculum Boreale' or in the text known as 'Findmarchens beskrifuelsis'. Leem himself states his source to be (in part) what 'Af gamle Manuscripter erfares' ('can be gleaned from old manuscripts') Leem 1767:452.

question took place in the seventeenth century, the last-reported—that of Anders Poulsen—in the early 1690s, contemporary with Lilienskiold's term of office as *amtmann* in Vardøhus *amt*.<sup>156</sup> Leem relates these traditions as follows:

Trold-Qvinderne have ogsaa i deres Bekiendelse tilskrevet sig adskillige andre selsomme Bedrifter. Eens Udsagn var, [...] At hun havde leveret en ung Karl en linnet, samt en anden en ulden Traad, som de skulde binde til deres Fiske-Krog, og forsikkert dem om, at de derved skulde have god Lykke til Fiskefangst. Een foregav, at hun havde redet paa en Feye-Kost over Søen fra Vasøe til Kiberg, da en anden, som var i Følge med hende, reed paa et sort Faar. Een sagde, at hun samt flere Trold-Qvinder havde ved deres Trold-Kunst fordrevet Fiske fra Landet, under hvilken udædiske Giernings Iverksettelse, en af dem fremviiste sig i en Størje (et Slags store Fiskes) Skikkelse, en anden udi sin egen Gestalt, værende iførte sort Trøye, blaat Boffel-bays Skiort, en rød med Guld-Kniplinger ziret Hue, samt hviid Hals-Klud, og siddende paa Vandet, omgiven med Tang rundt om, og holdende i Haanden en Tare-Leg (saa kalder man et tykt Tang, som noget ligner en tyk Ride-Pidsk), hvormed hun jagede. Een bekiendte sig at have udrettet samme i en Hval-Fiskes Skikkelse. Een foregav, at hun kunde gaae paa Havet med sin Spand i Haanden, og derudi opsamle Fiskes Lever.<sup>157</sup>

There were yet other magical means of appropriating food besides those methods entailing traction. The same seventeenth-century source cited above also describes a magical phenomenon known from pre-modern Scandinavian folklore, the 'buttercat' (*smørkatta*), in appearance like a grey ball blown along the ground, which a person would employ to steal butter from a neighbour's dairy, as was believed. Leem

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156 1684-1701.

157 Leem 1767:458-9.

describes both this and other activities familiar from wider European witchcraft traditions, involving cats of a more literal (albeit still very much supernatural) variety than the buttercat:

Een sagde, at hun kunde omskabe sig til en Kat, til hvilken Kunst den Onde maatte skaffe hende Katte-Blod at smørre sig, samt Katte-Skind at bedække sig med. Om en anden sagdes der, at hun udi sin Forstue i en Tønde herbergerede en hende saa tilhaande gaaende Kat, at hvorhen den blev sendt, derfra skaffede den, hvad hun forlangede. En anden blev beskyldt at eye en graa, saa kaldet Smør-Kat, der tilbragte hende fra andre Folkes Spise-Kammer, saavel som og fra andre Steder, hvad hun vilde have.<sup>158</sup>

There are also Sámi traditions of the buttercat, probably loaned from Scandinavian neighbours.<sup>159</sup>

A peculiar detail in the tradition of Linke-Ola is that his boat 'resembled a Sámi reindeer sled'. The accounts of Scandinavian witches just discussed include statements that a witch could walk on water.<sup>160</sup> Perhaps this *noaidi* was conceived of as having a similar ability, namely to drive his sled across water as he did across snow.

On land *noaidit* on occasion exerted tractive power over reindeer, for the purposes of shooting wild reindeer, taming wild reindeer to become farmed herds, and locating and calling back a stolen ('tame' i.e. semi-tame) reindeer herd. The latter feat is accomplished by an individual known as 'Spå Lappen' Kutavuorok, whose nickname along with the manner in which he achieves the act of magic in question—namely by

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158 Leem 1767:459-60.

159 Tatár 1987.

160 'Een foregav, at hun kunde gaae paa Havet med sin Spand i Haanden, og derudi opsamle Fiskes Lever.' ('One claimed that she could walk on the sea with her bucket in her hand and gather the livers of fish into it.') Leem 1767:459.



enlisting the assistance of *tjensteandar* (i.e. attendant spirits)—we may reasonably assume, marks him down as a *noaidi* (notwithstanding that it was not uncommon for Sámi who were not *noaidit* to prophesise by means of the use of a magic drum or another tool). According to Lars Levi Læstadius account of a tradition concerning Kutavuorok:

Jag har i min Barndom hört en historia om den förut omtalta Spå Lappen *Kutavuorok*; När Vargane en gång hade förskingrat en rik Lapps Renhjord, hade *Kutavuorok* skaffat till baks hela Renhjorden genom sin magt öfver de döde. Han hade nemligen bedt hela Lappfamiljen lägga sig och sofva i godan ro. Sjelf hade han lagt sig bredevid den rika Lappens Äldsta doter. Spå Lappen började då att hvisla; straxt infunno sig hans tjensteandar som ett starkt susande, så att *Kutavuorok* sjelf tillsade dem, att de icke skulle trampa ned folket, som låg i kåtan. Han gaf dessa andar ordres, att hämta till baks Renhjorden, hvilket äfven skedde. 3 gånger efter hverandra hörde folket i kåtan, huru Renhjorden kom som ett urväder sättandes till kåten; men först 3<sup>dje</sup> gången var det den verkliga Renhjorden, som hade infunnit sig vid kåtan.<sup>161</sup>

Just Knud Qvigstad, in his collection of Sámi oral traditions from Varanger, presents a tale concerning a *noaidi* who regularly hunts reindeer on a mountain called Akkoberget, reverently returning their antlers to the same spot, within an antler-fence. The *noaidi* instructs his son to carry on in his footsteps, stressing he is to replace the antlers each time. When the son comes to Akkoberget and shoots one of the reindeer,

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161 Læstadius 1997:162. Of some relevance to the earlier discussion of tractive weather magic and the frequent attribution of both powers (control of the weather and magically-empowered acquisition of food) to one and the same magician—or in this case order of magician—Læstadius reports that 'det varit en Folktro, att Spå Lappar kunnat åstadkomma hvad slags väder som häldst genom den ofvan omtalade Trollknuten.' ('It was a popular belief that Sámi prophets could bring about all kinds of weather by means of the aforementioned magical knot.') The *trollknut* was an object that allowed control of the wind, see *ibid.*, *passim*.

he finds that, uncannily, the rest of the herd instead of bolting approach him, unafraid. The more he shoots the tamer the wild reindeer become. Spooked, the man draws a cross in the rock face. Three *noaidit* who subsequently visit the site intending to reap the easy pickings there are turned to stone, and reindeer never again congregate there.<sup>162</sup>

Evidently the reindeer's unnatural docility has been engendered by the old *noaidi*'s reverent habit of returning the antlers of those slaughtered to the earth at the site of their death, in a manner typical of Sámi religious observances attested in the centuries prior to that in which the oral tradition in question was recorded. The son is clearly not at ease with the *status quo* he inherits, in spite of the economic bounty to be reaped (in return for continued observance of his father's ritual practice); he seems uncomprehending of and rattled by the behaviour of the reindeer, in spite of his father's attempt to explain, prior to his death, the system of supernatural exchange by which they present themselves for slaughter. Rather than being thankful for the ease with which he is able to shoot the reindeer, embracing his good fortune, he is unnerved. 'Da tok redsel mannen; han brydde sig ikke om renene eller om hornene, men skrev et stort kors i fjellveggen på Akkoberget.'<sup>163</sup> Ill at ease with receiving the economic benefits bestowed, presumably—or so the boy in any case seems to conclude—by a numinous power with which it is inappropriate or downright dangerous to associate, he reacts negatively, by reaching for the cross in its function as an apotropaic tool with which to neutralize the unsettling supernatural presence.

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162 'Villrenene på Akkoberget' (ed. Qvigstad 1927:459-61). Qvigstad, who earlier undertook investigations into the location and circumstances of *sieidit* in Norway (Qvigstad 1926), notes that 'Akkoberget er en gammel offerplass ved munningen av Neidenfjorden. Horngjerdet sees ennu tydelig' ('Akkoberget is an ancient sacrificial site by the mouth of the Neiden fjord. The antler coral can still be clearly seen'), ed. Qvigstad 1927:461.

163 Ed. Qvigstad 1927:4. Then the man became afraid; he didn't care about the reindeer or the antlers, but drew a large cross on the rock face on Akkoberget.'

Encapsulated in the son's reaction is the schism between two generations and two religious traditions, one of which unequivocally opposes the other. The father, the *noaidi*, subscribes to the indigenous religious tradition according to the rules of which one sought assistance in economic (and in other) affairs by appeal to supernatural entities. To judge from his reaction to the reindeer—viz. the resources supplied by the supernatural entities with whom his father has been engaged in a partnership—the son does not subscribe to, or in any case does not condone engagement with, the same religious tradition; on the contrary, his carving of a cross at the site indicates his allegiance to the Christian tradition.

According to the pattern attested extensively in the accounts of indigenous Sámi religious tradition compiled by Isaac Olsen and Knud Leem, a descendant will inherit the tutelary spirits of her or his ancestor.<sup>164</sup> This may extend to the contracts existing between an ancestor and spirits immanent in particular landscape features, which are phenomenologically distinct from (whilst bearing a number of common traits as) tutelary spirits which attend to one individual at a time.

In carving the cross, the son appears to alienate the supernatural entities, to judge from subsequent events: three *noaidit* are petrified upon seeing the cross—a demonstration of the power of Christianity over the indigenous religion, and also perhaps a figurative expression of how the new religion made the old one, and its functionaries, things of the past, relics of an earlier era. Christianity effectively suppressed the practice of indigenous magical techniques, or at best drove the practitioners underground, ultimately making them redundant for a lack of public clients. Since the time the *noaidit* were turned to stone 'har det ikke mere vært villren

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164 Olsen [after 1715] 1910:22, 31, 47, 54, 55, 59, 60, 62, 66, 68, 72, 73, 76, 79, 82; Leem 1767:415, 422.

på Akkoberget' ('there haven't been any more wild reindeer on Akkoberget').<sup>165</sup> The supernatural powers with which the *noaidi* had enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership have been alienated, and Christianity has achieved its victory over the indigenous non-Christian religion.

The taming of the wild reindeer, so the narrative appears to suggest, has come about via the agency of supernatural powers immanent in and/or with jurisdiction over Akkoberget.<sup>166</sup> Akkoberget would appear from its name and circumstance—'Han lurte sig op på høiden' ('He crept up onto the bluff'), there is a rock face (*fjellvegg*) there—to be a mountain or bluff. We know that particular mountains and standing stones (several of which are said to stand at the site, see above) were considered holy by Sámi communities and individuals, shown reverence and offered sacrifice on the basis that they were the loci of attendant spirits possessing influence over local circumstances including the provision of wild game (fish in lakes, reindeer in the environs of the site). It is clear that Akkoberget has been made the object of sacrifices from the antler fence to be seen there right up to the time the tradition was related in 1918 by Isak Persen Saba; Qvigstad (who himself investigated the site) notes signs of it having been used as a place of sacrifice in former times.<sup>167</sup>

The father's stipulation with respect to the site and the reindeer shot there, that "hornene må du legge i horngjerdet, der hvor du ser det trengs",<sup>168</sup> a ritual he himself has observed on his own visits to Akkoberget,<sup>169</sup> reflects common practice of offering

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165 'Villrenene på Akkoberget', ed. Qvigstad 1927:461.

166 A tradition recounting two men's expedition to hunt wild reindeer describes by contrast the taming of a wild reindeer bull evidently by means of magic performed by a *noaidi*—while the text is not explicit in this respect, the implication is clear. Qvigstad lists the narrative under the heading 'noaidekunster' ('To villrenjegere', ed. Qvigstad 1928:491-3). Otherwise this tradition constitutes a further example of the supernatural taming of wild reindeer.

167 Qvigstad 1927:461.

168 'Villrenene på Akkoberget', ed. Qvigstad 1927:459.

169 'hornene la han alltid igjen i horngjerdet på Akkoberget.' ('he always put the antlers back inside the

to the sacrificial 'idol' (*sieidi*) a sacrifice of part(s) of the animal(s) bagged, by way of repayment, payment in kind for the animals which the supernatural power has made available for the individual or community to hunt and, as exemplified most explicitly in the case of this tradition, enabled to catch. That the son does not then observe the stipulated ritual offering must be a further reason for the subsequent cessation of assistance in ensuring that there are game to hunt on Akkoberget and that hunting trips to Akkoberget are successful due to the unnaturally docile behaviour of the wild reindeer there.<sup>170</sup>

This pattern of a failure to offer a due and promised sacrifice to a *sieidi* after it has fulfilled its role by ensuring that an economic endeavour (hunting reindeer, fishing in a given lake) is predisposed to success and a bountiful return in terms of

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antler coral on Akkoberget') ed. Qvigstad 1927:459.

170 According to other Sámi traditions, tame reindeer whose owners treat them badly may resolve to abandon them and 'løpe ut i villmarken som villren' ('ran off into the countryside like wild reindeer'). (One such tradition, 'Asjesj-ædne og Ludesj-ædne', ed. Qvigstad 1928:229, is related by an informant from Balsfjord in Troms; another, 'Njavesj-ædne og Asjesj-ædne', ed. Qvigstad 1929a:385-7, from Lyngen, to the northeast of Balsfjord.) These are talking reindeer, who discuss with another herd the differing treatment they receive at the hands of their respective owners. The second tradition also indicates them to be not only tame but exceptionally compliant: 'Hver kveld kom de for å la sig melke' ('Every evening they came and allowed themselves to be milked'), *ibid.*

These traditions exemplify the need to treat tame animals with a modicum of respect in order to maintain this compliance, compliance which facilitates their economic exploitation by their owners with the minimum of effort. To avoid alienating them their owners must keep to a certain pattern of behaviour, albeit perhaps not as strictly delineated as the etiquette required in relations with *sieidit*. The reindeer demonstrate free choice in the matter of whether to continue to be exploited. Wildness is here the state in which an animal exercises autonomy over its gifting of its economic value to a person. The same is exemplified in traditions (discussed below) where wild reindeer which have presented themselves to a hunter vanish from sight or run away when the hunter mentally retracts an earlier offer to make a votive offering by way of 'payment' for this opportunity—except that in these instances the ultimate power of granting the economic opportunity, it is clearly implied, lies with a *sieidi*.

That a great many *sieidit* in Finnmark and Varanger bore names incorporating the element 'passe alda' (sometimes *aldo*) 'holy reindeer doe', or simply *alda* (*aldo*) (Olsen [1715] 1934, *passim*; Paus [1715] 1934, *passim*; Leem 1767:431-41, *passim*) may indicate that some *sieidit* (i.e. the spirits immanent in the landscape features in question), specifically *sieidit* who receive offerings of reindeer and in return grant offerers fresh opportunities to exploit wild reindeer as an economic resource, are themselves conceived of as zoomorphic.

game caught, resulting in misfortune for the person who has broken his promise or failed to observe reverence and make the due sacrifice, is exemplified in a number of Sámi oral traditions.

Under the heading 'Offerstener (sieider)', Just Qvigstad collects together a dozen narratives from informants from different parts of Finnmark and north-eastern Troms (including several each from Kautokeino and Kvenangen, others from Loppa, Rafsbotn in Alta, Tana, and Polmak) which describe ad hoc relations with *sieidit* in which people make, but subsequently renege on, a pledge to make a sacrificial offering should they receive the *sieidi*'s help in catching fish or reindeer.

Two of these narratives describe scenarios in which an offering of part of the catch (head, guts) is promised to nearby *sieidit* if a successful catch of halibut is subsequently made. In both cases this comes to pass, and in both cases the beneficiaries fail to make the promised sacrifice. The upshot is in one case that a sudden storm blows up and the beneficiary of the *sieidi*'s help is almost drowned; in the other case 'Før de blev ferdige til å sloie kveiten levnet den op og begynte å røre på sig; så rente den nedover den sleipe fjæren like til sjøen, og før guttene nådde til å hugge den fast, var den alt i vannet og svømte igjen ut på dypet. Guttene blev stående igjen å se på at kveiten reiste.'<sup>171</sup>

According to another tradition, an old man who 'var meget heldig til å få fisk i en innsjø', suffers the efforts of a young companion to ruin the good relationship which he has with a *sieidi* situated beside said lake (the old man habitually smears the fat of the fish he catches on the *sieidi*).<sup>172</sup> The younger man does this by taking the *sieidi*—a round white stone—rowing out with into the middle of the lake and throwing it overboard, while the older man is asleep. However, 'Da han stod op, gikk han ut for

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171 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:513.

172 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:507.

å se, hvordan det var utenfor, og han så at stenen var på samme plass'.<sup>173</sup> Nevertheless, things are not altogether as they were before after the young man's act of desecration:

Den dag fisket de, men fikk ikke mange fisk, nettop så meget at de kokte, og fiskene var meget magre, så de fikk meget lite fett. Men den gamle mannen gjemte fettene i koppen sin. Den unge mannen skjønte det meget godt; han la sig til å sove; for han visste hvad den gamle manne skulde. Da denne var kommet tilbake, gikk den unge mannen ut og rodde hen til stenen; han tok den i båten og bandt en annen stor sten riktig fast til den med tæger, rodde midt ut på sjøen og kastet den der, kom tilbake og la sig. Da det var blitt morgen gikk han ut og så at stenen igjen var på samme plass. Han blev meget forundret, med tidde stille.

Den dag fisket de også, men fikk ingen fisk, skjønt de så riktig mange, når de kastet noten. Men når noten kom i land, fikk de ingen. Da sa den unge mannen: "Din gud er nok dårlig." Den gamle mannen skjønte at hans gud var utskjemt, og han blev så sint på kameraten sin, at han vilde drepe ham. Den unge mannen måtte flykte, jo snarere, dess bedre. Den gamle mannen blev alene igjen med noten og båten; men han fikk så mange fisk at han ikke kunde gjøre dem til.<sup>174</sup>

This tale exemplifies the manner in which a *sieidi*, if treated with irreverence—even irreverence perpetrated by a third party and not the *sieidi*'s principal client—will cease to reward the client with economic commodities. This is essentially the same pattern of a potentially mutually beneficial partnership between human and *sieidi* alienated by a failure to observe a pre-established etiquette.

Another tradition describes a similar scenario where a young man named Morten, evidently acting out of sheer flippancy, attempts to sink a *sieidi*—once again a

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173 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:509.

174 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:509.

round white rock—which miraculously reappears the following day. Morten has earlier failed to repay the same *sieidi*'s provision of two reindeer calves, and is thus firmly characterised as an irreverent young man:

Han tenker: nu skal jeg bære den stenen der ut i vatnet, og så gikk han og tok stenen og kastet den ut i vatnet. Selv gikk han avsted og vandret en dag og kom igjen til den samme sieiden. Da ser han at den hvite stenen igjen ligger oppe på sieidestenen. Han tok igjen den hvite stenen, bar den til vatnet og kastet den enda meget lenger. Så gikk han avsted og vandret igjen et døgn. Da han vendte om, kom han til den samme stenen. Da ser han at den hvite stenen igjen ligger oppe på den samme stenen.<sup>175</sup>

Finally he provokes the *sieidi* to the point that he is visited in a dream by an elderly man—who must be taken to be the *sieidi* (i.e. the spirit immanent in and contactable via the physical object of the rock—both are denoted with the term *sieidi*, and are effectively identical)<sup>176</sup>—who issues Morten with a warning about his disrespectful treatment of the rock, and its potential consequences:

Så la han sig, og søvnen tok ham. Da drømte han at en gammel gubbe kom til ham og sa: "Nu får du ikke røre stenen mer. Hvis du nu enda tredje gang bærer den ut i vatnet, går det dig ikke godt." Da han hørte det, rørte han ikke stenen mer; han gikk sin vei.<sup>177</sup>

The scenario of a spirit immanent in a rock approaching a human via the medium of a

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175 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:517.

176 The anthropomorphism of the *sieidi*—or perhaps more properly speaking its animistic nature—is further suggested by its comparison to the head of a man: 'Den hvite stenen er så stor som et menneskehode.' ('the white stone is as big as a man's head') ed. Qvigstad 1928:517.

177 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:517.



dream to protest against being treated aggressively and irreverently is also described in Icelandic tradition, in the tale of Koðrán Eilífsson and his *spámaðr*.<sup>178</sup>

These two traditions also articulate a schism between the older and younger generations, most explicitly in the first, where it is the older man who observes proper reverence and etiquette, while the younger profanes the *sieidi*.<sup>179</sup> Again in the second it is expressly a young man who abuses the *sieidi*.<sup>180</sup> This likely reflects a general trend within Sámi (as in other cultures') religious life in the conversion and post-conversion period for the younger generation to abandon the customs of the older generation, and furthermore show contempt for and actively disdain ancestral traditions. The period of religious conversion, when such schisms came about not only between father and son, but also neighbours and perhaps even siblings and husbands and wives, must be assumed to be the earliest and most major moment of religious schism, although with traditions certainly living on into the post-conversion era in a more covert and insular form,<sup>181</sup> there would presumably have been occasions of later schism. The motifs found in the two traditions discussed above, along with that of 'Villrenene på Akkoberget' (which highlights a schism between father and son with respect to relations with *sieidit*), may represent expressions of the initial, traumatic and revolutionary schism of religious conversion. Evidence of and discourse concerning intergenerational schism will be taken up in more depth later.

### **Spiritual etiquette: the human-spirit contract reneged upon**

178 As related in *Dorvalds þáttur víðförla* I. The same spirit (here *ármaðr*) is described more summarily in *Kristni saga*.

179 'Det var en gammel mann som var meget heldig til å få fisk i en innsjø. Han tok med sig en ung mann som visste at han hadde en sieide.' ('There was an old man who had a lot of luck in fishing in a certain lake. He took along a young man who knew that he had a *sieidi*.') ed. Qvigstad 1928:507.

180 'Det var en gut som het Morten [...]' ('There was a lad named Morten') ed. Qvigstad 1928:515.

181 Cf. traditions of *noaidit* practising into the nineteenth century discussed by, *inter alia*, Kjellström 1987, Lundmark 1977a, 1977b, 1983b, 1987; Pollan 1993:98-101.

Several other tales related by informants incorporated in Qvigstad's collection tell of people who pledge that, should they come across one or more wild reindeer and have the fortune of being able to shoot or otherwise slaughter them, they will reward a *sieidi* located in the vicinity (and thus with the power to grant the request) with a sacrifice of part of the animal(s), typically the antlers. One such tradition, related by an informant in Kvenangen, is connected with Kvitebergneset:

Engang gikk en mann efter villren på Kvitebergneset. Da han hadd gått hele dagen og ikke funnet noen, lovte han at hvis han enda traff på én villren, vilde han gi hornene til Kvitebergkirken. Da han hadde gått en stund, traff han på to store villrenokser som hadde slåss så lenge at hornene var viklet i hverandre. Mannen kom ganske nær; da tenkte han på hvem av dem han nu skulde skyte. Han la da merke til at den ene som var størst, også hadde meget store horn. Da tenkte han: "Ikke gir jeg Kvitebergkirken noe; jeg får nu nok allikevel den ene." Som han tenkte det, skiltes renene fra hinannen og var som blåst vekk for hans øine.<sup>182</sup>

A later and more or less identical tradition from Kautokeino is connected with a certain Ole Isaksen:

Det var en mann som het Ole Isaksen; han kokte kaffe; da tenker han: han skal prøve om der er gitt den onde så stor makt at han formår noe. Han gikk da til Lykkestenen og sa: "Hvis der nu kommer to villrenokser, skal jeg skyte dem og gi den ene til stenen, forat renlykken skal vare." Da han hadde sagt det, møttes to villrenokser fra to kanter. De stanget hinannen, og hornene blev sittende så fast at mannen tenkte: de der slipper aldri løs. Han tok børsen og begynte å sikte og i det samme tenkte han: jeg gir ikke den stenen der noe, når jeg nu skyter de renoksene der. Da slapp renoksene

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182 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:513.

løs før han nådde til å skyte, og løp avsted og fór sin vei.<sup>183</sup>

Elen Ucce of Kautokeino relates a tradition (already discussed, above) exemplifying the same pattern of cause and effect in ad hoc relations between humans and *sieidit*:

Det var en gut som het Morten; han satt ved sieiden og laget et håndtak av renhorn til en kastetømme. Da tenkte han: han skal nu prøve om der er så megen makt i den stenen der at den formår noe. Da sa han til stenen: "Hvis der nu kommer to rener, skal jeg slakte dem til stenen for å bli rik." Da han hadde sagt det, kom to renkalver dit. Det var hans farbrors kalver. Da sa Morten: "En lort gir jeg dig." Da han sa det, forsvant renkalvene.<sup>184</sup>

These tales spell out the system of exchange between human and *sieidi*, whereby if the prospective beneficiary went back on his pledge to make the due payment of sacrificial offering to the *sieidi*, even if he only revises his intentions in thought (unspoken intentions are evidently transparent to the *sieidi*), the *sieidi* would instantly withdraw the opportunity for economic gain it has gifted the human party, just as quickly as this opportunity was first presented upon the swearing of the initial vow of repayment.

Likewise, if one failed to make good on one's promise after having reaped the rewards presented by the *sieidi*, this would come back to haunt one, the short-term gains being recouped many times over by the *sieidi*. Wealthy individuals, possessing assets of their own, were particularly vulnerable (and perhaps seen as deserving) of such economic losses as a comeuppance for their stinginess with respect to the *sieidi*, as in the case of 'en rik fjell-lapp som het Klemet':

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183 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:515.

184 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:515-7.

Det var en rik fjell-lapp som het Klemet. Engang kom han til en sieide og så at der ved den var samlet svært mange renhorn. Da tenkte han: "Om jeg skulde få en villren, skulde også jeg gi sieiden noe." Nettop som han tenkte dette, fikk han se to villrensimler som kom løpende mot ham. Ofte stanser de for å se sig bak, og de stanset likeoverfor ham i samme skuddlinje. Han skjøt begge ihjel, flådde dem og gjorde dem til, men gav ikke sieiden noe. Siden gikk han og hentet kjøttet, kokte og satte det tillivs. Klemet var en svært rik fjell-lapp og hadde mange rener.

Næste år nettop på samme tid, da han med sin heim var i nærheten av sieiden, kom han hen til den, og da ser han i en avstand som skuddvidden for villren likesom et tett vidjekratt. Han tenkte at der skulde det ikke være vidjer. Han gikk da tit for å se, go se, femti okserener lå døde i en dunge, og deres horn så for ham ut som et vidjekratt. Da kjente han at det var hans okserener allesammen; men kroppene lå helt under sneen og ikke annet enn hornene såes. Renflokken var død, fordi han løi for sieiden og ikke gav den noe; for den som lover en sieide noe og ikke gir det, ham går det aldri godt.<sup>185</sup>

Note how Klemet's wealth is emphasised at the point in the narrative when he is described reaping economic benefit from the bagged game,<sup>186</sup> suggesting by this juxtaposition that he is guilty of greed in firstly asking for the *sieidi's* help in hunting a wild reindeer when he personally owns many (semi-domesticated) reindeer of his own, but compounding this act of greed by then failing to meet his obligations as recipient of the *sieidi's* economic assistance.

A comparable albeit more elaborate tradition demonstrates how sensitive *sieidit*

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185 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:507.

186 'Siden gikk han og hentet kjøttet, kokte og satte det tillivs. Klemet var en svært rik fjell-lapp og hadde mange rener.' ('After that he went and fetched the meat, boiled it and ate it. Klemet was a very rich mountain Sámi and had many reindeer.') ed. Qvigstad 1928:507.

can be with respect to the nature and value of the offerings made to them. Certain parts of an animal—the antlers of a reindeer, the fat and guts of a fish—were considered to be of an acceptable value. In the following tradition the *sieidi*, having already been cheated of a due reward of fish guts by its client, expects butter in compensation, and accepts no substitutes; lard offered in its place will not suffice:

I gamle dager var der i Enare en mand, som dyrkede en sten ved stranden. Når han drog ud på fiske, lovede han at smøre stenen med fiskeindvold. Fik han 10 fisk, så skulde han ofre til stenen én indvold, og fik han 100 fisk, så skulde han ofre 10 indvolde. En nat drog han ud på notfiske. Han kastede sin not i sjøen ret ud for afguden og sagde til denne: »Får jeg nu stor fisk her, så skal jeg smøre dig«. Da han drog noten på land, se, da var der bare stor fisk i den; alligevel undlod han at smøre stenen, da han så, at det var fed fisk, men drog hjem med sin fangst [...] En tid efter reiste han atter på fiske. Han kastede mange gange noten sin ud og drog den på land, men fik ikke en eneste fisk. [...] Da blev han arg og sagde til afguden: »Nu vil jeg ikke ofre dig noget for fremtiden, siden jeg intet får«, og så gik han hen for at rive ned stenen. Men da han kom til sin gud, se, da blev han hængende fast ved den.<sup>187</sup>

The age of the protagonist in this tradition is not indicated; those who get on the wrong side of *sieidit* in similar traditions often young. He already has a reputedly good symbiotic relationship with the *sieidi*—the root of his misfortune is that he becomes greedy and then when as a consequence he suffers bad fortune in a subsequent fishing expedition he characterises his dearth of luck as the *sieidi*'s shortcoming, thereby inverting the true state of affairs, that he has brought about the *sieidi*'s wrath, alienated

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187 'Manden, som var sin god utro (Fortælling fra hedenskabets tid)' ed. Qvigstad & Sandberg 1887:115-7. The informant is a schoolteacher in Utsjok. The events are supposed to have taken place in Finnmark (*ibid.*:117, note 1).

it and the assistance it gives him, by failing to stick to his side of the bargain he himself brokered, to reward the *sieidi* with an offering should he make a good catch. The tale illustrates a pattern whereby the human party either wilfully or by dint of egocentrism—crucially, mistaking himself as the served, the *sieidi* the servant, rather than the two as equal parties—becomes muddled with respect to the play of cause and effect, as if the *sieidi* had spontaneously failed its obligations, without legitimate grounds for doing so (viz. having been short-changed itself), when in fact it is the man himself who has broken the terms of the deal and the fair exchange.

It is an old woman who communicates to the man who has upset the *sieidi* the latter's demands apropos a reconciliation:

Kjærringen sagde: »Dersom du gir det løfte, at du vil smøre stenen to dage og to gange om dagen, dagsiden (formiddagen) med smør og natsiden (eftermiddagen) med fløde, så slipper du igjen løs«. Han lovede at gjøre det og slap løs. Manden gik nu for at smøre stenen, men vilde ikke spandere smør, tog derfor kjødfedt og smurte den ind dermed, blev igjen hængende og holdtes således fast i tre dage. [...] Kjærringen sagde nu igjen til ham: »Smører du nu ikke stenen, førend du atter drar på sjøen, så er jeg sikker på, at du blir (omkommer)«. Endda smurte manden ikke, men drog på fiske. Da blev der så stærk storm, at båden kantrode og manden druknede.<sup>188</sup>

Thus once again it is the older generation who possess knowledge of how to interact with *sieidit* in a fitting and respectful manner when younger people either through their own ignorance, spite or miserliness contrive to arouse a *sieidi*'s displeasure or negate a *sieidi*'s goodwill. The old woman has perhaps determined the *sieidi*'s will by means of an act of divination, after the man's wife approaches her for help—although

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188 'Manden, som var sin god utro' ed. Qvigstad & Sandberg 1887:115-7.

this is not explicitly stated in the informant's narrative—or she has experience of previous dealings (and misdealings) with *sieidit* and as a consequence knows a proven method of how to go about pacifying a *sieidi* which has been slighted and begun to exhibit signs of expecting redress.

### **Prescribed conduct vis-à-vis supernatural powers**

The degree to which *sieidit* are portrayed as the wronged parties in dealings between humans and *sieidit* may reflect a revisionist narrative of earlier circumstances, to judge from statements indicating a more egalitarian relationship whereby if a *sieidi* failed to reward its client with success in economic endeavours, the latter was justified and within his/her rights to abandon or even vandalise the *sieidi*.<sup>189</sup> None of the post-conversion era traditions portray *sieidit* which fail either through some putative ill will or lack of power to meet their client's economic needs or desires. Therefore none of the clients in these traditions have cause to turn their back on the *sieidit* from whom they have sought assistance. It may also be the case that the earlier accounts of Sámi dispensing with the services of particular *sieidit* may constitute the propaganda of missionaries, given that it accords very well with the Mission's principle aim, viz. for Sámi parishioners to reject and turn away from 'idols' in the realization that they were in fact impotent.

On the whole these traditions seem more to express a negative view of those

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189 These statements are found chiefly in late (i.e. post-conversion era) narratives. Besides the tradition of 'Manden, som var sin god utro' may be mentioned 'Bæive-Olav vil ikke mer gjøre sieiden til lags' (ed. Qvigstad 1927:464-9): 'Olav hadde lenge tjent en hellig sieide, og han var en god villrenskytter; men tilsist fikk han ikke mange villren, og så blev han betatt av utilfredshet, og på grunn av utilfredsheten begynte han å bære hat til sieiden.' ('Olav had for a long time patronized a holy *sieidi*, and he was a successful hunter of wild reindeer; but after a while he didn't bag many deer, and was filled with dissatisfaction, and on account of this began to despise the *sieidi*.) Olav subsequently razes the *sieidi*.

who behave with a lack of proper etiquette towards *sieidit*, with those who consequently get their just deserts. Qvigstad's and Sandberg's informants likely fall into an elderly demographic—those with the leisure to tell tales to collectors, while younger family members attended to daily chores<sup>190</sup>—and perhaps for that reason their emphasis on the wisdom of the elderly and the importance of showing due reverence to tradition and to inherited customs is that much more pronounced. While it is unlikely that there existed any living tradition of *noaidevuohta* at such a late stage, it is notable that *noaidit* who functioned as communities' counsellors, over and above their role as advisers and intercessors in supernatural affairs, i.e. a role also fulfilled by elderly members of the community, who typically assumed a role as the community's historians.<sup>191</sup>

An anecdote related by a reindeer herder named Isak Eira is by contrast an exemplification of proper, reverent, "fair's fair" conduct with respect to a *sieidi*. Isak asks a *sieidi* for help, wishing to travel with his reindeer herd unseen by others (his motivation is not explained but presumably this will be to his economic advantage). He promises an offering in return, the *sieidi* helps, and (in contrast to the traditions describing negative treatment of a *sieidi* and accordingly negative consequences) Isak thereafter makes good on his promise. He brokers the deal with the *sieidi* first verbally, pledging payment, confirms the agreement with himself (and his intention to honour it) non-verbally, then addresses the *sieidi* once again out loud, notably stressing that the endeavour is to be accomplished by him and the *sieidi* together, as a collaborative effort, rather than by the supernatural power on behalf of a supplicant human client: 'Da han drev flokken avsted, sa han enda ganske høit: "Nu skal skal du hjelpe mig,

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190 Hammond describes how Sámis expressed exasperation that von Westen expected them to spend their time being interrogated and preached to, when they had better things to be doing (Hammond 1787:260, Rydving 1995b:76–7).

191 Pentikäinen 2005c:388.



sieide, og nu driver vi to flokken så at hine folk ikke skal se den", og han drev den avsted.<sup>192</sup> There is thus a pronounced sense of equality not always present in such deals.

Interaction with the *sieidi* is then made up of several ritual elements: a firm and clear vocalized statement of assistance required and offerings promised, the degree of faith the man has in the *sieidi*, the quality of the promised offerings ('gode drammer', 'et godt og friskt tobakksblad'), and the subsequent delivery of the promised offerings (the *sieidi* having by now granted the assistance requested). The anecdote is concluded with an explicit setting out of the rules of human–*sieidi* relations:<sup>193</sup>

Han sier at der er særdeles megen hjelp i sieiden, og den hjelper mange ganger, når en trenger den til hjelp; men en skal tro, og en skal gi, hvis en lover noe. Hvis en ikke gir, går det en dog ikke godt siden; en kommer i forlegenhet, når en siden kommer til det stedet eller der i nærheten, hvor en var før dengang da en bad sieiden om å hjelpe sig. Og derfor pleier folk å gi sieiden det de lover, og da går det dem alltid godt også senere, når de er i nærheten av sieiden, og de er også meget flinke til å finne bortkomne rener, de folkene.<sup>194</sup>

One may also cite here the pronounced display of reverence shown by Aslak Loggje, who upon arriving at Girjegalsa, the site of a *sieidi*, 'dressed up and spoke in a whisper when he walked past.'<sup>195</sup> And likewise 'When he went into (the summer site) from Roggilhullet, he dressed up and wanted everyone who was travelling with him to do

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192 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:519.

193 Isak Eira of Kautokeino, the informant who has communicated the anecdote to Qvigstad (or to one of the those who collected oral traditions on his behalf) is evidently the same indefinite 'en mann' whom the anecdote describes (ed. Qvigstad 1928:518–21).

194 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:519.

195 'Når Aslak Loggje drog til sommerplassen og nådde til Girjegaisa, pyntet han sig og talte hviskende, når han gikk forbi.' ('When Aslak Loggje went to the summer campsite and reached Girjegaisa, he wore his best outfit and spoke in a whisper when he passed by'), ed. Qvigstad 1928:515.

the same. Then he went to Lykkestenen and greeted it and poured *brennevin* over it.<sup>196</sup>

Furthermore, even domestic animals were required to show reverence to a *sieidi* (also called Onnegædge, 'the lucky rock'—perhaps then identical to the site and *sieidi* of Roggilhullet) at the site Roggildalen, on pain of forfeit of the lives of their master's reindeer (just as the wealthy reindeer herder Klemet is 'fined' by the *sieidi* to whom he appeals and then fails to honour his promise to): 'The dogs are not allowed to bark when they drive the herd in to sleeping place in Roggildalen. At that time snowdrifts or ice tend to fall down from the mountains which lean together. If the dogs bark, ice falls down and kills the reindeer.'<sup>197</sup>

### Theft and punishment

It was also considered a 'punishable offence' to take from a *sieidi* items earlier offered in sacrifice to that *sieidi*. Again there are several traditions recounting such acts of theft, by people who presumably did not see any harm in taking the objects nor expect any repercussions to arise from their actions. Some examples will now follow.

We have seen above that the antlers of a reindeer are considered a fitting offering to a *sieidi* for a catch of reindeer, even if the offering is ultimately not delivered as promised, and several authors and informants mention sacrificial sites littered with antlers offered in sacrifices in former times.<sup>198</sup> A man named Mattis Mattisen Hætta is said to have taken it upon himself to remove some antlers from such

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196 'Når han fra Roggilhullet gikk inn (til sin sommerplass), pyntet han sig og vilde at alle folk som var i følge med ham, skulde pynte sig. Så gikk han til Lykkestenen og hilste den og helte brennevin på den.' ed. Qvigstad 1928:515.

197 'Hundene må ikke gjø, når de driver hjorden inn til lægeret i Roggildalen. Da pleier snefonner eller is å falle ned ovenfra fjellene som bøier sig sammen. Hvis hundene gjør, faller is ned og dreper renene.' Qvigstad 1928:515.

198 See e.g. *Lilienskiold [1698] 1942:159*; post-conversion era investigations such as Qvigstad 1926, Vorren 1987; post-conversion era traditions documented by Qvigstad 1927:459, 1928:504–9, 512–5.

a site, and almost immediately regrets doing so, as the *sieidi* (evidently) asserts itself:

På baksiden (sydostsiden [*sic.*]) av Girunvarre er et stort berg, likesom et stort hus, bratt opover. Mattis Mattisen Hætta (det var min avdøde bestefars bror) gikk engang forbi der ok tok horn. Da blev han næsten vettskremt med dem; han begynte å bli likesom dåneferdig, og det sortnet for oiene hans. Han måtte vende om og bringe hornene tilbake til samme stenen.<sup>199</sup>

Similar tales are also told of people who take man-made objects—spoons made from reindeer antler, belt buckles—evidently left beside *sieidit* as offerings, and suffer a similar fate to Mattis:

Der var en pike; hun het Elen Marie. Hun var tjenestepike hos Aslak Loggje. Så gjætte hun ok kom til Sieidedalen til Sieidestenen og fikk se en meget vakker hornskje, Hun kunde ikke bare sig; hun tok skjeen og gikk. Da de var nådd hjem, blev hun syk og blev meget dårlig. Da sier Aslak Loggje: "Du har kanskje rørt liggende ting." Piken svarte at hun hadde tatt en hornskje fra Sieidestenen. Da bad Aslak Loggje henne bringe skjeen tilbake. Hun gjorde det, og da hun kom hjem igjen, var hun frisk.<sup>200</sup>

Here it is an older man who possesses the knowledge of how the young woman can avoid suffering further negative consequences as a result of her compulsive theft of the *sieidi*'s rightful possession. This speaks perhaps not so much of intergenerational schism as it does of youthful inexperience and inadvertent recklessness—the girl does not appear to mean any disrespect by her actions. At worst she is guilty of

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199 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:513.

200 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:517.

covetousness, and is punished accordingly by the *sieidi* from whom she steals in a way in some respects comparable to the punishment of thieves by Sámi and Scandinavian magicians including *noaidit* and Icelandic users of an amulet known as a *þórshamar*.<sup>201</sup>

A further tradition exemplifying the same pattern of 'crime' and punishment and thereby promoting proper and reverent treatment of *sieidit*, likewise describes the theft of valued objects:

Det var en mann som engang gikk til den samme sieiden;<sup>202</sup> han tok en meget vakker hornskje, som var meget pent utskåret, og den var meget pen, og han tok også en beltespenne av horn som var meget pen, og han gikk hjem. Men han fikk den første natten ikke fred til å sove. Så måtte han om morgenen da han stod op, gå og bringe hornskjeen og beltespennen tilbake, og da fikk han nok fred til å sove natten etter, og siden hadde han ikke mere lyst til å ta noe som han så ved sieidestenen.<sup>203</sup>

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201 Concerning *noaidit* who punish thieves see Olsen [after 1715] 1910:33: 'at giøre effter tiuffve, saa og at slaa Ild, som kaldis Haure Kodsk, og sender den i deris rompe paa dem som har staalet, saa de maa straxt komme springendis med kosterne i haanden og sige sig at have staalet det og straxt bekiende det, og enten sige hvor kosterne ere, eller og skaffe dem frem, og der som hand vild da icke slycke den Ild ud med sine ord igien, som hand til forn med ord haver den ud sendt, saa dør de mennisker strax eller og springer i siøen og vandene og drugner sig, thi den Ild kand icke heller udslyckis med vand, om End skjønt de gaar under vandet.' ('to go after thieves, for instance to throw fire, which is called *Haure Kodsk*, and send it into the backsides of those who have stolen, so that they must as once come running with the goods in their hand and say that they have stolen them and at once confess it, and either say where the goods are, or go and get them, and if he does not then want to extinguish that fire again with his words, as he has previously sent it out with words, then those people will die at once, or they will run into the sea and the lakes and drown himself, since the fire cannot be put out with water, even if it goes under the water.')

—note the palpably tractive effect of this act of magic, causing the thief to come running to the magician; Nielsen 1934:446 (s.v. 'juovsâtit'); Grundström 1943-4:99-100; traditions concerning the use of *þórshamrar*, and physical examples of the artefact, are presented by Maurer 1860:100-1; Jón Árnason & Ólafur Daviðsson 1898-1903, vol. IV:103; Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. I:431-2; Bø 1974:502-3; Ögmundur Helgason 1990:250-1.

202 A *sieidi* located by Qvigstad at Nordreisa in Sieidevage, NB not the *sieidi* described in the previous tale.

203 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:521.

In all cases thieves suffer illness, insomnia or other discomfort until they return the stolen objects.

### **Sacrifice made to 'churches' – instances of religious syncretism?**

Several of the traditions discussed above make mention of so-called 'churches', which are in fact large free-standing rocks likened in shape, and seemingly also function, to actual churches: *Ibba-gir'ko*, *Bah-njar-gir'ko* (the Kviteberg church or churches).<sup>204</sup> That these rocks, which are the object of sacrifice, acquired the appellation 'church', Norwegian *kirke*, North Sámi *gir'ko* (in the orthography used by Qvigstad), appears to be a case of an indigenous understanding of churches as recipients of sacrifice (an idea perhaps arising from an ethnocentric interpretation of forms of taxation such as tithes), and a consequent borrowing and transference of the word and concept of a church from the locus of Christian religious activity to the indigenous locus of religious activity, specifically sacrificial practices, the *sieidi*. Offering of sacrifice to churches and to their parish priests is indicated in Anders Poulsen's explanation of the symbols on the skin of his magic drum.<sup>205</sup>

Of *Ibba-gir'ko* it is said that 'Det er på avstand å se til som en stue eller kirke. Dette berg har de gamle lapper dyrket som en gud og har ofret til det rener og kreaturer. Derfor finnes det mange horn og ben der.'<sup>206</sup> *Bah-njar-gir'ko*, abbreviated to simply *gir'ko* ('the church'), 'er en fjellveg på Kvitebergneset. Langs denne fjellveg har vannet runnet og laget sådanne svarte bilder som er å se til som en dør og vinduer. Der i nærheten er også en stor sten, som er å se til som en prest. Den har hode som et menneske og hvit krave om halsen. Den pleide å kalles for Presten. Til de kirkene

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204 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:505, 511, 513.

205 Knag [1693] 1903:74; *FAJ*:74; Lilienskiold [1698] 1942:166; Lilienskiold [1690s] 1998:262-3, 270-1; Leem 1767:470.

206 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:505.

pleide folk før å ofre.<sup>207</sup> It would appear that it is the rock conceived of as 'presten' which is the second of the churches, alongside the more obvious candidate, the  *fjellvegg*.

Two narratives (already discussed) relate instances of sacrifices promised to these 'churches' but not subsequently delivered, respectively the head of a fish and the antlers of a reindeer. This demonstrates how one and the same  *sieidi* had 'jurisdiction' over both economic resources or spheres and could bestow upon a person the luck required to acquire them, in return for an offering. These  *sieidit* are described as being located on a peninsula, and accordingly they exert an influence over resources both on the adjacent patch of land and in the adjacent body of water, Kvitebergdypet.

### Summary

In summary we can say that where a particular magical technique was employed, or conceived to have been employed, by Sámi and Scandinavian communities to influence one's economic circumstances for the better, there were similarities but also differences in application and intended outcome, between the respective cultures and periods, and indeed from one instance to the next. In many cases the differences in application would seem to be conditioned by the immediate social, economic and local environmental and ecological factors at play. Nonetheless elements of magical technique recur to a sufficient extent that it seems reasonable to isolate—for the purposes of scholarly analysis—a discrete motif of a resort to tractive magic, as distinct from other types of magic such as that involving  *gand*.

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207 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:511. 'are a rock face on Kvitebergneset. Along this rock face the water has trickled and formed such black images as resemble a door and windows. In the vicinity of this there is also a large stone, which looks like a priest. It has a head like a person and a white collar around the neck. It was usually referred to as 'the Priest'. People were in the habit of sacrificing to these 'churches'.'

Likewise the respective communities had access to economic opportunities which in some respects differed, in others accorded. The similarities in application of magic to economic ends suggest that similar strategies and magical techniques were adopted in similar circumstances, and that these same strategies and techniques were adaptable to differing ecological conditions. This is also in keeping with the contingent and pragmatic nature of magical techniques, which may be said to persist because—besides other complex reasons—they are perceived to be proven efficacious, in part because they are adaptable to the various unforeseen scenarios one encountered in daily life.

It may of course be added that ideas about techniques of tractive magic are far from unique to the two cultures discussed; however my aim in the foregoing was to compare traditions of the use of such techniques in specifically these two cultures, in order to determine what common ground they share where the respective spheres of religious and economic activity interreact and catalyse one another.

It may be provisionally concluded that Sámi and Scandinavian traditions conceiving of the use of tractive magic for economic gain support the thesis that both cultures conform to a broader paradigm wherein a culture, by appeal to supernatural agency, via the intermediary of a communal representative (and sometimes by an individual for purely personal, rather than communal gain), seeks solutions to crises arising from the economic and ecological conditions to which it is subject. The apparent diachronic continuity and lateral distribution of these traditions, while problematic given the nature of the sources, suggest that these two cultures' shared common ground within the religious sphere, in that they seem to have conceived of acts and techniques of economically-oriented magic along very similar lines.

The remaining chapters will present a more in-depth case study of the kind of magic exemplified above: a literary description of a magical ritual referred to as *seiðr*, aimed at remedying an economic crisis and apparently incorporating a tractive element. Attempts will be made to contextualise this description in the social and economic circumstances to which the culture which transmitted this literature was subject, and thereby locate the description within a broader history of ideas of magic in the north. The crucial distinction between literary manifestations of such ideas in the era this literature was produced and transmitted, and ideas which may or may not have been part of the worldview of people living in the era depicted, can scarcely be overstressed.



## CHAPTER THREE

**The Norse frontier economy and its religious corollary**

In this chapter arguments will be put forward in support of the contention that we have good reason to regard *seiðr* as one element in a broader Arctic Norse hunting religion, and specifically a shamanism, or something closely analogous to a shamanism, which at the same time retains its own distinct ethnocentric character, as indeed do all circumpolar shamanisms.

This argument will be based principally on the assertion that the Norse communities of the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions of the Scandinavian diaspora engaged in a hunting economy in combination with pastoralism (stock farming), a hybrid economy in which the latter element may have been in many localized instances the less significant element in terms of its contribution to the subsistence needs of these communities.<sup>208</sup> As such they were dependant upon resources the availability of and access to which were far from guaranteed, on the contrary could appear capricious. These economic conditions obtained particularly on the poorer farms at the periphery of these highly socially stratified settlements,<sup>209</sup> and especially in the early *landnám* phase.<sup>210</sup> The outer fjord farm of Herjólfssnes on Greenland fits this

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208 McGovern 1992:201, Berglund 2000:299.

209 See e.g. McGovern 2000:333. We must however reckon with a nuanced picture in this respect, inasmuch as while at the time of *landnám* and the years immediately subsequent to *landnám* all settlers would have been dependent on hunting to meet their subsistence needs, until such a time as the imported stock of cattle had reached numbers sufficient that they could sustainably absorb an annual slaughter for meat, the relative economies of the richer and poorer farms in the settlement appear to have become more and more differentiated thereafter, such that by the fourteenth century the former were able to maintain modest herds of cattle while the latter were increasingly dependent on game meat, principally seal. It is notable however that even at this late stage the richest farms ate as much if not more reindeer meat than cattle, sheep and goat meat combined (*ibid.*).

210 Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 1997:24-6.

profile, and will be used as a case study exemplifying my arguments and conclusions.

We know that shamanism is a religious model which recurs consistently throughout the Arctic or circumpolar area,<sup>211</sup> amongst hunting communities, from prehistoric to early modern times in Scandinavia (among the Sámi), and up until the twentieth century in Siberia and Greenland. Further south and in later periods, former hunting cultures which had moved over to pastoralism retained shamanism as their religious strategy and as a kind of economic insurance policy, inasmuch as shamans were employed to see to the welfare of the herds of domestic animals which represented the community's source of food. Shamanism may thus be characterised as an Arctic hunting religion which has been inherited by the pastoralist descendants of hunting cultures.<sup>212</sup>

Given then that shamanism is typical of Arctic hunting cultures, it follows that if the Arctic and sub-Arctic Norse communities of Greenland and northern Norway were hunting cultures, then it would seem plausible that *seiðr*, the magic ritual to which textual sources attest these very communities had resort, fits the profile of an Arctic shamanism.

This latter assertion will require some substantiation. This will consist in a close contextual reading of a description of a *seiðr* ritual purported to have been performed at Herjólfssnes in Greenland. It will be shown that the ritual and its function are congruous within the local social, economic, environmental and ecological circumstances.

In support of this contention an excursus will be made on the contextual meaning of the term *hallæri* as it is used in this and other texts, the aim of which will

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211 'circumpolar' in the present context refers to that part of the Earth lying within the Arctic Circle. The primary focus of the present chapter will be on Arctic Scandinavia and Arctic and sub-Arctic Greenland and the human cultures that inhabited and exploited these areas in the medieval period.

212 Hultkrantz 1965, 1966; Hamayon 1994:81-2.

be to demonstrate that this term can refer to a variety of different economic circumstances, and that in this instance it refers to a sustained and imminently catastrophic failure in a hunting economy, a failure which (I assert) it is the role of the ritual practitioner of *seiðr*, the *seiðkona*, to resolve. This is a role commensurate with that of other circumpolar shamans in their communities in similar situations of economic crisis.

Finally, I will indulge in some informed speculation on what the precise practical function of the ritual at Herjólfssnes consisted in, based on evidence for the kind of concepts we might expect to have been embedded in the mindset of hunting communities. Specifically, the use of decoy reindeer as a method of hunting is hypothesised to have had its counterpart in conceptions that it was possible to lure herds of game animals to a given place. I will show that conceptions of guardian spirits of game animals are attested from Scandinavian tradition, in the figure of *bróðir ormsins og fiskar sum kongar*. By luring this guardian of a shoal of fish or herd of reindeer it would thus have been possible to lure the entire shoal or herd. I then consider whether the term *náttúrur* and the potentially related term *verðir* may refer to such guardians of game animals.

This then, it is proposed, was the aim of the *seiðr* ritual performed at Herjólfssnes: to lure the spiritual guardian or guardians of a group or groups of game animals, accompanied by these respective groups *en masse*, and thereby resolve the economic crisis faced by the hunting community at Herjólfssnes, the *hallæri* which is described in the prologue to the account of *seiðr* purported to have taken place there. The congruity of such hypothesised magical conceptions within the sphere of Norse magic will be demonstrated by drawing analogies with other applications of *seiðr* with the same aim, that of luring or summoning herds of animals, schools of seals and whales, or shoals of fish (or even sometimes human beings) to given localities.

It will be stressed throughout that when considering the question of the identification of *seiðr* with other shamanisms it is essential to contextualise each ritual and the circumstances surrounding it and to consider them on their own terms. This is a departure from theoretical models in which *seiðr* and shamanisms are reduced to generalised and abstracted definitions in which significant local variations are homogenised so as to become invisible.

#### THE TEXT:

##### ***Eiríks saga rauða* – a description of a *seiðr* ritual and its preconditions?**

An account of *seiðr* in the Icelandic saga *Eiríks saga rauða* describes the visit of a *völva*, *spákona* or *vísendakona* (she is referred to by all three terms in the text), that is, a prophetess or ‘wise woman’, named Þorbjörg lítilvölva, to the farm of a chieftain, Þorkell, in Herjólfssnes on Greenland, where she performs an act of magic incorporating a distinctly a tractive element.

The text of *Eiríks saga rauða* is preserved in two medieval manuscripts: AM 544 4to, which is one of three (now separately-bound) codices making up the compilation Hauksbók, put together under the auspices of an Icelander, Haukr Erlendsson;<sup>213</sup> and AM 557 4to, otherwise designated Skálholtsbók. The AM 544 4to text of *Eiríks saga rauða* was copied between 1302 and 1310.<sup>214</sup> The remainder of Hauksbók as a whole is made up of texts covering a diverse range of subjects and genres, encompassing historical, mathematical, philosophical and theological matter.<sup>215</sup>

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213 The two remaining portions of Hauksbók are catalogued as AM 371 4to and AM 675 4to.

214 Stefán Karlsson 1964:119. A more precise dating of 1306-8 is possible for this portion of Hauksbók (*ibid.*, Gunnar Harðarson & Stefán Karlsson 1993:271), in which case it was copied in Iceland.

215 *Ibid.*, Jakob Benediktsson 1961:250. For a more in-depth account of the content of Hauksbók and Haukr's rationale in selecting some of the texts which make it up, see e.g. Sverrir Jakobsson 2007. Parts of Hauksbók were copied after Haukr's death and thus fall outside of his direct 'editorship'. Notwithstanding this, Hauksbók is exceptional in reflecting so deeply its patrons personal interests over other editorial policies such as a more or less consistent unity of formal genre and/or theme.

Possible evidence of a more deepgoing interest on Haukr's part in Greenland *per se* is the inclusion of *Fóstbræðra saga* (shortly preceding *Eiríks saga rauða* in AM 544 4to)—part of the action of which takes place in Greenland—*Landnámabók* and *Kristni saga* (in the AM 371 4to portion), the latter documenting the Christianization of Greenland besides that of Iceland, the former including Icelandic and Norwegian settlers of Greenland among the mass of Icelandic genealogy and popular tradition it presents.

Haukr's influence on the composition of his manuscript appears to have gone beyond mere selection of the texts copied into it, to the deeper level of reshaping the texts themselves, editing in the process of copying.<sup>216</sup> As interesting as this variation is in itself as regards the study of these texts' transmission and the material philology of the codex taken in its right, this also makes its text of *Eiríks saga rauða* potentially further removed from a common exemplar than the other, younger text of the saga, that preserved in AM 557 4to and dated to 1420.<sup>217</sup> For this reason the latter text, despite a significant degree of orthographic corruption, has been assigned the status of 'best text' by editors of the saga, i.e. not that which is best preserved (since both texts are equally complete without lacunae), but rather that which theoretically most closely reflects the earliest composition of the saga as a holistic literary unit.<sup>218</sup> This has also been the verdict of those scholars who have investigated *Eiríks saga's* account of *seiðr*. I see no overriding philological rationale for diverging from this policy, and will refer primarily to the Skálholtsbók text of the saga in my analysis of the content of the text.

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216 Either by Haukr, who copied parts of the manuscript himself, or by secretaries under his instruction (Jansson 1944:260, 290, Gunnar Harðarson & Stefán Karlsson 1993:271). This applies no less to Hauksbók's text of *Eiríks saga rauða* as it does to the same manuscripts texts of e.g. *Fóstbræðra saga* (Jansson 1944:290) and perhaps most notably *Landnámabók*, Haukr's text of which is significantly expanded in comparison to its sister redactions (Gunnar Harðarson & Stefán Karlsson 1993:271).

217 Jansson 1944:273 ('about one century later than the Hauksbók'), 1958:537 (ditto); Stefán Karlsson 1982:198; Dillmann 2006:276; Tolley 2009, vol. I:487; Degnbol et al. more conservatively to 1420–50 (1989:236).

218 Ólafur Halldórsson 1985:335, Tolley 2009, vol. I:487. Jansson concludes that the Skálholtsbók text is likely to have had an older exemplar than that which Haukr had access to (Jansson 1944:260).

However I do not consider the Hauksbók text irrecoverably secondary, not least since each preserved text is equally the product of the period in which it was composed as it is of the period in which its ultimate exemplar was composed, and any variation the manuscript witness exhibits is a potential source for the history of thought for the period it came into being. The Hauksbók text was copied in the lifetime of the Norse settlements on Greenland, the Skálholtsbók text as it was breathing its last breath. While the saga's value as a source for the *period* in which the events it depicts is questionable, at best problematic, its significance as a commentary on contemporary events in the *place* and community (or the continuation of the same community)—be it by adapting it or merely circulating and disseminating it—has a more sound basis. The composition of the saga itself has been dated to the early thirteenth century or the mid-1260s,<sup>219</sup> in either case at a significant remove from the period in which it is set.

The fourth chapter of the extant texts of *Eiríks saga rauða* consist, in their most perfunctory details, of an essentially self-contained account of the *seiðr* ritual and its economic, environmental and social context.<sup>220</sup> The account also incorporates at its heart undeniably hagiographic elements. The *völva* Þorbjörg has previously visited various farms in the district, those to which she has been invited, and when she arrives at the chieftain Þorkell's farm she is welcomed ceremoniously and in general treated with a good deal of reverence. The purpose of her visit is to divine how long the *hallæri* ('bad season') which has afflicted the community will persist, and to predict individual fortunes.<sup>221</sup> To this end she undertakes the *seiðr* ritual, for which however she requires the help of assistants, who she seeks to recruit from among those present:

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219 Dillmann 2006:293, Wahlgren 1993:704.

220 Self-contained inasmuch as the events it describes, while involving key protagonists of the saga as a whole including its leading lady, have no great bearing on the course of its overarching narrative.

221 The term *hallæri* and its context-bound connotations will be discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

bad hun fa sier konr þær. sem kynni frædi. þat er þyrfti til seidinnar fremia ok uardlokr heita. enn þær konr funnduzt eigi þa uar at leitad um bæinn. ef nauckr kynni. þa. svarar. Gvdridr. huerki er ek fiolkvnnig ne visennda kona. enn þo kenndi halldis fostra min. mer a. islandi. þat frædi er hun kalladi vard lokr.<sup>222</sup>

Guðríðr is a Christian, and is therefore reluctant to take part in a heathen ritual. Þorbjörg however persuades Guðríðr to sing *varðlok(k)ur*—songs with some kind of magical effect—appealing to her sense of compassion by telling her 'svo mætti uerda at þu yrdir maunnum at lidi. her vm' ('it might be that you can help the people here');<sup>223</sup> Guðríðr consents, and, because she sings the song so beautifully, the ritual proves to be exceptionally effective; the AM 544 4to redaction of *Eiríks saga rauða* relates that:

hun hafdi margar nattvrur higat at sott ok þotti fagurt at heyra. þat er kuedit var. er adr uilldi fra oss snuazt ok oss avngua hlydni veita. Enn mer erv nu margar þeir hluter aud synar. er aadr var bædi ek ok adrir dulder.<sup>224</sup>

Þorbjörg then predicts the imminent end of both the bad season, and of an epidemic which has been ravaging the community. And her predictions subsequently turn out to be accurate.

Several details of this description have invited certain scholars to draw comparisons with ethnographic accounts of ritual practitioners and practices classified by scholars as shamans and shamanistic, including the pseudo-ethnographic missionary accounts of Sámi *noaidit* (Sámi shamans).

<sup>222</sup> *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 544 4to redaction) ch. 4, ed. Jansson 1945:42. The entirety of the AM 557 4to (Skálholtsbók) text of this chapter of the saga is given in Appendix B, with a parallel translation.

<sup>223</sup> *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 544 4to redaction) ch. 4, ed. Jansson 1945:42.

<sup>224</sup> *Eiríks saga rauða* ch. 4 ed. Jansson 1945:43. The younger text of the saga says the same thing, without assigning the agency quite so explicitly to Guðríðr, employing instead a passive construction, *ibid.*

### **The *seiðr* described in *Eiríks saga rauða* as pseudo-shamanic ritual**

Chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða* has perhaps been discussed more than any other text (or episode) in connection with the study of the phenomenon of *seiðr*. Here I will try to introduce some new perspectives on this text, but first of all it may be helpful to review some earlier interpretations of the text and its value as a source for Norse ethnography.

Þorbjörg lítilvǫlva's clothes and accessories are described in great detail in the text, and Hilda Ellis-Davidson has compared the description to that of the costume of certain Siberian shamans, in particular the shaman of the Enets tribe.<sup>225</sup>

Both Ronald Grambo and François-Xavier Dillmann have made close readings of chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða*, and each came to opposite conclusions.<sup>226</sup> The two scholars' difference of opinion essentially consists in the fact that Grambo interprets Þorbjörg's ritual as shamanistic where Dillmann does not. The Swedish folklorist and scholar of comparative religion Dag Strömbäck also adopted a shamanistic interpretation. Grambo has revised certain of Strömbäck's conclusions, perhaps most significantly that regarding the function of the song *varðlok(k)ur*.

Strömbäck, in his book *Sejd* from 1935, reasoned, with reference to the Norwegian missionary Isaac Olsen's description of a séance performed by a Sámi *noaidi* with the help of a young female singer, that in the context of the ritual at Herjólfssnes the song must have been used to call the free-soul of the shaman—or as here, the *vǫlva* (whose role Strömbäck equates with that of a shaman)—which during

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225 Ellis Davidson 1976:287. 'The glass beads and the 'stones' on the cloak are in keeping with the ornaments, all of a symbolic nature, adorning the costume of a Siberian shaman. The cloak in the saga account is called *tuglamottul*, 'cloak with straps', and the term has usually been interpreted as a cloak with straps for fastening [...], and it may indicate a garment hung with thongs, straps or bands in the manner of the shaman's cloak in Siberia and elsewhere.'

226 Grambo 1984a; Dillmann 1992.



the séance has been sent on a journey to another part of the cosmos, back to her body at the conclusion of the séance. Grambo hypothesises that instead the *varðlok(k)ur*, sung at the beginning of the séance, was supposed to summon the spirits consulted by the *völva*, who furnished her with the information which forms the substance of her prophecy or divination.<sup>227</sup>

Dillmann finds fault with Strömbäck's conclusion on the same point, without offering any alternative explanation.<sup>228</sup> Nor does Dillmann demonstrate any awareness of Grambo's arguments regarding the account of the ritual at Herjólfssnes, which were published prior to his own study of the same account,<sup>229</sup> pre-dating also the completion of Dillmann's doctoral thesis which touched upon the same matter.<sup>230</sup> Perhaps it is expedient not to introduce further theories which it could prove problematic to attempt to discredit. But then, getting to the bottom of what *seiðr* is is not the task Dillmann has set for himself. He concerns himself rather purely with what *seiðr* is not.<sup>231</sup>

Another scholar who has taken a sceptical stance with respect to talk of shamanism in connection with Old Norse literature is Jere Fleck, who tackles the characterisation of the god Óðinn as a shaman,<sup>232</sup> seeking to dismantle the theory and ultimately demonstrate it as resting on shaky foundations. Like Dillmann's study, Fleck's problematization of the assumption of shamanism is valuable, not least in stimulating further debate. However, both scholars stumble into a methodological pitfall as regards the classification or typography they adopt as the crux of their

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227 I will return to the meaning and function of *varðlok(k)ur* in the following chapter.

228 Dillmann 1992:30-2, cf. Strömbäck 1935:124-39.

229 Dillmann 1992.

230 Dillmann 1986, since published as Dillmann 2006.

231 For further discussion and a summary of scholarship on this matter see further Mebius 2000.

232 By Mircea Eliade and Hilda Ellis Davidson amongst others, cf. Eliade 1964:379-87, Ellis Davidson 1964:141-9, 1976:283-4.

respective arguments.

Dillmann and Fleck both refer to the Hungarian scholar László Vajda's definition of Siberian shamanism,<sup>233</sup> which they nonetheless, both erroneously and misleadingly, treat as a definition of shamanism *per se*. Brit Solli describes Dillmann's approach as 'kriterie- og begrepstyranni' (it exhibits an excessive deference—bordering on the prescriptive—to typology over real-world variation within parameters), which, though phrased somewhat emotively, is a legitimate criticism.<sup>234</sup> Vajda's definition is convenient for both Dillmann and Fleck's purposes, because it is a relatively strict definition, stipulating the presence of eight elements in a given ritual complex in order that one may classify it as shamanism. These elements are: ritual ecstasy; zoomorphic tutelary spirits; the shaman's call to his vocation, involving anthropomorphic tutelary spirits; the shaman's initiation; the shaman's soul's journeys in the otherworld (or 'soul-flight'); the concept of a stratified cosmos with several levels (commonly three); shamanic duels; and shamanic equipment (drum and costume).

It may be that the study of *seiðr* by scholars of Old Norse could benefit from a greater familiarity with more recent debates within the field of anthropology. The reference point for a scholar such as Dillmann—writing in the 1980s and 90s—are works from the 1950s (Eliade's flawed synthesis cum definition of the phenomenon worldwide, and László Vajda's programmatic definition of Siberian shamanism which borders on the prescriptive), and thus he fails, crucially, to incorporate the important

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233 Vajda 1959, cf. Dillmann 1992:23–5.

234 'Jeg er av den oppfatning at Francois-Xavier Dillmanns avvisning av at *seiðr* har noe med sjamanisme å gjøre, er for katagorisk og preget av kriterie- og begrepstyranni. Han følger Eliades kriterier for sjamanismen, og gud nåde de kjensgjerninger som ikke passer inn under de på forhånd fastlagte kriterier.' ('It seems to me that Francois-Xavier Dillmann's rejection of the idea that *seiðr* has anything to do with shamanism is too categorical and based upon overly strict criteria and terminology. He subscribes to Eliade's criteria for defining shamanism, and heaven help those facts which do not conform to the stipulated criteria.'). Solli 1997-8:25.

advances in thinking on this subject which have taken place in the intervening years.

Scholars such as Neil Price have already made a lot of headway in bridging this disciplinary gap.<sup>235</sup> However, in some cases the studies of *seiðr* undertaken by scholars who are first and foremost specialists in the field of comparative religion could have benefited from a more thorough knowledge of the medieval Scandinavian sources describing it. For instance, Mircea Eliade's treatment of the Norse source material in his grand synthetic work on shamanism from the 1950s is an example of how easy it is for a scholar not sufficiently familiar with the material to conflate significant and crucial details of the different sources in a such a way as to present a quite misleading picture of the phenomenon and thereby invalidate the conclusions he reaches. Apparently relying heavily on Hilda Ellis' *The Road to Hel*,<sup>236</sup> Eliade assimilates the assumption that there are explicit indications in the textual sources that the *vǫlur* commonly fell into ecstatic trance, something which is in fact by no means explicit.<sup>237</sup> This in fact is a question which has been at the centre of the debate on *seiðr* as shamanism long after Eliade wrote, and it is a question that remains unresolved.

Even a Scandinavian scholar of comparative religion and folklore traditions such as Juha Pentikäinen, who one might expect to possess a greater familiarity with the finer details of these sources, in common with Eliade conflates details of the earliest eye witness account of the séance of a Sámi *noaidi*, namely that found in *Historia Norwegie*, in an article on shamanism in a recently published encyclopaedia of Sámi culture.<sup>238</sup>

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235 See e.g. Price 2000, 2002, 2006a, 2008.

236 Ellis 1943.

237 Eliade 1964:386.

238 Pentikäinen 2005c:386-7. The two *noaidit* are conflated into one, thus: 'In his difficult journey to the other side, the sorcerer battles with another shaman who had caused the death of the victim, metamorphosing into the shape of a whale before returning to this world and awakening the woman from the dead.'; while the non-Nordicist Diana Riboli, true to the source, keeps the two *noaidit* distinct (Riboli 2004:254). This pales however next to the Anttonen's confusion of the terms *seiðr* and *sieidi*

As mentioned previously, Dag Strömbäck drew a direct comparison between the song sung by the young Christian woman Guðríðr during the *seiðr* ritual and that sung by a young Sámi woman as part of a séance performed by a *noaidi*.<sup>239</sup> Contrary to earlier loan theories, and based on a thorough survey of the ritual as it is described in the whole of the Old Icelandic literary corpus, Strömbäck interprets *seiðr* as a magico-religious ritual complex loaned from the Sámi to the Norse, an interpretation which rests significantly on his analysis of chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða*.<sup>240</sup>

This was at the time something of a radical perspective, and yet, as Håkan Rydving notes, it is not sufficient merely to invert earlier loan theories—such as the view dominant among scholars of Old Norse until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the greater part of the indigenous Sámi religion had been loaned from the Norse—for in so doing '[t]here might be risk that one type of less well-founded analogy replaces another'.<sup>241</sup>

One possible remedy or methodological safeguard against drawing overly superficial comparisons between the religious phenomena of different cultures is to try to locate the religious phenomena in question in their social, economic and environmental context, rather than simply examining isolated features with little or no regard for their place and function within the religious system in which they actually occur, or occurred.

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(2004:502-3), conflating the Icelandic term with the Sámi term's referent. The passage in question is edited by Ekrem and Mortensen (trans. Fisher) 2003:62-3.

239 This ritual is described by Olsen [after 1715] 1910:44-8.

240 Strömbäck 1935:196-206 and *passim*. Summing up, Strömbäck concludes: 'Det förefaller då helt naturligt att tänka sig, att lapsk trolldom även kunnat öva direkt inflytande på nordisk, och knappast lärar väl härvid det mest karakteristiska i lapparnas magiska praxis, schamanderandet, ha undgått att göra ett djupt intryck på nordborna.' ('It seems quite natural to believe that Sámi magic could also exert a direct influence on Nordic magic, and in the process the most characteristic element in Sámi magical practice, namely shamanism, would scarcely have failed to make a deep impression on Scandinavians.') Others including Mircea Eliade considered this loan theory unnecessary in order to explain the presence of shamanic elements in Germanic religion (1964:224).

241 Rydving 1990:370.

Instead of focusing quite so much on details such as the *vǫlva*'s costume and ritual accessories, it seems potentially more fruitful, in seeking to get to the bottom of the matter of the function and the nature of the *seiðr* ritual described in *Eiríks saga rauða*, to focus on the wider context in which the ritual is purported to have taken place. For we are more likely to apprehend this function if we familiarise ourselves with the nature of the particular situation the ritual addresses and is aimed at resolving.

Given that the scholarly discussion to date has largely revolved around the identification (or the discrediting of the identification) of the ritual as constituting a form of shamanism, it is illuminating to observe that other, ethnographically documented shamanisms consistently adapt to and address the immediate and particular environmental, economic and social circumstances faced by the communities they serve. The shamanic *séance*, in particular when performed in response to a crisis situation, is as such a highly contingent and pragmatic act, tailored to and conditioned by the precise circumstances obtaining in the situations and environments in which it is performed.<sup>242</sup>

It might be said that in seeking to anchor shamanisms so firmly and concretely in the socio-economic conditions which give rise to them, we risk transforming them from something mystical and other to something mundane and familiar—how exciting can shamans be, after all, if in essence their activities revolve around something so

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242 Piers Vitebsky emphasises the close and organic interface between the shaman's act of magic and the community's needs, and the need therefore to locate analyses of the function and significance of these acts within the immediate cultural context in which they are applied: 'The shaman's activities are intensely embedded in the local social structure. The entire practice of shamanism must therefore be understood with reference not only to indigenous theology, but also to local concepts of nature, humanity, and the person, the meanings of life and death, and even the workings of the economy. Many writings about shamans ignore social context or even deny the shaman's social role, promoting an image of the shaman as some kind of solitary mystic [...] The mystic is also a social worker.' (Vitebsky 2000:66)

basic and everyday as putting food on the table? But perhaps this is for the best, for in ceasing to regard shamanism as something distant, exotic and other—in departing from discourses which characterise them in these terms, whether implicitly or explicitly—we first then begin to approach and to apprehend what shamanisms—and by extension those magical rituals, such as *seiðr*, which are analogous to shamanic rituals—are really ‘about’.

### THE CONTEXT:

#### **A peripheral hunting community in a peripheral Norse settlement:**

#### **Shamanism as Arctic religion**

It is the broad consensus of scholarship that shamanism is a form of religion which is characteristic of hunting cultures, and was at one time virtually universally prevalent among Arctic hunting cultures in particular, as well as cultures employing a pastoral economic strategy.<sup>243</sup> This is to say that those cultures (including the Sámi) which moved from hunting to herding the animals upon which they were dependant for subsistence—whilst continuing to hunt other animals (often primarily for their skins or pelts) and fish—retained shamanism as a means of promoting (or engendering) and maintaining good fortune in their economic endeavours, often by seeking and securing the approval of a supernatural entity characterised as the guardian of the game animals, who would then allow an animal (or a certain quota of animals) to be caught by the community’s hunters.

Success in hunting expeditions and animal husbandry was further engendered by a more active intervention, exemplified in a Scandinavian context by the capacity of the *noaidi* (the Sámi shaman) to locate and protect the animals from which the community derived sustenance, domestic reindeer herds, and to locate wild animals

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243 Hultkrantz 1965, 1966.

(again reindeer) and by capturing the soul of an animal lead it to the hunting ground used by the community.<sup>244</sup> It seems nonetheless the case that the archetypal shaman was less essential in other areas of the farming economy, for instance when it came to rituals aimed at protecting reindeer from illness and disease, rituals which *could* be performed by a *noaidi*, but could also just as well be carried out by an individual who a scholar of religion would categorise as a sacrificial priest, but who in any case did not have the status or character typical of a shaman.

The testimony of the users of so-called *runebommer* (shamanic ritual drums the skins of which were decorated with symbols whose referents variously lay within the earthly and the supernatural sphere) regarding the function of these drums when they were put to practical use—both by *noaidit* and by other members of the community who did not have the same distinct status of religious specialist—indicates that ensuring luck in hunting and fishing was the principal practical function. Thus:

At one District Court, “an old, good-tempered man” explained in court that the Saamis used the drum “in the simple belief and opinion thereby to obtain good fortune or otherwise learn whether some good or evil fortune is approaching them, before they betake themselves to the woods in order to catch animals or otherwise practice their fishing [...]” [...] The same ideas reappear in Saami arguments in other places, too. In Jukkasjärvi it was said that they “to this day used drums or kábdes [SaaL. *goabdes*, SaaN. *goavddis* ‘drum’] in simple-mindedness only, after the ancient custom of their forefathers, with the purpose of gaining good fortune”, and in

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244 See Pentikäinen 2005c:388. Olsen and Leem describe a *joik* sung to drive wolves away so that they will not harm cattle (Olsen [after 1715] 1910:9 Leem 1767:485-6). Conversely, Olsen relates traditions concerning how *noaidegázzi* (viz. the tutelary spirits who instructed *noaidit* in their vocation) taught *noaidit* to transform themselves, others and other animals into wolves and bears for the purpose of attacking livestock, besides summoning regular (i.e. non-transformed) bears and wolves to accomplish the same, as well as how to drive away both game animals and fish (Olsen [after 1715] 1910:9, 32-4, 44).

Jokkmokk that they had “hitherto used drums, with which they however said that they had not done anything evil, but merely wished to see beforehand what evil or good would befall them, likewise how it would fare with their forest hunting and fishing and also with their livestock”. Only in the easternmost Kemi *lappmark* were the drums no longer in use, because of the zealous activity of the clergyman, Gabriel Tuderus, in the first half of the 1670’s.<sup>245</sup>

Here we might broach the question of whether medieval Norse heathens, including ritual practitioners of *seiðr*, might have been persecuted by the Crown and the Church in a way comparable with that in which Sámi *noaidit* and the communities who had resort to them were centuries later persecuted and victimised by Swedish and Norwegian clergymen, and the way Siberian shamans were persecuted by the Soviet state.

It would seem, if not impossible, then in any case very hard, to prove that Norse *seiðr* practitioners used drums in their rituals, and neither is it my intention, in comparing the ritual of the *seiðkona* Þorbjörg lítilvölva with the rituals performed by Sámi *noaidit* and ‘laymen’, to imply in any way that she or for that matter any other *seiðkona* or *seiðmaðr* did so.<sup>246</sup> The similarity, I suggest, lies not so much in the tools and accessories of the ritual, but in its fundamental purpose. The aim in both cases was to engender or restore good fortune in hunting (and fishing) expeditions. This concern is the common thread which runs through all manifestations of the hunting rituals performed throughout the circumpolar area, rituals which have collectively been termed ‘shamanism’, or more properly a plurality of ‘shamanisms’.<sup>247</sup>

245 Rydving 1991:30-1, citing B[ergman] 1891.

246 For attempts to show that Óðinn ‘beat on a lid on Samsø’ see e.g. Grambo 1989, Magnus Olsen 1960, Lid [1944] 1950, Strömbäck 1935.

247 I will not concern myself here with the possible wider affinities beyond this geographical sphere, between Norse magical practices and shamanisms documented in other parts of the world beyond the circumpolar sphere, as synthesised (problematically) by the likes of Eliade (1964), nor with the



Furthermore, hunting is the economic strategy primarily served by shamanisms. Thus if we are to look for a hypothetical Norse form of shamanism then we might do well (or indeed, best) to look for it where Norse communities are engaged to a significant extent in hunting activity, in magico-religious rituals aimed at ensuring the continued fecundity of the (supernaturally conceived) source of the staple of their subsistence economy, and as a means of intervening when this source apparently dries up.

As such, we are here concerned with local economies dependent on an often unstable set of variables as regards the abundance and basic provision of food (in the form of herds of game animals; in the Arctic the game animal in question was commonly the wild reindeer, which occurred across virtually this entire area).<sup>248</sup> And given these conditions and parameters, we are speaking of an economy operating to some extent constantly on the cusp of potential starvation—in concrete terms, to take one example, the unexpected failure of a migrating herd of reindeer to materialise at a given locality or along a given migration route at a given point in the year (that which in previous years it had tended to)—dependent on factors over which the community and its hunters have no control. And it is at this point that resort is made to supernatural powers perceived as possessing the power to control the forces which the human community cannot.

Within the medieval Norse diaspora, this economic situation (or model) seems to have pertained principally in northern Norway, and in Greenland, and to a lesser extent in the other Norse Atlantic colonies, where stock-farming was more viable, but where hunting, trapping, sealing, whaling and perhaps not least fishing, nonetheless contributed significantly to the economy, and in the opinion of some scholars may

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problems inherent in such far-reaching, inevitably to some extent decontextualised comparisons.

248 See e.g. Niskanen 2005.

have constituted a source of subsistence which the communities in question could not have lived without,<sup>249</sup> and where ‘it seems likely that cattle were kept primarily for their milk rather than as meat animals’.<sup>250</sup>

### **Hunting as the principal economic strategy in Greenland and northern Norway**

Even as late as Peder Claussøn Friis’ day (Friis lived from 1545–1614) hunting of game for food was still a reality in parts of northern Norway:

Om matjakt skriv Peder Claussøn Friis frå dei bygdene som grensar opp til Storhedder: “de hafuer oc stor Hielp aff Vildt, som de skiude, saa som Elgsdiur oc Rensdiur, Hiorte oc Hinde, oc atskillige Slags Skougfugle, til deris Føde oc Underholdning.” Også bjørnekjøtt har alltid vori rekna for særst næringsrikt og velsmakende.<sup>251</sup>

The economic circumstances which the ninth-century north Norwegian chieftain Ohthere (ON Óttarr) describes as obtaining in northern Norway in his day—few livestock and an emphasis on hunting—concord closely with those that would seem to have obtained in the Greenland settlements, as does the topographical situation, in that *'eal þæt hís man aþer oððe ettan oððe erian mæg þæt lið wið ða sæ; & þæt is þæh on sumum stowum swyðe cludig'* ('All the land that can be grazed or ploughed lies by

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249 Keller 1991:132, 139; McGovern 1992:195.

250 McGovern 1992:201, a conclusion also reached by Joel Berglund: ‘The type of animal bones can indicate the attitude toward local wild animal resources, which sometimes reflects economic necessity. A preliminary review showed that most bones came from such game as hare, seal, and caribou, confirming that the domestic animals were kept for milk and wool.’ (Berglund 2000:299)

251 Bø 1962:550. ‘Concerning hunting, and with reference to the districts bordering Storhedder, Peder Claussøn Friis writes that: “they depend to a large extent upon game which they shoot, such as elk, reindeer, harts and hinds, and various woodland birds, as a source of food and sustenance.” In addition bear meat has always been reckoned a particularly nutritious and tasty food.’

the sea; but even this is very rocky in some places.’).<sup>252</sup> This may be compared with statements in the medieval Norwegian text *Konungs skuggsjá*, when in response to the son’s question (in the dialogue which forms the narrative frame of the text):

Sva vil ec oc þæss mæð leyfi spyria við hvat sa lyðr lifir er þat lannd [viz. Greenland] bygger eða hvarso landeno er farit hvar þat er isum þact sæm hafit eða er þat þítt þo at hafit se frosit eða er nocqvot sað alannidino sæm á aðrum lanndum.<sup>253</sup>

His father replies:

skaltu þat vist vita. at þat er litill lutr aflannidino er þitt er en allt annat þa er isum þact [...] En opt hafa menn freistað at ganga upp alandet apau fioll er hæst ero ímyisum stoðum at siaz um oc vildu vita æf þeir fynni noccot er þitt væri alannidino oc byggiannde oc hafa menn hværgi þat funnit nema þar sem nu bua menn oc er þat litit fram mæð stronndonni sialfri.<sup>254</sup>

The economic situation in Greenland was thus comparable to that in northern Norway: in both regions agriculture was virtually impossible whilst stock farming was viable only to a far more limited extent than in more temperate areas to the south. The population was therefore dependant on hunting, both land and sea mammals, and (in Norway) fishing for subsistence (and indeed for survival). Both in Greenland and in Finnmark good grazing land was at a premium, and thus fishing and hunting would at the very least have constituted an essential complement or supplement to the economy, and food acquired in this way may perhaps even have represented the staple of the diet of the Scandinavian settlers of these territories, just as it certainly did for

<sup>252</sup> King Alfred’s *Orosius*, ed. and trans. Ross 1981:20-1.

<sup>253</sup> *Konungs skuggsjá* ch. 17, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:71.

<sup>254</sup> *Konungs skuggsjá* ch. 17, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:73-4.

the other cultures inhabiting the same areas, respectively the Thule Inuit and the Sámi. Similar strategies—both economic (subsistence) and corollary religious strategies—might then likewise have been employed in both territories.

Furthermore, what the two areas have in common in terms of climate is that they both experience exceptionally cold winters, something which has a direct influence on the viability of stock farming, inasmuch as it dictated the length of the season in which it was possible to grow fodder in the homefield and to allow cattle to remain out of doors grazing.<sup>255</sup> Whilst the winter in Greenland was milder, as was the climate in general, the summer was comparatively short. Although the two Norse settlements on Greenland—unlike the northern part of Iceland and northern Norway—lay south of the Arctic circle proper, the former colony did not benefit from the warming effects of the North Atlantic Drift of the Gulf Stream to the same extent as the Scandinavian settlements to the east.<sup>256</sup>

However, although northern Norway was an area where the climate and local environmental conditions were in these respects closely similar to those obtaining in the areas settled by the Norse in Greenland, the settlement patterns in the two areas were in a sense inverted, inasmuch as the following situation pertained in the respective regions:

In Greenland the Norse farmers settled the inner fjord regions while the nomadic Thule (as opposed to older Dorset) Inuit culture, migrating south along Greenland's west coast, came to take up seasonal residence in the outer fjord regions, from where they were ideally placed to exploit the resources of the sea, hunting seals and whales.

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255 In mountain dairies or shielings, Norwegian *sæter*.

256 See e.g. medieval textual sources such as *Konungs skuggsjá*, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:49–85; *Flóamanna saga* chs. 20–26, ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:274–310; *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* chs. 5, 18, *ibid.* pp. 114–6, 163–5; and climatological studies e.g. Ogilvie, Barlow & Jennings 2001.

In northern Norway the Sámi, perennial inhabitants of the region, continued to exploit the resources of the inner fjords—as they had done for centuries—while it was the Norwegian settlers who here came to occupy the outer fjord areas and coastal islands.<sup>257</sup>

All the same, the Scandinavian communities in the respective regions shared areas of common ground with one another, in terms of their particular economic adaptations. For instance walrus was hunted both in the Norðrsetur on Greenland and in the White Sea area, on expeditions launched from northern Norway (Ohthere's home lay in the present-day *fylke* of Troms), and both historical and archaeological sources testify to these Norse hunting and whaling expeditions in both areas in the medieval period.<sup>258</sup>

The *fiskebønder* of northern Norway probably did not embark on such hunting expeditions however, given that they in all probability rarely owned ocean-going ships and were in fact dependent on the merchants of Bergen and Trondheim for grain, which formed an essential portion of their diet. Hunting expeditions to the White Sea would probably have been made principally under the aegis of a wealthy landowner and/or merchant, such as the north Norwegian chieftain Ohthere, who describes making such journeys in the account he gave to King Alfred sometime late in the ninth century.<sup>259</sup>

Herjólfnes, as a settlement situated on a relatively exposed peninsula, is a perhaps somewhat exceptional example of a Norse settlement in Greenland occupying

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257 See Venke Olsen 1986; Nedkvitne 1993:195: 'About 1450, stockfish production also spread to northern Troms and Finnmark. [...] Then Norwegian fishermen settled in fishing villages on the outer coast where the distance to the best fishing grounds was shortest.'

258 See e.g. *Konungs skuggsjá*, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:33-9; with respect to northern Norway see e.g. Ohthere's account from King Alfred's *Orosius*. The statements of these medieval sources are corroborated by archaeological finds, cf. as regards northern Norway e.g. Johnsen 1962:160, Gjessing 1941; as regards Greenland see e.g. Degerbøl 1929.

259 Ed. and trans. Ross 1981:20-1.

a topographically comparable environment to those found in the Norwegian settlements in Troms and Finnmark (ON Finnmark).<sup>260</sup> The soil erosion which has taken place on the peninsula at Herjólfssnes in the period since the disappearance of the Scandinavian community there, so extensive that it uncovered a later medieval graveyard,<sup>261</sup> indicates just how exposed to the elements the site of the farm there was, and at what a premium flat (and potentially cultivatable) land was at the site.

The location of the farm at Herjólfssnes on a peninsula must reflect a certain degree of forethought on the part of the settlers, an awareness of the kind of economic resources one could expect to be able to exploit in the newly-settled environment in Greenland.<sup>262</sup> This is to say sites were probably chosen with economic resources (and the potential to exploit them) in mind.

Perhaps these were settlers who had previously had a farm on a peninsula in Iceland or Norway (maybe even the Faroes or the Orkneys) where they had hunted seals and driven whales ashore.<sup>263</sup> Within the space of a year at most, a year in which,

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260 The region designated Finnmark in Old Icelandic is not coterminous with the modern Norwegian county of Finnmark. The former encompassed a more extensive area than the latter, taking in both modern Finnmark and the northeasternmost part of Troms. While it is difficult to be certain how fixed the borders of Finnmark were in the minds of medieval Norwegians or how they shifted over time, or for that matter precisely where they lay, statements in medieval manuscripts indicate its southern border as being medieval Hálogaland (which corresponds broadly to modern Trøndelag), spanning northernmost Fenno-Scandinavia as far as the White Sea in the east (Blom 1959:281-2, cf. Hermann Pálsson 1997:28-30, 35-7). It is possible that, beyond its broader geographical referent, Finnmark may have been used by locals to designate any land which at that time was not settled by Norwegians—who tended to occupy grazing land along the coast (as attested by Ohthere)—but was inhabited by nomadic Sámi and other ethnically Finnic peoples; hence 'the hinterland of the *finnar*'.

261 The uncovering of the graveyard stimulated archaeological excavations at the site in which some remarkably well-preserved examples of medieval garments were recovered, probably late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century, to judge from the cut of the garments in comparison with contemporary European fashions, cf. Nørlund 1924.

262 Poul Nørlund, excavator of the farm at Herjólfssnes, seems in any case to think so: 'for fishing and hunting Herjólfssnes was a good spot. Not only is there seal in plenty [*sic.*], but even the white bear may happen to pass that way.' (Nørlund 1924:7)

263 There was certainly a tradition of driving whales ashore in Iceland. Gjessing (1941) documents archaeological evidence that the Norse exploited this resource elsewhere along the North Atlantic littoral. Finds of whalebone artifacts in northern Norway dated to the Merovingian and Viking periods

as in any other, the migratory populations of harp seal made their way along the south-western coast of Greenland into the fjords along which the farms of the Norse settlements were established, it would quickly have become apparent to these settlers that their hunch that similar resources were to be had in the new territories, too, had proven accurate.

If the settlers arrived in the season when sea mammals, fish and birds flocked to the area—Ívar Bárðarson's description describes an abundance of easy pickings<sup>264</sup>—then they would have known even before they laid the foundations of the first buildings of the farm that these resources were plentiful in the vicinity of that site. These seals would then almost certainly have been a principle means of sustenance for Scandinavian settlers of Greenland whilst, occupying temporary accommodation, they

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testify to a Scandinavian hunting economy in this region extending over many centuries. As regards the exploitation of resources in another Atlantic island group settled by the Norse, the Faroe Islands, see Símun V. Arge 2000.

264 'løbe ther vtallige hualle i then samme Bærefjord, och vanther ther alldrigh fiske [...] och vdi then fiord ligger en stuort høll och heder Hualshøll och første søen ganger vd, tha løber all huallffiskerne [*sic.*] i den samme høll' ('a great many whales swim in Berufjörðr, and it is always full of fish [...] and in that same fjord there is a large pool called Whale Pool, and when the tide goes out all the whales swim into it') *Det gamle Grønlands beskrivelse af Ívar Bárðarson*, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1930:20; 'ther er nock fugle och ægk' ('there are lots of birds and eggs') *ibid.* 21; 'ved Petthersvigh ligger en stuor bij, som heder Verdzdall, nar denne bij er et stort vand ij vge søes breit fuld met fisk' ('there is a large farm by Pétursvík called Vatnsdalr, near which there is a large lake three miles wide and full of fish') *ibid.* 23; 'ther ner ligger en stuor fiskesøo fuld med stuor fisk, och thaa nar stuor vand och regen kommer och vanden indfaller och menskis, tha bliffuer ther vtalligh megit fisk liggendis igien paa sandenn' ('nearby there is a large fish pond full of large fish, and near that and when it rains and the lake overflows a great number of fish are left stranded on the sand') *ibid.* 24-5; 'den stuore øo, som ligger vdenn for Eijnersfiord och hieder Renøe, saa kaldis fordj om høsten løber ther vtallige rendiur' ('the large island called Renøe, out from Einarsfjörðr, derives its name from the many reindeer that gather frequent it in the autumn months') *ibid.* 26; 'alle haande fiskkøn mere end vdi nogre andre lande [...] ther er noch reendiur' ('many different species of fish, more than in other lands [...] there are plenty of reindeer') *ibid.* 31. See Mathers 2009 for a recent translation and commentary of Ívar's full description, including an account of its transmission (Mathers 2009:74) and a potted biography (*ibid.*:75-6). The value of Ívar's account derives from it being that of an eyewitness with first-hand knowledge of Greenland, although his visit postdates its settlement by several centuries. Mathers notes an apparent loan from *Landnámabók* (2009:77), but this concerns the sailing directions Ívar gives, not the information concerning economic resources.

built their farms, during the phase Helgi Skúli Kjartansson reckons with and terms *landnám fyrir landnám*.<sup>265</sup>

Herjólfunes evidently fairly quickly came to take on a strategic maritime significance as one of the easternmost coastal farms of the Eystribyggð, not so far from southern cape of Greenland, where ships coming from Iceland and Norway would perhaps first make landfall, and where trade with foreign merchants probably took place (as Ívar Bárðarson's account likewise indicates).<sup>266</sup> This, however, need not exclude the possibility that the initial motivation for establishing a farm precisely here on such an exposed peninsula—with a climate presumably less mild, and certainly less sheltered, than that of the inner fjord regions which otherwise (and understandably) comprised the majority of the farm sites in both the Eystribyggð and the Vestribyggð—was that it placed the inhabitants of the farm within striking distance of migrating seal populations.

To the east of Herjólfunes, beyond the eastern extremity of the Eystribyggð, lay islands, sounds, fjords and inlets the names of some of which, in combination with certain statements of Ívar Bárðarson's, indicate were exploited for other natural resources, sources of food such as bird eggs and whales.<sup>267</sup> There were also resources to be exploited inland, principally reindeer, during their autumn migrations down from the highlands to the temperate coast, but the significance of especially seal, both the meat and the blubber of which are a valuable source of nutrition,<sup>268</sup> must have been

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265 Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 1997. An account of an individual instance of this phase in the context of the settlement of Iceland is found in *Egils saga* chs. 28-29, as will be discussed further below.

266 '... Herjólfunes, och ther ved ligger en haffn som heder Sand, almindeligh haffn for Normend och kiøbmennd' ('Herjólfunes, near to which there is a harbour called Sand, a common harbour for Norwegians and merchants'). *Det gamle Gronlands beskrivelse af Ívar Bárðarson*, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1930:19.

267 *Ibid.*

268 Cf. Dahl 1962:167. 'spik, spistes fersk, tørret el. saltet; af spækket, hvis betydning for sundhed næppe kan vurderes for højt, fik man desuden tran til hjemmeforbrug og eksport.' ('blubber was eaten fresh, dried or salted; train oil, the nutritional significance of which can scarcely be overemphasised, was



high, a fact corroborated by the evidence of Norse middens excavated on Greenland, in which the bones of seal—and one species in particular, the ringed seal—were found in abundance.<sup>269</sup>

The Greenlandic Norse chieftains seem to have had something of a weakness for reindeer venison, to judge from the relative quantities and proportions of reindeer remains in the middens of poorer and richer farms. This meat was probably hunted by the poorer farmers, and subsequently paid to the richer landowners as rent and perhaps likewise to the Church as tithes.<sup>270</sup> Already in possession of the best grazing land, upon which to raise their herds of domestic animals, these wealthier farmers then skimmed the cream, as it were, off the top of the economic resources to which the poorer farmers had access. Venison was evidently preferable to seal meat,<sup>271</sup> and it was the poorer farmers who were best placed—closest to migration routes—to exploit the wild reindeer herds.

Game and game meat would thus appear to have taken on the value of a commodity in a system of exchange between the poor and the richer social strata of the settlements—just as another product of hunting activity, walrus ivory, clearly also did<sup>272</sup>—a unit of currency, specifically the currency with which the poorer (presumably tenant) farmers paid rent and tithes to chieftains and bishops. Thus, in the context of the Norse settlements on Greenland, those who hunted game were not necessarily those who got to eat it. In its stratification, the Norse economy is clearly then a

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also derived from whale blubber, and this was consumed domestically and also exported.)

269 E.g. McGovern 1992:205, also e.g. Nørlund 1924, Degerbøl 1929, 1934.

270 E.g. McGovern, Perdikaris & Tinsley 2001:161.

271 Ditto whale meat, see e.g. Magnús Már Lárusson 1962:171.

272 Just as Icelanders often valued goods (as opposed to, say, weregild) relative to the value of cows or ells of *vaðmál* (homespun woollen cloth). To judge from the pasturage available to those Greenlandic farmers who kept sheep, and the way in which they must have exploited it, there was probably never a sufficient surplus of wool from Greenlandic farms for it ever to become an export article of any significance (Christensen 1991).

somewhat different system than that which pertained among for instance the Sámi and other Arctic peoples, where there was (probably) a far greater degree of communality and egalitarianism in terms of sharing resources.

Redistribution, which we also find in Sámi society, was certainly not an alien concept to the heathen Norse, no less than to the Christian Norse. There are nevertheless cultural differences here. Certain members of the Sámi community, perhaps most conspicuously the *noaidit*, could (in common with Siberian shamans) be said to have been economically privileged, inasmuch as they received payment for their activities and were given the best food and place by the fire,<sup>273</sup> just as *vøplur* were (to judge from the testimony of several textual sources) given the place of honour in the high seat on the Norse farms they visited in order to perform divination and other rituals. Notwithstanding such social stratification, the hierarchy which typified Norse society must be characterized as significantly more complex with its multiple strata and the different privileges each section of society enjoyed. This state of affairs, underpinning as it does the entire economic system of exchange and division of labour, must inevitably have a fundamental effect on the religious conceptions which were so tied up with the economy, the means of livelihood and the constant imperative of ensuring the acquisition of food, which in Greenland unavoidably involved a certain amount of hunting activity.

The fact that it was (apparently, probably) the poorer farmers, who found themselves pushed out to the periphery of the settlements—the farmers with plots of land less conducive to a high level of productivity (with a lower ‘carrying capacity’) when utilised for traditional North Atlantic stock farming (on the Norwegian, and subsequently Icelandic model)<sup>274</sup>—who engaged in this hunting activity, perhaps

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273 See e.g. Olsen [after 1715] 1910:89-90, 96.

274 Cf. McGovern 2000 on the (ultimately unsuccessful) attempts to transplant the ‘ideal Norwegian farm’ (including a mix of domestic livestock unsuited to the carrying capacity of the new environments)

contributed to the development of an ever-widening socioeconomic schism between them, the hunter-farmers—or in coastal, outer fjord regions *fiskerbønder*,<sup>275</sup> whalers and sealers—and the wealthier farmers who, by virtue of the greater quality and abundance of the grazing land they had acquired (on an opportunistic, first come first served basis), could afford to raise larger herds (and flocks) of livestock.

Both the fact of the social and economic marginalisation to which these more impoverished hunter-farmers were subjected according to the political agenda of the dominant hierarchy, and the fact that they were (presumably) to some extent ‘out of sight and out of mind’ as far as the richer, church-owning chieftains and clergymen were concerned—off the ecclesiastical radar, as it were, at least until the next round of tithes were due—may have privileged them the privacy in which to pursue their own economic and religious strategies, including, perhaps, resorting to more traditional Norse ritual methods of predisposing their particular economic activities to success, ritually and magically engendering hunting fortune.

The Norse settlers of the Atlantic islands brought with them the shieling model whereby the stock farmer, with his cattle, relocates to a mountain pasture farm during the summer months to exploit the grazing there, and to afford the homefield where winter fodder was produced the respite to allow it to do just that. McGovern notes ‘[t]he discovery of outer fjord sealing stations in the Western Settlement equipped with substantial storage structures [which] suggest a seasonal, communal operation to kill and temporarily store seals during the short migration peak.’<sup>276</sup> Both of these

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first to Iceland and then to Greenland.

275 As regards Norse Greenlandic fishermen as a historical circumstance see however Tom McGovern’s presentation and discussion of the data documenting the remarkably low quantities of fish bones in Norse Greenlandic middens—in stark contrast to the evidence of increasingly intensive exploitation of fish in contemporary Iceland and Norway, McGovern 1992.

276 McGovern 1992:205.

strategies for exploitation of distant (in any case non-local, respectively higher altitude hinterland and coastal) resources likewise demonstrate a capacity to exploit resources on a seasonal basis, which is essentially the same as what for instance the Thule Inuit did when they followed the migrations of sea mammals such as seal and whales, in order to hunt them, relocating temporarily to the outer fjord regions, the headlands or peninsulas.

In transplanting the shieling model, along with the pattern for the main farm building in which the whole farm unit—family, farmhands, animals and all—resided together during the long winter season, the Norse settlers of the Atlantic islands might be said to be conservative. If so, this conservatism incorporated at the same time a degree of adaptability, in that the settlers quickly learnt to adapt for instance the manner in which they built farm buildings to the circumstance that there was little or no timber to be had on Greenland.<sup>277</sup>

Thus when we speak of the conservatism of Norse settlers we must speak at the same time in terms of a nuanced, rather than a polarised picture. Furthermore, the fact that the Norse were capable of both adapting to the new environmental circumstances they encountered in the Atlantic islands, and likewise were capable of some degree of nomadism (if we may call it that), in their practice of relocating from season to season (winter to summer, farm to shieling or hunting station and back again)—a seasonal alternation they must have practised for untold generations back in the homeland of Norway—perhaps begs the question of why then they were not able to adapt further to the kind of more fully nomadic economy practised by the Thule Inuit in Greenland, and by the Sámi in northern Norway and the rest of Sápmi, with such success?

The answer may lie partly in the influence exerted by the Church on the

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<sup>277</sup> The same situation pertained in the Faroes, and what timber there was in pre-settlement era Iceland was all but decimated within a few generations of the *landnám*.

economic strategies adopted by the settlers who were soon baptised (probably within two decades of the settlement in the case of Greenland), and on their descendants: hunting as an economic strategy, but perhaps yet more so the religious conceptions and practices that came along with it, when contrasted with traditional Scandinavian stock farming, may have been considered as bordering on the ungodly, pagan, too similar to the practices of the heathen people to the north (the Inuit, the Sámi). In the eyes of churchmen, hunting was perhaps luridly associated with the alien cultures to the west and east of Scandinavian territories, and inextricably bound up ideologically with the religious beliefs and praxis of those peoples; in the context of the Greenland settlements the alien culture perceived as most threatening would of course have been the *skrælingar* of Greenland and Vinland, who are certainly in the first instance at least identical with the Thule Inuit, and who with the benefit of hindsight we can be reasonably sure resorted to shamans and shamanism in seeking to resolve economic crises.<sup>278</sup>

This economic strategy however fits much better with the ecology of Greenland than it does with for instance the Faroes, where a similar degree of economic conservatism evidently pertained for almost two centuries before the conversion of the inhabitants of the islands to Christianity. Perhaps then we need to question how conservative the Faroe Islanders (Orkney Islanders, Shetlanders, Icelanders, etc.) actually were, whether they in fact demonstrated a radical degree of adaptability in the form their subsistence economy came to take soon after their settlement of these respective territories; whether this economic adaptation in fact incorporated a significant degree of hunting and fishing; and whether this economy had a knock-on effect on the religious practices of the Norse settlers of these islands.

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<sup>278</sup> See for instance Eliade 1964:288-97.

### **Ecclesiastical repression of grassroots religious culture?**

To what extent might the Greenlandic clergy have put pressure on the poorer members of the community not to indulge in traditional rituals aimed at ensuring luck in hunting?—Poorer farmers who, to judge from the evidence of the Norse middens on Greenland, were dependent to a far greater extent on game meat, and thus on hunting (and good fortune in hunting) than the wealthier, better situated farmers and clergymen, who evidently ate a far higher proportion of farmed beef and lamb (as well as reindeer venison) than their impoverished neighbours.<sup>279</sup>

The relationship between the Sámi of northern Scandinavia and the Norwegian and Swedish clergy, which is far more extensively documented than that between the Church's diocese of Garðar on Greenland and its parishioners, may give clues to the kind of tensions that may have obtained between the Greenland clergy and in particular their poorer parishioners: that is, those farmers on the margins of the settlement in terms of access to good pasture land, those who were most dependent on hunting (seal and reindeer) as a means of subsistence; this poorer section of the community may well have constituted an increasing percentage of the settlement as the centuries passed.<sup>280</sup>

Both communities—Sámi and impoverished Greenland Norse hunter-farmers—found themselves on the social and economic periphery. We know that the Sámi continued to resort to shamans and shamanic rituals, and then principally as a means

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279 McGovern, Perdikaris & Tinsley 2001:161.

280 McGovern, Perdikaris & Tinsley 2001:159-60, e.g.: 'Poorer farms with smaller herds and flocks and less access to caribou were particularly dependent upon seal meat, and as herding conditions worsened in the later Middle Ages a higher percentage of farms probably slipped from middle ranking to poor status and diet.' (McGovern, Perdikaris & Tinsley 2001:160); ditto fishing: 'Coastal farmers in western Scandinavia ate astonishingly large quantities of fish. [...] Fish must have provided about 25 percent of the caloric demand of these peasants' households in normal years. In years when the grain crops failed, fish could save the peasants from starvation. There are reports of peasants surviving difficult winters on fish and water. This large consumption of fish was almost certainly the same in the Middle Ages and even earlier.' (Nedkvitne 1993:195)

of engendering hunting fortune, many centuries after their first contact with Christianity, and even after the aggressive and intensive missionary activity of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; indeed, even after the second wave of missionary activity in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, shamanistic elements survived within the religious culture of the Sámi communities, though public ritual activity was certainly, to an increasing extent, significantly if not wholly curtailed.<sup>281</sup>

There are numerous instances of the institution of shamanism surviving the transition of a culture from a strictly hunting economy to a pastoral economy.<sup>282</sup> In such cases, shamans are retained as the guardians of domesticated or semi-domesticated animals, an insurance policy against the uncertainties to which this means of subsistence, perhaps less so but by no means to a negligible degree, was also subject.<sup>283</sup> It is not implausible that Norse *seiðkonur* performed a similar professional service of protecting domestic livestock from predators natural and supernatural on behalf of communities of Norse stock farmers and farmer-hunters, and that this is what the ritual described in *Eiríks saga rauða* describes, whether it is based on a historical event or the generic pattern such rituals followed, replete with nuances of local colour.

Further, given that game meat seems to have formed a significant proportion of what Norse Greenlanders ate, the ritual specialist would have had to address the crises arising from this economic activity, alongside those faced by stock farmers. A similar dependence on game meat as that experienced by Greenlanders must also have applied in parts of Norway, especially in the coastal regions further north along Norway's Atlantic seaboard, ecologically commensurable with the fjords of Greenland,

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281 Many scholars such as Tolley regard this 18<sup>th</sup> century incarnation of *noaidevuohta* as 'moribund' (Tolley 1994:115-116, footnote 1).

282 Hamayon 1994:81-2.

283 Shamans could also play such a role in agricultural economies, not only pastoral ones (Hamayon 1994:81-2; Musi 2004:494).

and increasingly so the further north one settled. In this case, concepts and practices analogous to those conventionally labelled 'shamanistic' would not appear to be out of place in the context of a Norse frontier community and its economy. At least a proportion of Greenland's Scandinavian settlers appear to have come from Norway (some, such as Eiríkr rauði, via Iceland), and a pervading lesson learned from the archaeological record of Norse settlements on Greenland is that settlers sought to transpose economic strategies from the mainland Scandinavian model. This must be reckoned to include not only the stock farming but also the hunting element. One does not learn to hunt reindeer, seal and whale overnight, and the need to exploit these resources would have been at its most acute at the time of settlement and through a period of consolidation of herds of livestock.<sup>284</sup>

For a Norse community of this period, in these sub-Arctic and Arctic regions of the Norse diaspora, these economic conditions applied in the new settlement as in the old. If these conditions did give rise to corollary magical rituals along the lines of those performed by shamans, one would expect that these too would have been taken up irrespective of where a Norse community relocated to or coalesced, given those same economic preconditions. Continuity of economically-oriented religious or magical strategies would be encouraged, and innovations stimulated, by the economic opportunities arising from the ecological circumstances encountered in the environs of the new settlement.

In the case of the Norse communities on Greenland, older, pre-Conversion, traditional ritual methods of engendering hunting fortune, in this environment where game very quickly become a staple in the diet of the settlers and their descendants, may have been revived or simply carried over by the farmers (or hunter-farmers) of the Greenland *byggð*. If so, they may have been able to do so for significant periods

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284 Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 1997.



away from the watchful eyes of the clergy, given that it was a typical state of affairs for the nominally resident bishop of Garðar to be absent from and not physically resident in Greenland for long periods of his term of office.<sup>285</sup>

The question then would be: to what extent were the Norse settlements on Greenland communities in which there was a high degree of homogeneity as regards religious ideology, or was there on the contrary a schism (or schisms) resulting from the demonstrable economic schism or disparity between the poorest and the richest farms of the colonies? Would, in fact, such economic disparity, and its corollary, namely the dependence of the poorer farmers on game—on hunting as a means of putting food on the table—have tended to be conducive to a return to older Scandinavian traditions, beliefs and rituals, which clearly went against the religious beliefs and rituals (the religio-economic strategies) prescribed by the Church, but which on the other hand had the virtue of being in tune with the spiritual and psychological needs of a hunting community?

This was a hunting community which in turn was pragmatically in tune with the requirements for economic success and survival dictated by the particular topographical, climatological and ecological characteristics of the fjords of southwestern Greenland (and their hinterland, the Norðrsetur). As several scholars observe, the attempts of the church to dictate the economic strategy, a strategy which flew in the face of the local conditions on Greenland, may ultimately have proved fatal for the colony as a whole.<sup>286</sup>

Such (hypothesised) older rituals are perhaps not explicit in the textual sources for Scandinavia of the late first millennium, but must almost certainly have been part

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285 Arneborg 1991; cf. *Det gamle Grønlands beskrivelse af Ívar Bárðarson*, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1930.

286 See e.g. Arneborg et al. 2002; Barlow et al. 1996; Berglund 1986, 2000; Buckland 2000; Christensen 1991; Keller 2000; Lynnerup 2000; Martens 1992; McGovern 1980, 1981, 1991, 1992, 2000.

of the native religious culture, having developed originally as a corollary of the hunting culture which we know existed and formed a significant part of the subsistence economy in pre-historic Scandinavia and persisted long into the historical era (most extensively in the northernmost parts of the Scandinavian peninsula, in Sweden and especially in coastal Arctic and sub-Arctic Norway).

In broad terms, one of the principal functions of this religious component of the culture of Scandinavian hunting communities would be to resolve the anxieties which inevitably arise in such communities as a consequence of the uncertainties inherent in the nature of the economy and its resources. Put simply, if the community's hunters failed to bag a catch, the community would go hungry. Therefore, a significant proportion of the religious activity of such a community would address the matter of future and continued access to and successful acquisition of the main source(s) of food, upon which the continued social integrity (and indeed very existence) of the community was predicated.

Given that the Church and its rituals does not seem in any palpable way to have addressed the dearth of food suffered by the poorer farmers—beyond perhaps a minimum level of redistribution, sufficient to keep the poor poor and maintain the status quo whereby the Church remained entrenched at the top of the economic hierarchy—these farmers may have sought other means, other avenues, both economic and religious, of achieving these aims, of addressing these needs.

Furthermore, the irrationality of channelling so much of the limited manpower and scarce resources which were at the Greenland settlements' disposal into building opulent churches, manpower which was at a premium in the stock farming economy of Greenland where the maximum amount of haymaking had to be done in the relatively short Greenlandic summers, may have given cause for reflection and indeed cynicism on the part of the neediest members of the community. This might in turn

have led them to resort (or revert) to a dissident form of religion (or religiosity) which was more in tune with their economic needs, which addressed their immediate priorities, directly. Such religiosity would of course have been significantly at odds with the ideology and precepts of the Church.

Whilst it seems likely (based on what we know or can reconstruct of the more extensively and more reliably documented conversion of communities such as the Sámi of Scandinavia to Christianity) that in the period of religious transition in Greenland, in a community made up of both Christians and non-Christians, here as elsewhere there were points at which an individual or a group of hitherto non-Christians felt convinced of the efficacy and the validity of one or the other religious system, each sold on the basis of its relative merits, and certainly for a period—perhaps a very long period indeed—both. Both, simultaneously, may have been considered equally valid and viable belief systems *per se*, each applied in and to its perceived existential jurisdiction or area of particular influence. The tradition of Helgi *in magri* seems to attest to a mentality whereby hedging—or splitting—of bets in this way was considered shrewd, viable, spiritually acceptable at least within the bounds of one's personal and private relationship with supernatural powers perceived as able to influence one's existential circumstances.<sup>287</sup>

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287 *Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:250-3, and see further Kristiansen 1995 for an example of similar religious syncretism from more recent popular tradition. Alongside the conscious and deliberate cultivation of relations with two sources of supernatural influence—not necessarily *mutually* opposed or intolerant, rather the incoming intolerant of the ostensibly outgoing—we ought also to reckon with a less intentional or conscious confusion or conflation of elements of ritual praxis belonging to the respective belief systems, both during a transitional period and in ongoing popular religious tradition. DuBois (1999:86-7) sees, in the account of the epidemic, resultant deaths and revenant dead at Lýsufjörðr in *Eiríks saga rauða* 6, a didactic commentary on the importance of the segregation of the pagan from the Christian dead, and the observance of appropriate burial practice with respect to each. The initial failure to do so—with respect to both—viz. to bury the Christian dead in hallowed ground and cremating the dead pagan Garði, and the decision to get the dead below ground immediately, has directly lead to the situation that they *ganga aþr*, according to DuBois' reading of the narrative. Resort to the pragmatic (and in this instance also hygienic) expedient, even if, as is here the case, this deviated from the letter of the law with respect to prescribed Christian funeral customs, may

My contention is that the non-Christian religious strategy would likely, in the context of the ecological, economic and social conditions which (climatological, palynological, archaeological and historical data strongly suggest) prevailed on Greenland at this time, have been reckoned particularly by the poorest farmers as the more apt and efficacious of the two in the circumstances, for it sought to address directly, practically and pragmatically the economic crises which would have been a regular occurrence in the kind of hand-to-mouth economy that seems to have obtained in Norse Greenland. And even where a farm or community was not particularly impoverished, it was necessary to resort to these measures in desperate times.

Shamanism, being as it is a pragmatic religious strategy, adapting to the immediate, contemporary economic realities of the situation in which a community finds itself, and addressing itself to these realities, constitutes as such a far more dynamic approach to any given crisis than that offered by the Christian church, with its relatively inflexible scripture-based response to earthly matters (including economic crises).

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also indicate, as much as confusion or ignorance, a more general readiness among farmers faced with extreme circumstances to adopt a pragmatic solution to a crisis over strict observance of said religious praxis, to bend the rules.

## Two models for interpreting the *seiðr* episode in *Eiríks saga rauða*:

### a) as a product of the late 10<sup>th</sup> century

For the sake of argument (and of testing this theory), the description of the *seiðr* ritual in chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða* is taken to be (potentially) a genuine tradition. This perspective also reckons with the fact that the tradition has inevitably been subject to later hagiographically-motivated interpolations, traditional and literary accretions and so forth; which is to say it constitutes a version of events which to a greater or lesser extent has acquired secondary (tertiary, etc.) layers of meaning. For instance, literary motifs may have been attached to the original account, as Grambo points out.<sup>288</sup>

These accumulated layers have potentially also been premeditated and motivated by specific political aims. One likely example of such an accretion is the association of the young Christian woman Guðríðr with the ritual. Both her role in ensuring, through her exceptionally accomplished rendition of the *varðlok(k)ur*, that the ritual is efficacious,<sup>289</sup> and Þorbjörg's prophecy regarding how illustrious her descendants will be, are strongly suggestive of a retrospective revision of the text either by a descendant of Guðríðr or a clergyman—perhaps in the service of a bishop—with an interest in emphasising the piety of this ancestress of two later bishops of Iceland and of the mother (or mother-in-law) of a third by interpolating Guðríðr into

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288 Grambo 1984a.

289 'Kvað Guðríðr þá kvæðit svá fagrt ok vel, at engi þóttisk fyrr heyrt hafa með fegri raust kveðit, sá er þar var. [...] margar náttúrir nú 'higat [*sic.*] 'hafa' at sótt ok þótti fagrt at heyra þat er kveðit var, er áðr vildi frá oss snúask ok oss öngva hlýðni veita.' ('Guðríðr sang the song so beautifully and well that no one there remembered having heard it sung with a prettier voice. [...] many *náttúrir* which previously wanted to turn away from us and not heed us have now converged here, for they thought it sweet to hear what was sung.') AM 557 4to, 29v-30r, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 1985:412-3.

the account of the ritual.<sup>290</sup> Notably, Haukr Erlendsson (identified as Haukr *lögmaðr*),<sup>291</sup> commissioner and one of the scribes of the manuscript AM 544 4to (Hauksbók),<sup>292</sup> in which one of the two extant redactions of *Eiríks saga rauða* is preserved, was himself a descendant of Guðríðr, at least according to the genealogy which concludes the redaction.<sup>293</sup>

It is even theoretically possible that the composition of the entire text was motivated by this ecclesiastical revisionist agenda, but such a hypothesis would depend in turn upon demonstrating convincingly that the whole saga revolves around Guðríðr; arguably a figure such as Leifr Eiríksson represents a more central character. If Guðríðr is the core around which the saga is built, one would perhaps then be required to subscribe to the theory that the remainder of the saga to a significant extent utilises *Grænlandinga saga* as the model (a mediated source) for other events described in *Eiríks saga rauða*—whilst at the same time revising a number of the details of that text. These include the actors to whom given actions are assigned and who feature in particular events, perhaps principally the attribution of the discovery of Vínland to Bjarni Herjólfsson in *Grænlandinga saga* but to Leifr Eiríksson in *Eiríks saga rauða*.<sup>294</sup> Jónas Kristjánsson reviews the scholarly debate on this matter and concludes, following Sigurður Nordal,<sup>295</sup> that there is a greater likelihood that the two sagas are relatively independent compositions, based on the same tradition in the form

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290 Guðríðr, according to the genealogy in *Grænlandinga saga* chapter 9, was the great-great-grandmother of Brandr Sæmundarson, bishop of Hólar 1163–1201, the great-grandmother of Björn Gilsson, bishop of Hólar 1147–62, and the grandmother of the wife of the father of Þorlákr Rúnólfsson, bishop of Skálholt 1118–33 (*Grænlandinga saga* ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:269; Magnus Magnusson & Hermann Pálsson 1965:71 notes 4 and 5, and 72 note 1).

291 ⟨havks logmannz⟩, *Eiríks saga rauða*, AM 544 4to (Hauksbók) 35v, ed. Jansson 1945:81. Haukr served as *lögmaðr* both in Iceland and later in Norway (Gunnar Harðarson & Stefán Karlsson 1993:271).

292 Parts or all of this redaction of *Eiríks saga rauða* may even have been copied (interpolated into and emended) by Haukr's own hand, see Gunnar Harðarson & Stefán Karlsson 1993:271.

293 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 544 4to redaction) 35v, ed. Jansson 1945:81.

294 For a discussion of the conflicting versions of events in the respective sagas, see e.g. Perkins 2004.

295 Nordal 1953:248–9.

it took at different points in time, in different parts of Iceland, mediated through mutually divergent local and migratory traditions.<sup>296</sup>

The fact that, as Þorbjörg explicitly states, Guðríðr can potentially help the community by singing the *varðlok(k)ur*—'sva metti verda at þv yrdir monnum at liði her vm en þv værir þa kona ekki veri enn aðr. enn vid þorkel mvn ek meta at fa þa hlvti til er hafa þarf'—might indicate that it amounts to more than divination, constitutes in fact a *shaping* of the future as much as a prediction of it.<sup>297</sup> The final statement indicates that Þorbjörg ultimately gets her way by exerting pressure on her host Þorkell, he in turn obliging Guðríðr to play her part in the ritual. On one level then, Guðríðr might thus be said merely to be conforming to medieval Icelandic rules of etiquette, a factor which perhaps overrides the primacy we might otherwise assign to her Christian sensibilities, in seeking to demonstrate that the portrayal of Guðríðr as an exemplary Christian-among-heathens of the first millennium derives from an act (or cumulative acts) of ecclesiastical revision.<sup>298</sup>

Furthermore, even if, with Dag Strömbäck, and Bo Almqvist in turn, we regard Þorbjörg's prophecy, or at any rates parts of it, as having been interpolated into an account which is otherwise based on knowledge of traditional practices,<sup>299</sup> it is in

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296 Jónas Kristjánsson 1988:270-3.

297 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 557 4to redaction) ch. 4, ed. Jansson 1945:42. 'it might be that you can help the people here, and people won't think any less of you for it. And I expect Þorkell to provide me with what I need.'

298 'Guðríðr segir: 'Þetta er þess konar atferli at ek ætla í öngum atbeina at vera, þvíat em ek kona kristin.' ('Guðríðr said: "I have no intention of assisting in this sort of thing, for I am a Christian.") AM 557 4to, 29v, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 1985:412.

299 Almqvist formulates this theory as follows: 'det som berättats om sejdscenen sedan av sagaförfattaren – och måhända delvis redan på det muntliga planet – ändrats, så att Gudrids roll i sammanhanget förskönats och drag som från kristen synpunkt vore anstötliga utelämnats eller tonats ned' ('that which the saga author relates concerning the *seiðr* séance—and perhaps to some degree already in the oral phase of its transmission—was changed such that Guðríðr's role in the events was talked up, while aspects which from a Christian point-of-view were unpalatable left out or toned down') Almqvist 2000:245-6, while Strömbäck speaks in terms of 'en medveten tendens hos sagaförfattaren att glorifiera "biskopmodern" och framställa henne såsom ett för kommande värv utkorat redskap och

fact possible to take the first statement as original or genuine tradition and the second as a later addition, interpolation or accretion.

### **b) As a product of the thirteenth century (and later)**

An alternative perspective on chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga* pays closer attention to the saga in its incarnation as text and codex (to be more precise, as two versions of a common text, incorporated into two separate medieval codices), but without completely turning a blind eye to the social and political implications of the text (indeed, very much taking these historiographical factors into account). The perspective here proposed in fact focuses on the social or political agenda which might lie behind the composition of the text in the thirteenth century (around 1200, in the opinion of Hans Bekker-Nielsen).<sup>300</sup> *Eiríks saga rauða* may have been composed in such a way as to advance a given political agenda, and incorporate a subtext addressing the contemporary situation in the society in which it was produced.

On the basis of the conclusions of research into the provenance of the saga in the forms we have it and the date and circumstances of its composition, these factors can be localised and temporalised to an almost certainly ecclesiastical scribal milieu in

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tillika såsom ett ljus bland hedningarna', concluding that 'Antingen får man väl uppfatta *hela* volvans spådom om Guðríðr såsom en senare utsmyckning, eller också får man ta kapitlet, sådant det är, d.v.s. såsom en enhetlig framställning. Men väljer man det förra, så kvarstår likvisst frågan: Varför föres spåkvinnan här i sagan? Hon har ju ingen som helst betydelse för sagan, om hennes spådom om Guðríðr tas bort ur densamma. Såsom ovan framhållits uppfatta vi hela kapitlet såsom en av sagaförfatteren uppbyggd framställning syftande till Guðríðs glorifiering.' ('a deliberate tendency on the part of the saga author to glorify the "bishops' mother" and present her as a tool selected for [i.e. to advance the cause of] the impending mission and as a light among the heathens [...] Either one must interpret the *völva's* prophecy concerning Guðríðr *in its entirety* as a later accretion, or one must take the chapter as a whole as it stands i.e. as a unified account. But if one opts for the former, the question remains: Why is the prophetess introduced into the saga? She has in fact no significance whatsoever for the overarching narrative if her prophecy regarding Guðríðr is removed. As emphasised above we must take the chapter in its entirety as an account put together by the saga author for the purpose of glorifying Guðríðr', author's own emphasis), Strömbäck 1935:56-7, 59.

300 Bekker-Nielsen 1982:199.



Iceland in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A *terminus post quem* for the saga is set at around 1263–4 on the grounds that the composer of the text in the form we have it had knowledge of there having been a Bishop Brandr the Second.<sup>301</sup> A *terminus ante quem* can be placed at around 1306–8, this being the dating ascribed by at least a section of scholarly opinion to the part of Hauksbók in which the older redaction of the saga is preserved. This is the section catalogued as AM 544 4to, which is furthermore thought to have been partially written by Haukr Erlendsson himself. If this is indeed the case, it puts an absolute latest date of composition for this version of the saga at 1334, the year Haukr died; this assuming Haukr personally wrote at least the very last part of the saga, which concludes with the genealogy in which he is himself the youngest descendant.<sup>302</sup>

Having established provisional dates for the period in which *Eiríks saga rauða* was composed, and in which the oldest extant redaction was copied (and conceivably simultaneously interpolated into and/or emended), we can now sketch a picture of the probable environments in which saga and redaction came into being in these periods, so as to be able to better gauge the kind of forces which may have influenced the composer's (and thereby the text's) outlook on his (putatively historical) subject matter, the light in which he presented it, the purposes to which he put it, and in

301 Without the existence of whom it would unnecessary to indicate the Brandr mentioned in the text as being Bishop Brandr *the First*. The two redactions of *Eiríks saga rauða* agree here—AM 544 4to: ›branz byskvps hins fyra ›; AM 557 4to ›brandz. byskups. hins fyrra› (ed. Jansson 1945:81)—where *Grœnlendinga saga* mentions merely Brands byskups (ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:269).

302 Gunnar Harðarson & Stefán Karlsson 1995:271. 'Two charters in which Haukr is mentioned, written in 1302 and 1310, are in the same hand as a considerable portion of *Hauksbók*. This hand is undoubtedly his own, the oldest known hand of an identified Icelander. [...] it appears likely that AM 371 4to [viz. another of the three manuscripts which make up *Hauksbók*], as well as AM 544 4to, fols. 22–59 and 69–107, were written in this period, possibly 1306–1308, when Haukr was on a mission to Iceland, and AM 544 4to, fols. 60–68, around or after 1310.' *Eiríks saga rauða* takes up folios 93r–101v of AM 544 4to, and is dated according to the sigla of the *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* (1989:236) to c. 1302–1310. The Skálholtsbók redaction of the saga is found on folios 27r–35v of AM 557 4to, dated to c. 1420–1450.

general the subjective nuances and historiographical tendencies perceptible in the text in the form we have it.

In the fourteenth century Iceland suffered both the Black Death (bubonic plague) and the Little Ice Age which affected the whole of northern Europe and must have affected the quality of life and the productivity of farmers in Iceland just as it seems to have done in Greenland, to judge from the testimony of the archaeological record.<sup>303</sup>

Although the coming of the Black Death to Iceland certainly postdates the composition of (and the copying of the earlier of the two redactions of) the saga,<sup>304</sup> the conception of a personified spirit of disease of the kind represented by the figure of Pesta in Norwegian tradition may all the same have been current, and vivid, in the thoughts of the scribe or scribes who composed and copied the saga.<sup>305</sup> We cannot exclude the possibility that Icelanders—the informants of scribes (and people with whom they had contact) and perhaps in some instances scribes themselves—may have experienced the plague in Norway or further afield (for instance in the British Isles), at an earlier date. In any case, if there was any awareness in Iceland—if news of the disease and how deadly it was had reached people there—they would surely have dreaded its imminent crossing of the Atlantic.

Experience (or third-hand information, or dread) of both of these natural disasters (plague and severe climatic cooling)—disasters, that is, judged from a purely human perspective—may then have fed into the description of the ritual described in chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða*, and in particular into the description of the purported

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303 McGovern 1981, 1991.

304 It first reached Iceland in 1402, having come to Norway in 1349 on an English merchant ship which docked in Bergen. Iceland was spared an epidemic on this occasion (and for another half century) thanks to the lack of ships sailing between Norway and Iceland in the years 1349-51 (Møller-Christensen 1968:240).

305 On Pesta see e.g. Grambo 1984b:397.

ecological and epidemiological circumstances surrounding and necessitating the performance of the ritual in the first place. The concern with, and descriptively detailed focus upon, a remedy to the crises constituted by disease and the increasingly cold climate may reflect a saga composer inspired by the contemporary environmental and medical circumstances which were current and of concern in his lifetime to reflect and ponder whether older, traditional strategies for coping with such circumstances would prove more efficacious than those of which the Christian clergy was capable. The experience of the plague would have been especially vivid for the scribes themselves, as monks and clergymen, for it was they who would have been personally engaged in efforts to treat and cure victims of the plague, and as a consequence of this it seems to have been precisely they, the literate members of society, who were among those who suffered proportionally the most fatalities as victims of the disease.

For the purposes of this investigation, then, it is assumed that the ritual described in chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða* took place where and when it is said to have done. We can also, as noted, with Strömbäck, assume the text to be a fabrication, a learned composition, and here too we can inform our understanding of the text through adopting a contextualist perspective, and by asking with what contemporary economic and social conditions would the composer of the text have been familiar in the time and the milieu in which he lived—would for instance *sóttfarar*, *hallæri* have been familiar and concrete realities for him? Assuming the composer was an Icelander, we may postulate that he was, indeed, familiar with times of economic hardship.<sup>306</sup>

Furthermore we may consider the wider textual and codicological contexts:

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306 Hardship of the kind experienced by Icelanders increasingly after Iceland surrendered its independence to the Norwegian Crown in the 1260s, after which the latter failed (in the long term) to honour a pledge that regular sailings of merchant ships would be made between the two countries (cf. e.g. Jones 1986).

what is the role of chapter 4 within the saga as a whole, and are we justified in seeing it—even if, as Strömbäck argues, Þorbjörg 'har ju ingen som helst betydelse för sagan, om hennes spådom om Guðríðr tas bort ur densamma'<sup>307</sup>—as a piece of genuine tradition or recollection embedded in a saga in which a number of such traditions are joined together by more literary, perhaps knowingly fabricated prose? A piece of tradition into which, in turn, the revisionist composer has inserted a conspicuously homiletic detail, namely Þorbjörg's prophecy of Guðríðr and her descendants' illustrious futures.

With respect to the codex, we might also ask whether there is any broader scheme or theme which lies behind the inclusion of precisely this text among precisely those others with which the saga shares the pages of the two manuscripts in which it is preserved.

Regarding the possibility that a reflexive humanitarian impulse lies behind the choice to include the text in these two codices, or to copy it at all, in preference to other saga texts that may have been available to the scribes of these manuscripts at the time of their composition, it is significant that, depending on what dating one ascribes on the one hand to Skálholtsbók (the Icelandic palaeographer Stefán Karlsson reckons ca. 1420–1450),<sup>308</sup> and on the other to the demise of the Norse settlements on Greenland (about 1450 being the broad consensus),<sup>309</sup> the production of both codices, and in any case the older, is contemporary with the lifetime of the Greenland *byggð* and their inhabitants.

In light of the picture provided by textual, archaeological and climatological evidence—namely that the economic situation for the Greenlanders bordered more and more on the desperate as the centuries passed—we may speculate whether the

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307 Strömbäck 1935:59.

308 Stefán Karlsson 1970:137–8.

309 See e.g. Berglund 1991.

scribes by whom, or the patron for whom the manuscripts were produced perhaps had family connections with the Eystribyggð. Such family ties between Icelanders and Greenlanders until late in the lifespan of the Norse settlements on Greenland are attested by the letters, one drafted in Greenland, two in Iceland, dated respectively 1409, 1414 and 1424, announcing the marriage of Sigríður Björnsdóttur and Þorstein Ólafsson at Hvalsey in Greenland in the year 1408.<sup>310</sup> If so there may well lie some political or humanitarian agenda behind the depiction of the precarious and evidently at times desperate economic situation in Greenland, and the cooperation depicted between the heathen *völva* and the young Christian woman might then be an appeal—couched in the symbolic language of allegory—for solidarity and spiritual amnesty in hard times for the sake of the survival of the community, and the wider settlement, as a whole.

### **The shamanistic template as a corroborative methodological tool**

If, in accordance with interpretative model a) proposed above, the account of the ritual in *Eiríks saga rauða* represents genuine tradition, that is to say a recollection of an actual event—and this is a big if—we must all the same assume a certain degree (perhaps a high degree) of corruption of a hypothesised ‘original’ account (or memorate), both during the oral and the scriptural stages of its transmission and preservation.<sup>311</sup>

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310 Ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 1978:143-4.

311 Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen expresses the view that it is ultimately impossible to determine whether parts or the whole of the account of *seiðr* in chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða* derive from traditional-oral or learned-literary tradition. Thus: 'Det er neppe tvil om at skildringene av en profesjonell vólva som drar omkring med stort følge er litterær lån fra en saga til en annen, men det er ikke lett å bestemme hvilke sagaer som er låntakere og hvilke som er långivere. Heller ikke lar det seg gjøre å skille mellom litterær utforming og eventuelt eldre muntlig tradisjon i skildringene av völrur [...]' ('There is scarcely any doubt that the two accounts of a professional *völva* who travels around with a large entourage is a literary loan from one saga to another, but it is not easy to determine which sagas have loaned and which have been loaned from. Nor is it possible to distinguish between literary accretion and potentially older oral

Therefore it is necessary to make reference to and comparison with independent evidence (archaeological, climatological and textual), to determine whether the ritual as it is described is congruous with its chronological, geographical, social, environmental, ecological and economic context, for if it is this makes it more plausible that it did take place where and when it is purported to have done. However it is acknowledged we will never achieve certainty in this matter, only (potentially) greater degrees of probability.

As discussed earlier, the wealth of details in the description of the *spákona* Þorbjörg lítilvölva have been discussed extensively by a number of scholars, and frequently compared with ethnographic descriptions of Siberian shamans. Where correspondences have been noted between these respective sources—on the one hand the saga, on the other ethnographic data—these have been regarded as demonstrating the congruity of these details, such as for instance the description of Þorbjörg's costume and accoutrements, with those of an archetypical shaman, *ergo*, *seiðr* is a kind of shamanism. Thus Grambo remarks that:

I det hele tatt virker skildringen av drakten hennes meget troverdig når en tenker på de paralleller en kan trekke med sjamandrakter i Sibir. Det har helt sikkert eksistert visse faste normer for hvordan en trollkyndig kvinne skulle opptre ved ulike anledninger.<sup>312</sup>

The sources are, it goes without saying, of a quite different character from one another. Whatever the reliability or otherwise of *Eiríks saga rauða* as a source (ultimately for an alleged historical event), it is in any case not an ethnographic

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tradition in the depictions of *völur*.) Halvorsen 1976:357.

312 Grambo 1984a:63. 'The depiction of [Þorbjörg's] attire seems plausible bearing in mind the parallels with Siberian shaman's costumes. There must have been fixed conventions for how a female magician was to dress on different occasions.'

description as such, given by what we would classify as an anthropologist in the modern sense of the word, or in any case an eyewitness to cultural practices consciously engaged in documenting said practices. Rather it is a text composed several centuries after the event by a scribe with spiritual allegiances theoretically in conflict with the religious ideas described in the text. This must inevitably colour the presentation of the ‘facts’ to some extent.

Many of the abundant details of the account are impossible to verify. Ultimately when dealing with a source such as this we will never be able to achieve any certainty in our conclusions, but it is perhaps possible to establish a greater degree of likelihood. One area of the account we may be able to verify from independent sources—archaeological, climatological, palynological, and textual-historical—is the wider environmental and social context within which the ritual is purported to have taken place.<sup>313</sup>

This aspect is also relevant to the interpretation of the account within a shamanistic framework, inasmuch as shamanism was a religious technique tailored to the spiritual needs of hunting communities, suited to tackling the economic crises such communities faced on a regular basis.

Furthermore, shamanism is characterised by the quality of adapting itself to the immediate circumstances in which it was applied. In this sense it was a highly adaptable, dynamic and pragmatic religious technique or strategy. This is not to say it is not on some level also conservative, preserving older forms and traditions over longer periods.<sup>314</sup> But above all the function of the shaman was to tackle the situation

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313 Later we may also consider the wider religious climate in Norway and those islands over which it claimed sovereignty in the North Atlantic, within the framework of which the Norse settlers would seem to have found their own spiritual niche.

314 Although having said this we on the whole lack sufficient historical records of shamanic ritual to be able to more than reconstruct a picture of its diachronic development—or lack of development—within one and the same culture over longer periods of time.

at hand, and as such the shamanic ritual represents the nexus of the past—the traditional lore and techniques into which the shaman has been inducted as an initiate—and the now, the circumstances of the present moment. The spatial context of the ritual might on the other hand vary from season to season—in the case of nomadic communities—but within this overarching annual cycle there was in almost all cases a high degree of continuity: even if one moved from one valley to the next, the environmental and economic circumstances would not have been unfamiliar.

Given this way in which shamanism is embedded in and intimately related to the needs and circumstances of the community in the here and now, if we are then to thoroughly investigate the question of ‘*seiðr* as shamanism’, we clearly need to pay close attention to the immediate social and environmental context of the ritual and the crisis it addresses in the time and place in which it is said to have taken place.

Having established this context, we may then on a firmer footing make comparisons between the *seiðr* practised in one place and that practised in another. And we ought to reckon with heterogeneity within the pan-Scandinavian tradition of *seiðr*. Ideas about the magical ritual given the same *seiðr* will take a different form in different parts of the Norse diaspora at different times; that it will be tailored to the immediate needs and circumstances of the communities or individuals for which it is performed.<sup>315</sup> Perhaps paradoxically, it is in its very variability that *seiðr* demonstrates a similarity with other shamanisms, which are equally as pragmatic and contingent in the forms they manifest themselves in different places at different times *within the same culture*, as well as from one culture to another. Variation is the rule, not the exception.

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315 I will almost exclusively be concerning myself with *seiðr* as a communal domestic ritual, rituals aimed at helping the community, at resolving shared economic crises, angst and uncertainty about the future, disease epidemics, and so on. I will not as such be dealing with *seiðr* as practised in secret as malevolent magic aimed at wreaking disruption, destruction and death in the lives of others, as treated by e.g. Strömbäck 1935 *passim*, Price 2002, Raudvere 2002.



Scholars of Old Norse religion have for some time now reckoned with a good degree of heterogeneity across Scandinavia and its Atlantic and Baltic colonies in terms of religious conceptions and practices, and heterogeneity within the *seiðr* complex would be wholly consistent with this model.<sup>316</sup> Having made this point about heterogeneity, we may nonetheless observe points of concordance between the *seiðr* purported to have been practised at Herjólfssnes and that said to have been practised, for instance, in parts of northern Norway, an example being the divination ritual described in *Vatnsdæla saga* as having been performed by *finna ein fjölkynnig* at a farm in Romsdal (ON Raumsdalr). Given the environmental circumstances these communities found themselves in, they might have been dependent on hunting as a staple of their diet to a comparable degree as the community at Herjólfssnes, along with other peripheral farms within the Greenland Norse *byggð*.<sup>317</sup>

It is here that we can turn our focus to the location of *seiðr* practice on the geographic and social periphery. This may, as Catharina Raudvere suggests, reflect purely a perception on the part of those situated closer to and more closely integrated into the scribal milieu which flourished around medieval centres of culture such as the cathedral schools of Iceland, that strange things went on in the communities on the edge of the known world.

Another possibility is that *seiðr* was pushed to the margins both of individual Norse communities and of the Norse area as a whole, taking on the status and character of a kind of dissident religious complex, a ‘counter-power in society’ in Roberte Hamayon’s phrase.<sup>318</sup> With first of all the unification of petty kingdoms into nation states, principally Haraldr *hárfagri*’s attempt to master Norway in the late ninth

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316 A state of affairs stressed e.g. by DuBois 1999, *passim*.

317 Archaeological and historiographical evidence would certainly seem to suggest as much, see pp. 176–7 above concerning Ohthere’s account in King Alfred’s *Orosius*, Gjessing 1941, Johnsen 1962.

318 Hamayon 1994.

century, and the subsequent and increasing ideological ground won by the Christian faith and by the Church in acquiring (or appropriating) property and executive power in the Scandinavian homelands—*seiðr* would inevitably have been driven to the social periphery.

This pattern accords with the paradigm observed in areas where indigenous cultures practising shamanism have found their territories suddenly part of a sovereign state, and themselves citizens of that state, where the encounter between them and their state government, be they Buddhist monks, Muslims, Christians or Soviets, has been characterised by mutual suspicion, with the state ultimately succeeding either in marginalising or actively suppressing the religious practices of the indigenous people, in many cases by means of the application of brutal martial force. In this way for instance various Siberian tribes were persecuted during the Soviet era, their traditions illegalised.<sup>319</sup>

Accounts such as that of the burning of Rognvaldr *réttilbeini* by Eiríkr blóðox, son of the Norwegian king Haraldr *hárfagri*,<sup>320</sup> bear comparison with such persecution, as of course does the persecution of Sámi *noaidit* by Lutheran missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Lappmarks of northern Sweden, Finland and Norway.

In such a religious climate as evidently obtained in Scandinavia in the last decades of the first millennium, a *seiðr* practitioner *c.* 990 would presumably then have found him or herself stigmatized and persecuted by the growing Christian faction within this society. In light of this it is all the more notable that while there is evident distaste expressed by individual Christian members of the community resident at Herjólfssnes at the time of the ritual—most notably Guðríðr's father Þorbjörn, who

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319 Balzer 1990.

320 *Haralds saga hárfagra* ch. 36, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:63–4.

absents himself for the duration of the ritual—there is also tolerance on the part of Guðríðr herself.

*Eiríks saga rauða* presents a picture of intergenerational religious schism within Christian opinion of *seiðr*, while in contrast we encounter (as we would perhaps expect) among the ranks of the heathen section of the community at Herjólfssnes (who at this point in time are evidently still in the ascendancy, numerically and spiritually), a united front of solidarity and consent with respect to Þorbjörg and the ritual she orchestrates; indeed some of those present even take part in the ritual. The text paints a picture of a strength and depth of tradition of *seiðr* ritual in this community, and by extension in the wider society of which it is a part. It likewise attests to the fundamental position *seiðr* held—as a kind of economic insurance policy—in this Greenland Norse community (and presumably then in other such communities).

Þorbjörg's eagerness for Guðríðr to take part in the *seiðr* ritual may reflect the pragmatism and contingency characteristic of shamans and shamanisms. It may also, as some scholars have suggested,<sup>321</sup> and as discussed above, reflect a revisionist agenda on the part of the composer of the saga, or his patrons, in that Guðríðr—as Þorbjörg explicitly states—can help the community by participating in the ritual, as much as it might go against her Christian principles and sensibilities. Thus a greater good is achieved through the temporary pact with the heathen *vǫlva*, and this fits comfortably with the broader Christian ethic. Nonetheless such cooperation between heathen and Christian in the sphere of religious ritual is fairly exceptional, indeed a more or less unprecedented occurrence—the peaceful coexistence of heathens and Christians was perhaps more common—and this begs the question was there some deeper agenda behind the spirit of cooperation depicted in this account.

In light of this we might ask whether *seiðr* in fact need necessarily be so

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321 E.g. Strömbäck 1935, Ólafur Halldórsson 1978.

inextricably bound up with ‘heathenism’ *per se*—whatever consistent system heathenism might or might not constitute—that it could not survive the transition to Christianity. There are numerous examples of later Scandinavian folk traditions exhibiting clearly old, ultimately heathen, conceptions which have survived up to the present day in an unbroken tradition.<sup>322</sup> Why then should shamanistic traditions not also have survived in a similar manner, perhaps as an integral part of these same folk traditions, just as Sámi folklore preserves distinct ritual patterns and conceptions which ultimately must derive from shamanistic and animistic ideas.<sup>323</sup> Examples of shamanistic traditions surviving in other parts of Europe—Italy, Romania, Hungary—long since Christianised, well before Scandinavia in the case of the Italian traditions, constitute a clear precedent for the survival of such ideas, and even in some cases ritual traditions, almost up to the present day.<sup>324</sup> Grambo indeed sees shamanistic elements in Norwegian folk tradition, amongst other places in the figure of Pesta, the Black Death, which as the personification of a spirit of disease fits very well into an archetypal shamanic cosmology.<sup>325</sup>

Given the manifest relevance of *seiðr* to the lives of Scandinavian farmers, it may be that *seiðr* was one of those heathen traditions that were carried over into the period Christianity was imposed as state religion in Scandinavia. In the context of the hybrid pastoral-hunting economies of regions such as Norway and Greenland (and Iceland for that matter), *seiðr* may have been regarded as a necessary practical complement to or element in the successful running of a farm and exploitation of local resources, as essential as pesticides or scarecrows are regarded as being by farmers of more recent times.

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322 See e.g. Ögmundur Helgason 1990 for an overview.

323 Pollan 1990, 1993.

324 See contributions to Hoppál 1984, e.g. Klaniczay 1984.

325 Grambo 1984b. See also Pollan 1990 in this respect.

Probably the pragmatically minded hunter-farmers and *fiskebønder* who resorted to *seiðkonur* and their *seiðr* rituals would never at any point have even contemplated abandoning their association with these people, were it not for the fact that they were almost certainly subject to external (that is to say non-local) pressures. Their principal reason for ostensibly desisting from consulting such ritual specialists—whilst perhaps continuing to do so more privately or surreptitiously—was that they would have been pressured and intimidated by laws of the kind prohibiting the consultation of *finnar* in the Norwegian regional law-codes, and (presumably) the heavy-handed enforcement of these laws by the ruling echelons of society and those elements of society who supported them in their enforcement of an executive and spiritual hegemony.

Thus *seiðr*, from formerly having been a spiritual cornerstone of the Norse economy, if it persisted at all beyond the conversion period, would have assumed the position of a dissident form of spirituality, at odds with the dominant and prescribed religion of the Norwegian state and its tributary territories, whilst remaining, as it had been for so long and would continue to be, in tune with the basic spiritual needs and economic concerns of the common Norseman.

## CHAPTER FOUR

**Contextual arguments for Norse-Greenlandic 'shamanism'*****Arctic ecology ergo Arctic economy ergo Arctic religion?***

Does the combination of a hunting economy in an Arctic or sub-Arctic environment—the latter condition almost inevitably giving rise to the former—invariably give rise to an archetypal set of animistic religious conceptions and their ritual corollary, shamanic or pseudo-shamanic ritual?

When approaching this question we need to reckon with a likely circumstance of dependence on hunting as a means of providing the food which was the staple of the community's diet. Furthermore it is the desperate nature of the economic situation—a community living virtually hand-to-mouth, the virtual lack of any form of economic safety net, so that if the community's hunters do not return from the hunt with meat, having had a successful hunt, then the community will starve—that gives rise to desperate measures. The seriousness of the situation overrides any perceived need or obligation to adhere to the religious rituals prescribed by the dominant religious system—Christianity—or for that matter to adhere wholesale to the heathen religious traditions inherited or imported from the Scandinavian homelands: a system of sacrifice to ensure crop fertility, a system which is clearly of little relevance to the communities on Greenland, where agriculture was not viable.

We ought in fact to reckon with as much of a capacity for adaptation and perhaps even innovation in the religious sphere on the part of the Norse settlers of Greenland and the other Atlantic islands as they exhibit in the economic sphere. If they could successfully switch from an economy based almost exclusively on farming

—both crops (grain) and livestock—to one where, given that agriculture was unviable and livestock alone was not sufficient to feed the community, they were forced to incorporate hunting (and related activities such as the gathering of the eggs of wild birds) into the economy on a significant scale, then they were surely also capable of adapting the religious system they employed to one more appropriate to their immediate, recently adopted (or adapted), economy.

If the settlers came from Iceland, they would have been used to gathering wild birds' eggs, to hunting auk, to driving whales ashore. If they came from northern Norway they may have been used to hunting reindeer and trapping and shooting other animals. Northerners (north Norwegians, *håloyger*) would also perhaps have been on expeditions to hunt walrus in the White Sea before, and so it would have been second nature for them to pursue this same hunt in a locale like the Norðrsetur on Greenland. Seal was hunted over almost all of Scandinavia and its Atlantic colonies.<sup>326</sup> Thus these were people who were not unfamiliar with hunting as a means of livelihood and of feeding themselves.

The fact that the hunting economy has such a long history in Scandinavia, from prehistoric times up until well into historical times in some parts of Scandinavia such as northern Norway, and the fact that *seiðr* is so closely linked to this economic activity in *Eiríks saga rauða*, suggests—contra Dag Strömbäck's theory<sup>327</sup> that *seiðr* was a loan or was at least inspired by Sámi *noaidevuohhta*—that *seiðr* was more likely a native innovation bound up with the traditional Norse hunting economy.

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326 Cf. e.g. Gad et al. 1972, McGovern 1992.

327 Strömbäck 1935:206. 'Det förefaller [...] helt naturligt att tänka sig, att lapsk trolldom [...] kunnat öva direkt inflytande på nordisk, och knappast lärer väl härvid det mest karakteristiska i lapparnas magiska praxis, schamanderandet, ha undgått att göra ett djupt intryck på nordborna' ('It seems quite natural to believe that Sámi magic could also exert a direct influence on Nordic magic, and in the process the most characteristic element in Sámi magical practice, namely shamanism, would scarcely have failed to make a deep impression on Scandinavians.').

The difference with the Greenland settlements is that they were evidently so isolated—with sailings thither from the mainland and less frequently from Iceland more and more infrequent as the centuries went by, to judge from the testimony of the written sources—that they had no economic safety net as such.<sup>328</sup> There was no deep well of famine relief. 'Famine' ought in this context to be understood as consisting not only in poor stock-farming years but also (and probably primarily) periods of persistently unsuccessful hunting activity. The nomadic Inuit could relocate to follow the migrations of sea and land mammals along routes which would have moved as the climate cooled with the onset of the Little Ice Age. The Norse were far from being as adaptable to the changing migration patterns of their prey as the Inuit were, tied as they were to their farms on the traditional Scandinavian settlement pattern. And expeditions to hunting grounds such as the Norðrsetur were evidently hazardous, as some sources imply,<sup>329</sup> including *Eiríks saga rauða* in the statement that 'høfðu menn fengit lítit <fang>, þeir sem í veiðiferðir høfðu farit, en sumir ekki aprt komnir' ('the hunters who had set out for the hunting grounds returned with a paltry catch, and some did not return at all').

Studies have shown that given the relatively small populations of the Greenland settlements, they would not have been able to absorb a sustained sequence of consecutive poor farming years, though in the short term the less favourably placed

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328 Beyond potentially a limited level of domestic redistribution of food from the richer to poorer farms, a contingency which in the relatively small-scale society of Greenland would only have had the capacity to buffer economic hardship to a very limited extent, perhaps a year or two at most.

329 See e.g. *Historia Norwegie*, ed. Ekrem & Mortensen, trans. Fisher 2003:54; *Grænlendinga þáttur* ch. 2, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:276. The runic inscription on a stone found in 1824 by the Inuit hunter Pelimut at Kingiktorssuaq Island, attests to expeditions undertaken by Norse Greenlanders into the so-called *norðsetur*: *ellikr · sikuaps : son : r · ok · bianne : tortarson : ok : enriþi · osson : laukardak · in : fyrir · gakndag hloþu · uardate · okrydu : (u)il* ('Erlingr Sigvatsson and Bjarni Þórðarson and Einriði Oddson built this cairn the Saturday before Rogation day and carved well (the runes)'), ed. Indrebø 2000; *Det gamle Grønlands beskrivelse af Ívar Bárðarson*, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1930:30.



farmers would probably have been fed (received famine relief) from the well-stocked byres, storehouses and larders of the large ecclesiastical estates, the largest being that at the bishop's seat at Garðar. This may have stimulated both a move over to a more dedicated hunting economy—at least among those sections of the community who were worst off as regards farming land, who found themselves at the bottom end of the economic pyramid, and likewise at the social and perhaps also geographical periphery of the settlements—and a corollary shift to a more contingent religious strategy, that better met the requirements of their economic situation than did Christian prayer and churchgoing.

Christianity did not address the needs of the hunting economy as directly as shamanism (or *seiðr*) did. Furthermore, the channelling of scarce resources and valuable manpower into church-building activity may have struck especially the poorer member of the communities, but ultimately all members—for it would have affected everyone in the long run, and sooner rather than later in such small settlements—as at best foolhardy, at worst criminal recklessness. In so doing it demonstrated a wilful blindness to the long term economic requirements of life in such an environment, where *seiðr* in contrast actively looked into the future and sought to even the odds as it were in the constant struggle for survival, by either anticipating or shaping future environmental conditions and stocking the hunting grounds with game animals.

Thus it is not simply hunting in a cold climate—the Arctic hunting culture archetype—that gives rise to shamanism, it is the circumstance of an economy balanced on a knife-edge, without a safety net, living hand to mouth, where a failure to provide food for the community means the extinction of the community, where the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful hunt may mean the difference between life and death. Desperate times, and desperate circumstances, breed desperate

measures, and perhaps the boldness to contravene prescribe religious norms.

### Recontextualising *seiðr*

What a contextualising of the *seiðr* ritual in its immediate environmental, economic and social context also demands is that we move away from generalisations of the universal hostility supposedly felt towards practitioners of *seiðr*. To judge from the syntheses of a number of scholars, as recently as that of Hans Mebius,<sup>330</sup> *seiðkonur* and *seiðmenn* are universally stigmatized. Thus Mebius states that 'I motsats till sejdarens i allmänhet dåliga anseende var den samiske schamanen en socialt respekterade gestalt fastän han också kunde vara fruktad' ('While *seiðr* practitioners typically had a negative reputation, the Sámi shaman was by contrast a respected figure, although could also be feared').<sup>331</sup> And later

En avgörande olikhet mellan den fornnordiska sejden och den samiska schamanismen är den positivt sociala roll den senare hade. Även om den samiska nåjden var föremål för fruktan och respekt, så är han en betydelsefull personlighet i den samiska miljön vars uppgift är att vägleda och framför allt bota.<sup>332</sup>

But this is not in full accordance with the testimony of the texts. It is only when one interprets each account of *seiðr* on its own terms that one comes to the conclusion that in fact in a number of instances practitioners of *seiðr* are depicted as being shown a good deal deal of respect and reverence. This is for instance the case in *Eiríks saga rauða*. Indeed, even where hostility is shown, it is often voiced by an

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330 Mebius 2000.

331 Mebius 2000:296.

332 Mebius 2000:302. 'A key difference between medieval Scandinavian *seiðr* and Sámi shamanism is the pronouncedly social role the latter had. Even though the Sámi *noaidi* was the object of fear and respect, he is nevertheless an important member of society whose role was to advise and above all heal.'

individual, and often then the protagonist within a given saga narrative—such as Oddr in *Örvar-Odds saga*, or Ingimundr Þorsteinsson in *Vatnsdæla saga*—whilst the host and the other guests at the feast consistently behave respectfully and reverentially towards the *völva*.<sup>333</sup> Thus hostility is in several instances the exception and not the rule, and this is the case, crucially, where the ritual is a communal event arranged for the benefit both of the community as a whole, and of each of its individual members in turn, the same structure we find in *Eiríks saga* and which recurs in accounts of shamanic séances from Siberia.<sup>334</sup>

Significantly, as also in *Eiríks saga*, the prediction made by the *völva* in each instance proves to be accurate and the individual fate it incorporates unavoidable. So even if the protagonists in these instances were reluctant to know their fate—or perhaps, have it shaped for them—they could not convincingly dispute the power of *seiðr* or the *seiðkona*. Indeed, if they were wholly sceptical they would not have reacted with such aggression in the first place.

These examples further suggest that the *völur* were thought to be able to shape the future as much as to predict it—hence the hostility expressed when the *völva* is about to pronounce the fate of the protagonists, as Reichborn-Kjennerud points out.<sup>335</sup>

In *Hrólfs saga kraka* the *völva* Heiður is most definitely aligned with those characters to whom the audience is invited to feel sympathy, assisting the escape of the young boys, Helgi and Hróar, whom the tyrannical king Fróði wishes to have murdered.<sup>336</sup> Thus here again the *völva* earns both respect and admiration from characters and audience alike.

It may of course be the case, as some have suggested, that this respect was

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333 *Örvar-Odds saga* ch. 2, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:205–8; *Vatnsdæla saga* ch. 10, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1939:28–30.

334 Winkelman 2004.

335 Reichborn-Kjennerud 1928:80; Steffensen 1988:34; Solli 1997–8:18.

336 *Hrólfs saga kraka* ch 3, ed. (principally from AM 285 4to) Slay 1960:9–13.

mixed with fear. This would also be in keeping with the way circumpolar shamans seem in many cases to have been perceived by the communities they served. But the fact that even where a section of a community turned against a *seiðr* practitioner, as in the case of the episode in *Eyrbyggja saga* when what is to all intents and purposes a lynch mob arrives at the farm of Holt and summarily executes the *seiðkona* Katla and her son Oddr,<sup>337</sup> bears witness to an ambivalence in the minds of the local community. The notable thing here is that this mob had another *seiðkona*, Geirríðr, on their side. Indeed in this instance, had they not, they would not have been able to locate the delinquent Oddr, who is otherwise hidden by Katla's *sjónhverfingar*. Thus even where one *seiðkona* is reckoned to be malicious and antisocial, another, as the composer of the saga presents her to us, is clearly reckoned an asset to the community, and may even be said to display a social conscience, community spirit, altruism with respect to the community. This would be consistent with a role as the spiritual guardian of the community and of their economic interests.

More generally it may have been the case that ordinary members of the community (i.e. those without access to the same supernatural knowledge and influence as a *seiðkona*) would not have dared to attempt to drive away or eliminate one *seiðr* practitioner without the aid and protection of another.

Thus even here in perhaps one of the clearest examples of hostility expressed and carried out towards a *seiðr* practitioner, there is far from being any black and white distinction because, for all that she has been earlier smeared by Katla's rumours of alleged hostile magic, Geirrøðr is ultimately acquitted both by the community and by the author of the saga.<sup>338</sup> So not all *seiðkonur* are bad, not all *völur* are witches, or plagues and parasites on the community's members and their economic resources.

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337 *Eyrbyggja saga* ch. 20, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:53.

338 See further Gísli Pálsson 1991:160-3, Raudvere 2002:88-9, 155-60.

If *seiðr* is to be equated with shamanism, then it must be compared with shamanisms in all the forms and permutations which the rituals and ideas thus labelled occur, rather than with an abstracted definition of the phenomenon which homogenises this regional and individual variation between shamans and shamanisms, subsumes each shaman's unique character and each unique social and economic context in which each local shamanism is embedded.

Instead of comparing an account of Norse *seiðr* directly with ethnographic accounts, looking for telltale correspondences—unreflexively looking for a perfect match, the foot that fits the glass slipper—it may be more helpful in the first instance to expect an ethnocentric form of shamanism. One would not, on the basis of the variation between other circumpolar shamanisms, expect each instance of a shamanism to conform *wholly and in every detail* either to any other individual documented shamanism, or for that matter to abstracted, reductive, homogenised definitions and syntheses of the phenomenon. It would, in fact, be exceptional, indeed unprecedented, if a putative Norse form of shamanism corresponded completely to another shamanism, for no such complete correspondence is attested, as stated, between any other two shamanisms.

Then we should look for internal congruity within the system of *seiðr*—in this instance what we might term 'white' *seiðr*,<sup>339</sup> which is to say *seiðr* practised in seeking to help and advise individuals or whole communities—in its relationship to and function on behalf of the community. If the system is holistic and functions in a way that broadly corresponds to that in which other shamanisms function, we might then

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339 On the analogy of the perhaps problematic dichotomy of 'white' versus 'black' shamanism proposed or subscribed to in certain older publications on the phenomenon of shamanism, see e.g. Strömbäck's chapter on 'Vit och svart sejd' in *Sejd*, 1935:142–59. Strömbäck reckons with two kinds of *seiðr*, *förgörande* (destructive, 'black') and *divinatorisk* (divinatory, 'white') *seiðr*, (*ibid.*, 1970:76).

reasonably speak of *seiðr* as a shamanism. But even then we might actually be better off simply calling *seiðr* 'seiðr', since in this way we emphasise its unique and ethnocentric character.

The point of the comparison—or even identification—of *seiðr* with shamanism is that by establishing that it corresponds closely to the broad pattern of the phenomenon, in a way which is at the same time congruous within the culture in which it manifests itself, the hypothesis of *seiðr* as shamanism may help to explain some of the more oblique and enigmatic aspects of *seiðr* as it is described in the texts. This would constitute a significant interpretative aid given that no such description—not even that in *Eiríks saga rauða*—is quite as full or as detailed as we might like it to be in telling us precisely what *seiðr* was believed to have consisted in, in terms of the technique of the rituals which seem to have been at its core, and in terms of the conceptual framework with which the constituent elements of these rituals aligned themselves and in which they were embedded. 'Filling in the blanks' in this way is a hazardous scholarly endeavour, but all the same, speculation, ideally speculation grounded in circumstantial evidence, is probably a necessity if further elucidation of the nature of the phenomenon is to be made.

In any case it seems methodologically circumspect to look for precedents for such conceptions in the first instance from within the same culture, if not the same local or regional culture then at least within the broader Scandinavian cultural sphere, and only then and from there, once such precedents are identified and established, proceed to make comparisons with putatively corresponding conceptions and phenomena from the traditions of distinct and separate cultures, whilst still—and perhaps most essentially here—exercising circumspection so as to be sure one is genuinely comparing like with like and not merely noting superficial affinities, that the correspondence has a holistic dimension and is not simply a case of a common or

shared, perhaps initially suggestive surface detail which nonetheless lacks deeper phenomenological substance.

### **The ritual at Herjólfssnes contextualised**

According to Gustav Storm's edition of *Eiríks saga rauða*—the text Strömbäck cites *in extenso* in his book *Sejd*—Þorbjörg's initial prediction with regard to the *hallæri* is that 'hallæri þetta mvn ekki halldaz lengr enn i vetr ok mvn batna arangr sem varar' (in Strömbäck's translation: 'detta nöðár icke skall vara längre än i vinter; med våren skall allt bliva bättre').<sup>340</sup> This statement, as will be shown, supports the interpretation of *hallæri* as relating to hunting, fishing, sealing and whaling, since crops are not farmed during the winter, whereas hunting, fishing etc. are pursued through the winter and indeed through most months of the year. Seals, for instance, were hunted ten months of the year in mainland Scandinavia.<sup>341</sup> The main species of fish caught by coastal fishermen-farmers (*fiskebønder*) in mainland Scandinavia (cod and herring) were caught during the spawning season (respectively winter and autumn),<sup>342</sup> and a similar situation would have pertained in Greenland, albeit involving different species and different spawning seasons given the colder seas around Greenland.

*hallæri* might also refer more generally to a lack of stocks of food—both for humans and fodder for animals—meaning that the people of the farm (and the wider settlement) simply didn't have much to eat that winter, but given the explicit statement connecting *hallæri* with *veiðiferðir*—which could encompass both land-based hunting expeditions as well as voyages to hunt sea mammals in the sea and on the sea ice—in the initial lines of the chapter, and given that it is precisely this situation which

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340 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 557 4to redaction) ch. 4, ed. Jansson 1945:43; trans. Strömbäck 1935:54. 'This period of hardship will not last longer than this winter; things will get better come spring.'

341 See Gad et al. 1972.

342 January to April and August to October (Nedkvitne 1993:196).

is explicitly indicated as precipitating the crisis which is the reason for Þorbjörg being invited to come to the farm in the first place to perform her ritual, we might rather expect the result of the ritual, namely the prophecy, to refer to this same crisis situation, and to its impending resolution.

There is no direct indication in the chapter itself of what season of the year Þorbjörg's visit, or the crisis that motivates it, took place. However, in the previous chapter it is at an autumn feast that Þorbjörn declares 'Eþla ek nu at uitia um maal. eireks. rauda. uinar mins er hann hafdi þa er uer skildumzt. a breida. firði. ætla ek nu at fara til grænlanndz i. svmar. ef suo fer. sem ek uillda.'<sup>343</sup>

Given the discrepancy between the autumn date of the feast and the stated intention to travel to Greenland 'this summer', Þorbjörn presumably means the following summer. In the description of the voyage it is stated that 'forzt þeim v greitt um svmarid'.<sup>344</sup> In any case they 'toku þo heriolf's nes. a grænlanndi uit vetr nætr sialfar'.<sup>345</sup> There Þorkell 'tok vid. þorbirni. ok aullvm skipverivm . hanns. um uetrinn. þorkell veitti þeim skavruliga'.<sup>346</sup>

Thus we can fix the date of the ceremony as a winter. The year could, one would assume, likewise be established from a close reading of the text with an eye to relative chronology. Given that at the close of chapter 2 Eiríkr has spent his three successive winters in Greenland, returned to Iceland the following summer, spent the winter at Hólmlátr,<sup>347</sup> been outlawed the following spring, and sailed once again for

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343 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 557 4to redaction) ch. 3, ed. Jansson 1945:37.

344 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 544 4to redaction) ch. 3, ed. Jansson 1945:38. 'they made slow progress through the summer'.

345 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 544 4to redaction) ch. 3, ed. Jansson 1945:38. 'they reached Herjólf'snes during the winter nights'.

346 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 544 4to redaction) ch. 3, ed. Jansson 1945:38. 'received Þorbjörn and all of his companions and they stayed with him through the winter, taking good care of them'.

347 The farm of Ingólfr á Hólmlátri, *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 557 4to redaction) ch. 2, ed. Jansson 1945:32.



the country which he now names Greenland that summer—taking us to 984/5—we may reckon the winter Guðríðr, Þorbjörn and his household spend at Herjólfssnes to postdate this year.

Thus according to the saga's internal chronology the settlements would, by the time Þorbjörn and his household arrive at Herjólfssnes, have been populated to a significant extent—there are clearly, in any case, enough farms set up there by this point that it makes sense for Þorbjörg to be in the habit of travelling between them ('þat var hattr. þorbjargar. a vetrvm. at hun for a ueizlr ok budv menn henni heim. mest þeir er forvitni var a. um forlug sin. eda. at ferðir').<sup>348</sup> We might then assume that a significant span of time has passed since Eiríkr's return to Greenland, but on the other hand *landnám* and the extensive establishment of farms—at least in rudimentary form—simultaneously by any number of settlers,<sup>349</sup> may hypothetically have taken place over a relatively short space of time, perhaps even as few as a couple of summers.<sup>350</sup>

We also need to bear in mind that the events the saga depicts as leading up to Þorbjörn's emigration may very well be partially or wholly concurrent with Eiríkr's exploration of Greenland. However, we are left uncertain with respect to the duration of the intervening period between Eiríkr's offer to Þorbjörn to join him in Greenland, when they part in Breiðafjörður, and the latter's subsequent voyage thither, since the autumn preceding Þorbjörn's departure is introduced by the decidedly imprecise 'Nv

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348 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 544 4to redaction) ch. 3, ed. Jansson 1945:38. 'In the winter months Þorbjörg was in the habit of travelling around to different farms, and she was welcomed by those men who were most curious about their fate and future endeavours'.

349 Besides those fourteen ships mentioned in *Landnámabók* (Hauksbók ch. 78, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:133; Sturlubók ch. 90, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:132), which, if this is an accurate figure, could by themselves have gone a long way to building and populating a good number of farms, both with farmhands and livestock.

350 See e.g. Berglund 1991, Orri Vésteinsson 2000.

er fra því at. segja eitt haust [...]'.<sup>351</sup>

The relevance of this would be that the sooner after the initial settlement the *hallæri* occurred, the more sure we can be that it was related to hunting, that is if we accept Helgi Skúli Kjartansson's theory that "there was an initial phase [subsequent—or perhaps even prior—to *landnám*] where early colonists explored the country and lived principally from hunting and fishing."<sup>352</sup> This was furthermore a necessary, indeed an enforced, economic strategy since it would, according to estimates, have taken a decade, perhaps two, before the relatively small number of cattle it was possible to transport to the new land by ship attained sufficient numbers to be able to support the settlers' requirements for food.<sup>353</sup>

Thus we have good reason to question the validity of Ólafur Halldórsson's statement that when

er sagt að hallæri mikið var á Grænlandi og að menn höfðu 'fengið lítið fang, þeir sem í veiðiferð höfðu verið, en sumur eigi aftur komið.' Þar virðist gert ráð fyrir að menn hafi verið farnir að stunda veiðiferðir í Norðursetu, sem varla hefur þó gerzt á fyrstu áratugum eftir landnám.<sup>354</sup>

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351 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 544 4to redaction) ch. 3, ed. Jansson 1945:33. 'Now it is said that one autumn...'

352 Orri Vésteinsson 2000:164.

353 Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 1997:24-6, e.g.: 'Í raun hlýtur landnámið að hafa byggst á því að fólk treysti sér til að afla matar með veiðum og söfnun, lifa á slíku nær alfarið fyrsta árið og að verulegu leyti nokkur ár í viðbót, meðan ám og kúm var fjölgað sem mest mátti. [...] Úr því að landnámsmenn gátu komist af í landinu áður en bústofnin þeirra fór að gefa af sér verulega matbjörg, þá hefðu þeir líka komist af í landinu þótt bústofninn hefði enginn verið.' ('Settlement seems in fact to have had as its foundation a reliance on the acquisition of food through hunting and gathering, with this constituting the sole source of food in the first year after settlement and in all likelihood for several years afterwards while the stock of sheep and cows was multiplied as quickly as possible. [...] Since settlers were able to survive in the new country before their livestock began to produce significant amounts of food, they would likewise have survived if they had no livestock whatsoever.')'

354 Ólafur Halldórsson 1978:389. 'it is stated that there was a *hallæri* in Greenland and that the people 'who had set off on hunting expeditions hadn't caught much game, and some hadn't returned.' This seems to indicate that people had embarked on expeditions to the *norðursetur* [the hunting grounds to

This assertion is put forward in seeking to establish that the account of Þorbjörg's ritual in *Eiríks saga rauða*, and specifically the economic circumstances surrounding and directly precipitating it, do not fit with the time the ritual is purported to have taken place. On the contrary, according to Helgi Skúli Kjartansson's hypothesis the economic circumstances described as having pertained at Herjólfssnes tally wholly with what we might expect in the early settlement period, in the first years following *landnám*. The settlers would in fact have been dependent on the resources available at hunting grounds such as the Norðrsetur.

Thus Ólafur's statement regarding the *hallæri* is in itself debatable, since we ought to expect the settlers to have made a thorough and extensive reconnaissance of the new land and its resources in the first period subsequent to—or even prior to—*landnám*. What Ólafur in any case overlooks—or perhaps sidesteps—here is that, as the account in *Egils saga* of Skalla-Grímr Kveld-Úlfsson's *landnám* in Breiðafjörður illustrates abundantly,<sup>355</sup> the settlers would not only have exploited resources lying at a considerable distance from the immediate fjords and valleys in which they established farms (such as the Norðrsetur), but also those in the immediate environs of these same fjords and valleys. Ívar Bárðarson indicates that bird colonies and a fjord or sound frequented by whales lay to the east of Herjólfssnes, both of which resources would have been precisely of the kind which settlers would have sought to exploit, if they knew what was good for them. And whilst collecting eggs and catching birds may have been a relatively risk-free activity, the hunting of whales was not, and the circumstance that some members of a hunting party had failed to return ('høfðu menn fengit lítit ‹fang›, þeir sem í veiðiferðir høfðu farit, en sumir ekki aptr komnir') could

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the north of the Scandinavian settlements], which is scarcely something that would have taken place in the first decades following settlement.'

355 *Egils saga* chs. 28-9, ed. Bjarni Einarsson 2003:38-40.

quite plausibly have come about on a *veiðiferð* in these relatively local environs just as well as on hunting expeditions made to the Norðrsetur. The paucity of the catch is likewise an outcome as congruous with an expedition to one as to the other hunting ground.

The point is that, as important and prime a source of game as the Norðrsetur almost certainly constituted, there were plenty of other territories in Greenland where hunting could be profitable, and so we cannot assume, with Ólafur, that the *veiðiferðir* the source mentions can *only* refer to Norðrsetur, and on that basis dismiss the putative antiquity of the account, or the possibility that the events described took place where and when they are purported to have done.

### *hallæri*

We can now attempt to exemplify the meaning (semantic content or referent) of the word *hallæri* in the different texts and contexts in which it appears. Though it is hazardous to impose to a strict typography on a collection of statements made in texts of widely varying vintage, historiographical character, and geographical and social provenance, we may at this juncture briefly mention an apparent antonym to the word *hallæri*: *árbót*. One might speak of *árbót* as the negation of *hallæri*, and *árferð* ('season') as the designation for the relative health of the subsistence economy, of how things are going in a given year or season as regards the provision of resources and general prosperity, a designation which may then be qualified or characterised such that an author will speak of for example *góð árferð*.

Comparable to the context in which the word *hallæri* occurs in *Eiríks saga rauða*—and thereby the word's referent—is its use in two instances localised, in the texts in which they are found, to the region Hálogaland in northern Norway.<sup>356</sup> One is

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356 Hálogaland is reckoned to stretch from the northern border of Naumdœlafylki in the south to the

from an early, relatively dependable source (*Landnámabók*), and concerns the filling of a sound with fish by a local woman, Þuríðr, who as a consequence is given the epithet *sundafyllir*:

Hon var því kǫlluð sundafyllir, at hon seiddi til þess í hallæri á Hálogalandi, at hvert sund var fullt af fiskum.<sup>357</sup>

The other source (discussed in Chapter One) is late and potentially more unreliable than *Landnámabók* as regards how far it represents traditions of the period prior to the adoption of Christianity as state religion in Norway. This source is *Gríms saga loðinkinna*, and there the situation we meet is that:

Þat bar þá til sem oftár, at hallæri mikit kom á Hálogaland. Grímr loðinkinni bjóst þá heiman ok fór á ferju sinni við þriðja mann. Hann helt norðr fyrir Finnmörk ok svá austr til Gandvíkr. Ok er hann kom í víkina, sá hann, at þar var nógr veiðifangi. Setti hann þar upp skip sitt ok gekk síðan til skála ok kveykti upp eld fyrir sér.<sup>358</sup>

So Grímr has headed up north to where the fish stocks are still plentiful, in this year or season when a *hallæri* obtained in this region of Norway. However, in an inversion of Þuríðr *sundafyllir*'s act of benevolent *seiðr* on behalf of her community, a local *jǫtunn* by the name of Hrímnir empties the bay of fish overnight. This sudden turnaround in economic circumstances is accompanied by an equally sudden cold

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border with Finnmörk in the north, based upon indications in textual sources such an entry in the fourteenth-century manuscript AM 731 4to (*Rímbeǵla*), ed. Kålund 1917-1918:6. See Hermann Pálsson 1997:32-4, and map 'Nóregr II' in Bjarni Einarsson 2003.

357 *Landnámabók*, Sturlubók, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:186. The Hauksbók and Skarðsárþók redactions give *sild* (herring) where Sturlubók has non-specific *fiskum*.

358 *Gríms saga loðinkinna* ch. 1, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:186.

snap:<sup>359</sup>

Svá mikil grimmd fylgdi veðri þessu, at allt sýldi, bæði úti ok inni. Um morguninn, er þeir váru klæddir, gengu þeir út ok til sjóvar. Sáu þeir þá, at á burtu var allr veiðifangi, svá at hvergi sá staði.<sup>360</sup>

The nature of this sudden disappearance is clarified for Grímr in a verse spoken by Hrímnir's daughter Kleima: 'faðir okkarr / burtu seiddi / báru hjarðir'.<sup>361</sup>

We can contrast the circumstances of these instances of *hallæri* with those indicated in other texts in which the word is used, and consider their economic implications (specific to their respective contexts) and in turn their implications for the religious strategy adopted in each instance in response to these economic implications. The following notices of *hallæri* indicate the particular conditions, circumstances and nature of the economic crisis in each instance:

þat havst var i Þrandheimi halleri a corni. en aðr hafði oc verit lengi goð arferð. en halleri var allt norðr i land oc því meira er norðar var. en corn var gott austr i land. oc sva um Upplavnd. en þess navt við i Þrandheimi at menn atto þar mikil fornn cornn.<sup>362</sup>

Here the composer or scribe deemed it necessary to specify that the *hallæri* related to crops (or crop failure), specifically corn—and thus we may conclude that it was not a given that a *hallæri* was always concerned with agriculture. For the same reason the

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359 This might tentatively be interpreted as a cypher for the Little Ice Age and its economic repercussions, which would almost certainly have been experienced directly and palpably by the authors of the text, their ancestors, and the scribes who mediated it.

360 *Gríms saga loðinkinna* ch. 1, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:186.

361 *Gríms saga loðinkinna* ch. 1, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:188.

362 *Óláfs saga helga* edited from Stockholm nr. 2 4to by Oscar Albert Johnsen & Jón Helgason 1941:261.

composer of *Eiríks saga rauða*, for the benefit of his readers, qualifies the precise nature of the *hallæri* described there by indicating that this particular *hallæri* is connected to *veiði*, to hunting. He does this by opening chapter 4 of the saga by providing circumstantial evidence to this effect, allowing the audience to draw the obvious conclusion.

There are further examples of *hallæri* which are specified as impacting, variously, upon agricultural or pastoral economies:

Eptir um vetrinn gerði hallæri mikit ok fiarfelli. Þorgeirr bondi a Hrafnkelsst(oðum) let mart fe.<sup>363</sup>

Nu kemr suo tima at arferd hallaz miog j landino geriz vedratta kolld suo at kornit friouaz ecki en saker þess at j slikum londum er þat mest almenningis matr sem jordin gefr vard fliott hit mesta hallæri ok varam suo at riker menn hofdu varla mat j munn.<sup>364</sup>

Noting that this last saga has a Biblical source, we might further note that Christianity, along with other such doctrinal, scripture-bound religions, developed in or emerged from the ancient agricultural economies of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle-

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363 *Droplaugarsona saga* ch. 5, ed. Jakob Jakobsen 1902-1903:151.

364 *Drauma-Jóns saga* ch. 2, ed. Page 1957:39-40. Also a scenario imaginable in the Greenland settlements, based on the evidence to hand: the failure of corn to ripen in the brief and cold Greenland summer, as indicated in *Konungs skuggsjá*, e.g. 'En þar sœm þu rœdder um þat hvart þar væri noccot sað eða æcki þa ætla ec þat land litit af því fram flytiaz en þo ero þeir menn þar er hællzt ero agetazter oc rikaztr kallaðer at þeir leita við firi fræistni saker at sa. En þat er þo mæstr fiolðe aþvi lannde er æigi væit hvat brauð er oc alldrægi sa ænn brauð' ('And if you are wondering whether any crops are sown in that country, well I reckon there isn't much of that there, although it is said that the wealthiest and most highly-esteemed men there have attempted to cultivate crops. Yet the vast majority of people in that country don't know what bread is, having never laid eyes on the stuff.');

'Þer gator þess oc fyrr iyðarri rœðu at æcki sað er aþvi lannde' ('You mentioned earlier in your monologue that grain is not sown in that country'), ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:71-2, 74-5. These ecological circumstances are discussed further below.

East—where a *hallæri*, as this last citation indicates, is related to crop failure. Shamanism, in contrast, developed in hunting cultures, where a *hallæri* would have meant (or resulted from) a lack of success in hunting and fishing endeavours.

In the following two instances the *hallæri* has been precipitated by, or itself precipitated, a failure in the hay harvest—hay being a resource critical for a pastoral (as opposed to agricultural) economy of the kind that obtained (in combination with hunting) in Greenland, Iceland and large parts of Norway in the medieval period:

»far ok helldr fameðr vm heraðit ný, er hallere er mikit a kornit, þui at nu er uetrarriki mikit, ok er beðe illt til matar ok heyia«. <sup>365</sup>

Í þann tíma kom hallæri mikit, svá at menn skorti bæði hey ok mat, ok gekk þat um allir sveitir. Gunnarr miðlaði mörqum manni hey ok mat, ok hófðu allir þeir, er þangat kómu, meðan til var. Svá kom, at Gunnar skorti bæði hey ok mat. <sup>366</sup>

Hay was perhaps more crucial to survival than any other crop in the Greenland settlements.

In the next instance a distinction is made between the ecological locales a *hallæri* could affect:

Vm þeirra daga var i Norgi hallæri mikit. beði a sę oc landi. var þa sulltr oc seyra um allt land. <sup>367</sup>

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365 *Sturlunga saga* edited from AM 122 a fol. with readings supplied from AM 122 b fol., by Kålund 1906-1911 vol. II:123.

366 *Njáls saga* (Möðruvallabók redaction) ch. 47, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954:121.

367 *Óláfs saga helga* edited from Stockholm nr. 2 4to by Oscar Albert Johnsen & Jón Helgason 1941:23-4.



If a *hallæri* could apply to the sea, and presumably then (as the short account of Þuríðr *sundafyllir* likewise shows) referring to a failure to catch fish, due to bad luck (or simply an apparent lack of fish in the sea), clearly it is not a phenomenon specifically relating to agriculture or to crop failure; attention must be paid to the environmental and economic circumstances each text describes. This highlights the need to contextualise each and every instance of *hallæri* and to avoid generalised definitions of the phenomenon. For instance, the statement that 'var þa mikit hallæri fyrir sunnan land ok mikit mannfall af fatęku folki'<sup>368</sup> indicates that it was the poorest farmers and/or paupers and beggars who were hardest hit by this particular *hallæri*—as one might expect was generally the case. It would then also have been they who would have been most motivated to, as Folke Ström puts it, 'I sin nöd faller [...] tilbaka på hedniska sedvänjor'<sup>369</sup>—that is to say to resort to rituals which, while they may have departed significantly from contemporary Christian ritual and doctrine, were nonetheless regarded as so efficacious as to make their use not a choice but a social obligation, an economic necessity, and to make the potential repercussions from the ecclesiastical quarter of such dissident ritual activity (interdiction, ultimately excommunication) a price worth paying. Better to be given a dressing down by the local bishop, even to be excommunicated, than to starve as a consequence of one's piety.

In summary, the examples cited above illustrate the fact that each instance of *hallæri* needs to be interpreted with reference to the economic circumstances obtaining in the particular locality in which they are said to have taken place.<sup>370</sup> The

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368 *Þorláks saga helga* (C redaction), ed. Jón Helgason 1938-1978:367. 'at that time the southern part of the land suffered economic hardship and many poor people died'

369 Ström 1961:169.

370 For further notices of *hallæri* in the medieval Old Norse-Icelandic corpus, see: *Óláfs saga helga* edited from Stockholm nr. 2 4to by Oscar Albert Johnsen & Jón Helgason 1941:234; *Heimskringla, Óláfs saga helga* chs. 97, 106, 114, 117 (ed. Finnur Jónsson 1911:267, 278, 287, 290; *Óláfs saga*

semantic import of the word is thus conditioned by contextual factors, and we cannot unreflexively apply a generalised or abstracted definition of *hallæri* to the occurrence of the word in chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða* (or other occurrences in other texts, for that matter). A gloss such as that given by Fritzner, 'uár' ('bad year'), is neutral enough, but when for instance Folke Ström, in summarising the circumstances of the *seiðr* ritual at Herjólfssnes, states that 'En svár missvæxt rádde' ('a severe famine reigned'),<sup>371</sup> this characterisation of the situation—and Ström's choice of words—misrepresents the economic circumstances, circumstances which the text clearly sets out for us in the very first lines of the chapter, namely that the *hallæri* relates not to a failed harvest,<sup>372</sup> but to a lack of success in *veiðiferðir* (hunting or fishing expeditions). Likewise in Einar Storgaard's translation of the saga (chapter 4 of which Uffe Hartvig Larsen gives as an appendix to his book *Vikingernes religion og livsanskuelse*) the first line is given as 'I den tid var der stor Misvæxt paa Grønland...', and it is also assumed by the same translator that the *veiðiferðir* the text mentions consist in 'Fiskeri'.<sup>373</sup>

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*Tryggvasonar* (S redaction), ed. Finnur Jónsson 1932; *The Icelandic Homily Book*, ed. de Leeuw van Weenen 1993 folia 75v, 95r; *Stefáns saga*, ed. Widding 1952; *Jómsvíkinga saga* (AM 291 4to redaction), ed. af Petersens 1882:6; *Jómsvíkinga saga* (Holm perg 7 4to redaction), ed. Cederschiöld 1874-1875; *Veraldar saga*, ed. Kálund 1917-1918:12; *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, ed. Dettner 1891; *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, ed. Guðni Jónsson 1936:28; *Þorsteins þáttur tjaldstæðings*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon & Unger 1860-1868; *Sneglu-Halla þáttur*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon & Unger 1860-1868; *Heiðreks saga*, ed. Jón Helgason 1924:41; 'Vitae patrum', ed. Unger 1877:345; *Orkneyinga saga* ch. 13, ed. Sigurður Nordal 1913-1916:24; *Flateyjarbók* (annals), ed. Storm 1888; *Nikuláss saga erkibyskups*, ed. Unger 1877; *Jónsbók: réttarbættur*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 1904:287; *Þorláks saga helga* (A redaction), ed. Jón Helgason 1938-1978:225; *Þorláks saga helga* (C redaction), ed. Jón Helgason 1938-1978:367; *Stjórn*, ed. Unger 1862:105, 162, 203, 215, 222; *Stjórn* (B redaction), ed. Unger 1862:543; *Stjórn* (C redaction), ed. Unger 1862:420, 546, 591; *Þorvalds þáttur víðförla*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 2000:296; *Svaða þáttur ok Arnórs kerlingarnefs*, ed. Ólafur Halldórsson 1961:178; *Játvarðar saga*, ed. Carl Christian Rafn & Jón Sigurðsson 1852; *Guðmundar saga byskups*, ed. Guðbrandur Vigfússon et al. 1878:56, 144; *Icelandic annals* (from GKS 2087 4°), ed. Storm 1888; *Miðaldaævintýri*, ed. Einar G. Pétursson 1976:9.

371 Ström 1961:169.

372 A harvest which would never materialise on Greenland—a point on which textual and climatological evidence agrees; unless *hallæri* here refers to a failure in the hay harvest, which is not impossible.

373 Storgaard 1961:34; Larsen 1989:210.

### Interpretations of the concept of *hallæri*

In his book *The Viking Way* Neil Price treats the account of the ritual performed by Þorbjörg lítilvǫlva in *Eiríks saga rauða* in the following terms, and in so doing—perhaps inadvertently—draws conclusions concerning the nature of the *hallæri*, and thereby the ritual which resolves it:

The archetypal description of a *vǫlva* is undoubtedly that from *Eiríks saga rauða* [...] This passage contains most of the conventions associated with these women: the touring seeress visiting each homestead in turn to answer questions about the future, personal fortune and *the health of crops*; the special equipment of a platform, staff and other items; the ‘choir’ of assistants; the spirits in attendance.<sup>374</sup>

Yet both textual and archaeological sources attest to how unviable attempts to cultivate crops of any kind at the vast majority of farms on Greenland—and certainly at a site like Herjólfssnes, on an exposed peninsula—must have been. Unless hay was regarded as a crop?<sup>375</sup> For beyond hay there was precious little else. Barley, among the hardier of grain crops, in any case failed to ripen. A description of the subsistence pattern in Greenland—making no mention of agricultural crops of any kind, and indeed explicitly stating that corn was not cultivated there—is provided by *Konungs skuggsjá*:

En þar er þu leitar æpter því við hvat er þeir lifa a því lande mæð því at þeir hafa æcki sað. En við fleira lifa menn en við brauð æitt Sva er sagt at aGrœnalande ero gros goð oc ero þar bu goð oc stor því at menn hafa þar mart nauta oc sauða oc er þar

<sup>374</sup> Price 2002:112, my emphasis.

<sup>375</sup> Cf. the passages from *Sturlunga saga* and *Njáls saga* cited above, footnotes 135 and 136.

smiorgerð mikel oc osta lifa mæn við þat mioc oc sva við kiot oc við allz conar væiðe.  
 bæðe við reina holld oc hvala oc sæla oc biarnar holld oc fœðaz mæn*n* við þat þar  
 alande.<sup>376</sup>

Price reproduces the Skálholtsbók redaction of chapter 4 of *Eiríks saga rauða* in full.<sup>377</sup>

The first line of the accompanying translation reads: ‘At this time there was a great famine in Greenland.’ The crux of the prophecy is translated as: ‘And I can tell you that this famine will not last longer than this winter, and that the season will mend when the spring comes.’ Whilst ‘famine’ is a neutral enough term that it may refer to a critical lack of food resulting from either crop failure or lack of success in the hunt (and other reasons besides), the gloss does not disambiguate the nature or the full implications of this *hallæri*. These are details which the text does in fact make more or less explicit; in any case they can be inferred with the full support of what the text indicates in the context in which the word *hallæri* is used. For this reason ‘famine’ is perhaps too loaded a word—with its connotations, both in medieval and modern times, in societies dependent on, tied to and operating within the conceptual framework of an agricultural economy, of crop failure—to use in the context of a discussion of this magical ritual and its ramifications, without qualifying more precisely its referent.<sup>378</sup> Not least where it bears upon an analysis of such phenomena, the referent of *hallæri* ought in each instance to be derived from the social, economic and environmental circumstances pertaining to the event in question, as far as we can reconstruct this context from the text itself and from independent evidence.

<sup>376</sup> *Konungs skuggsjá* ch. 18, ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:75.

<sup>377</sup> After Jansson’s diplomatic edition, Jansson 1945.

<sup>378</sup> Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, in their translation of the Sturlubók redaction of *Landnámabók* (1972), likewise gloss *hallæri* ‘famine’ in the entry concerning Þuríðr *sundafyllir* and an economic crisis in Hálogaland. This text gives less indication of the nature or the context of the crisis, but the translator would perhaps do well to take into consideration local economic conditions in his choice of words.

Now, it might seem of minor importance precisely how we interpret the word *hallæri*, but the sense in which we understand this word and its referent is in fact the key to our understanding of the aims and nature of the ritual practised by the *vǫlva*, and furthermore, how we are to classify this ritual within the wider sphere of Norse and circumpolar religious activity. If such a classification, or definition, according to an established typology—in this instance shamanism (or not shamanism—this is the question)—is deemed necessary or helpful to our understanding of an otherwise distant and inscrutable phenomenon, the fact that the ritual in question serves and is tailored to the needs of a hunting economy is of central relevance in reaching said definition. For it locates the *seiðr* ritual within a particular context, and thereby within a wider environmental and phenomenological continuum—namely circumpolar religion (more precisely the religion of circumpolar peoples prior to their assimilation to colonising and hegemonic orthodox religious systems)—in which shamanism is wholly congruous, and indeed to be expected.

Kunz' translation is more circumspect, avoiding a definitive interpretation of the precise nature of the economic crisis: 'This was a very lean time in Greenland. [...] And I can tell you that this spell of hardship will last no longer, and times will improve as the spring advances.'<sup>379</sup>

Poul Nørlund, in his summary of the circumstances surrounding the *seiðr* ritual at Herjólfssnes, notably characterises (somewhat interpretatively) the *hallæri* such that 'It had been a bad year, owing to scarcity of fish and seals'.<sup>380</sup> This is of course conjecture on Nørlund's part, inferable and implicit, but not explicit, in the source. And all the same it is a good and probable hypothesis, giving the circumstantial evidence, the topography and nature of the local resources at Herjólfssnes.

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379 Trans. Kunz 1997:5, 7.

380 Nørlund 1924:9.

### Decoy reindeer, guardian spirits of game animals and *at seiða til sín*

When it is stated of Þorbjörg that 'hun hafði margar natvrur hígat at sött ok þótti fagurt at heyra. þat er kuedit var. er adr uilddi fra oss snuazt ok oss avngua hlydni veita' ('Many spirits had now congregated around her,<sup>381</sup> “the [same] spirits which previously wanted to turn away from us and not heed us, for they thought the song she had sung was beautiful to listen to”),<sup>382</sup> can it be that what is described is the game animals being lured to the farm, or to the community’s hunting or fishing (or sealing or whaling) grounds—be they close by or some distance away—by the *varðlok(k)ur*, the latter then functioning as an act of tractive magic within the overarching ritual? This interpretation requires that we identify the *náttúrur* as the game animals, and the *hlyðni* they would otherwise not have granted as the willingness to be caught, the willingness which the hunters of other circumpolar communities whom shamans served believed that the animals could be persuaded to feel.

The drawback of this interpretation however is that it potentially conflicts with or directly contradicts the apparent testimony of the text as regards the identity and/or the function of the *náttúrur* (or *verðir*—the two may well be synonymous), since the next thing we are told—by Þorbjörg herself—is that to her 'erv nu margar þeir hluter aud synar. er adr var bædi ek ok adrir dulder.' ('many of those things which were previously hidden from both me and others are now clear').<sup>383</sup> Given that this statement immediately follows that concerning the tractive effect of the singing of the *varðlok(k)ur*, it is reasonable—and probably correct—to assume that it is the *náttúrur*

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381 This could be interpreted as meaning that the spirits made a beeline for either Þorbjörg or Guðríðr.

382 Ed. Jansson 1945:43.

383 Ed. Jansson 1945:43. It should be noted that this assumed connection between the *varðlok(k)ur*, the *náttúrur* and the result of the attendance *en masse* of the latter at the site of the ritual—that is to say, the function of both the song and the beings it summons—is not explicitly stated in the text.

who have provided the *vǫlva* with what she and the community urgently need to find out. However, the *náttúrur* and the *varðlok(k)ur* that attract them may have a dual function in this ritual context: both to furnish the *vǫlva* with information regarding future events, and to lead the herds, of which they are (hypothetically) the guardian spirits, to the community's hunting grounds.

This I take to be the function of the songs sung in the context of the ritual described, the *varðlok(k)ur*. I interpret the second element as a noun derived from the verb *at loka*, here with the sense 'enticement';<sup>384</sup> the second element, the noun *vǫrðr*, I take here to connote the sense 'guardian',<sup>385</sup> specifically (on the basis of the circumstantial evidence set out above) the guardian(s) of the game animals, corresponding to the spirits who in conventional shamanistic cosmology were responsible for ensuring the provision of animals for the hunters to hunt (and for the community to eat); hence the effect to which the text assigns the songs, causing many spirits (*náttúrur*) to seek out and congregate upon (*sækja at*) the source of the singing.

We might then ask if we are still speaking of shamanism if we characterise *seiðr* as a means of luring animals (and in other contexts people),<sup>386</sup> given that if we here assign this function to the *varðlok(k)ur*, it cannot (surely?) simultaneously have the function of summoning shamanic tutelary spirits.<sup>387</sup> And it is precisely the presence of

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384 Or 'enticer, lure, bait'. Here I essentially concur with Strömbäck's proposed etymology, 1935:130.

385 Thus Tolley 2009 vol. I:244, cf. Strömbäck 1975. Else Mundal notes that in later Norwegian popular belief spirits designated by cognate terms such as *vård*, *vord*, *vardøger*, whose origins she traces back to the medieval literary motif of the *fylgja*, the aspect of guardian spirit is conspicuous by its absence, see Mundal 1974:129–32. Mundal groups instances of the *fylgja* motif into two broad categories: 1) an apparition which functions as a kind of *doppelgänger*, albeit it typically having the appearance of an animal, which mirrors the nature of the person to which it is linked and sometimes presages misfortune, and 2) a kind of tutelary spirit, conceived of as a woman, and shows that, while typically anthropomorphic, in its function the *vardøger* exclusively conforms to the former type.

386 For examples of which see, respectively *Laxdæla saga* ch. 35 (ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:98) and 37 (*ibid.* 105–6). See Chapter One for an in-depth discussion of traditions describing ideas of magic with a tractive effect.

387 Those assisting the putative pseudo-shaman in this context, Þorbjörg lítilvǫlva.

these spirits and the help they give in effectuating the *seiðkona*'s divination—by directly supplying her with the information which she then mediates to the community (first as a group and afterwards on an individual basis) in the form of *spá*—which, according to a criterion formulated by Hultkrantz and subscribed to by Solli is what makes *seiðr* commensurable with shamanism, in terms of its phenomenology.<sup>388</sup> As Solli formulates it, 'For at en spådomseanse skal kunne karakteriseres som sjamanisme må det *alltid* være hjelpeånder inne i bildet'.<sup>389</sup>

Neither does the proposed interpretation sit particularly well with glosses of, and earlier scholars' explanations of the function of, the *varðlok(k)ur*.<sup>390</sup> But having said this, if the purpose of the song is *at lokka vǫrðum*, why has it instead attracted *náttúrur*? The two appellations must then be synonymous (at least in the mind of the composer of the account, or his informants) and refer to the same creatures, spirits or beings.

If they are spirits, and not living beings, we might still postulate that they are the spirits—the *verðir* 'guardians'—of the game animals, and that by luring them one thereby also lured the entire herd, or pod, or shoal of land or sea mammals or fish which these *verðir* were the leaders or guardians of and pathfinders for. This idea of a guardian spirit for a group of animals is known from a number of circumpolar cultures and communities employing shamans. There is also a precedent for the same conception in a pan-Scandinavian popular conception, in the figure of the *fiskekonge* or *bróðir ormsins og fiskar sum kongar* ('the brothers of the snakes and fish as kings'):

Strange looking fish, either exceptionally large specimens of a certain species or those

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388 Hultkrantz 1978, Solli 1997-8.

389 'In order for a divinatory séance to be categorised as shamanism it *must* involve tutelary spirits', Solli 1997-8:25.

390 Magnus Olsen 1916; Strömbäck 1935:124-39, 1970:78; Grambo 1984a:64-6.



that were malformed in one way or another, or even uncommon species caught together with fish shoals, have been regarded as kings or leaders of certain fish. They have also been called *-styrja* in the Scandinavian languages. In the Nordic countries, this term denoted certain large and rare fish species which were believed to command and protect other fish species such as herring or mackerel, which appear in large shoals along the Atlantic coast.<sup>391</sup>

Svanberg adds that 'Such views were already being recorded in the early 17th century.'<sup>392</sup> Among the names such 'fish kings' are known by were: Norwegian *laksestorja*, *laksekong* (Friis), Swedish *Laxestör*, *Macrille-Stör*, Norwegian *sildekonge*, *sildtust*, *sildstörje*, Icelandic *sildakóngur*, Faroese *sildakongur*, *sildasterril*, Norwegian *makrellstörje*, Swedish *Makrill-störja*, *Makrill-störje*, *kungsål*, *ålkung*, *makrillkung*, *knurrkonge*, Swedish *abborkkung*, *norskungar*, Finlandsvenska *fiskarnas konung*, Troms (Norway) *kongen* (salmon), Baltic Swedish *strömmingskungen* (a large Baltic herring with a reddish head), West Coast Swedish *sillkung* (huge reddish herring), Danish *sildekonge* (red or light red), Swedish *kungstorskar*, Norwegian (esp. Lofoten) *kongetorsk* (cod with a ball or crown on the head), Danish *torskekonge*, *fiskekonge* (deformed specimens), Norway *sejkonger* (saithe), *hysekonger* (haddock), *brosmekonger* (cod).<sup>393</sup> The elements *-styrja* (*-storja*, *-störje*, *-stör*, *-sterril*) and *-kong* (*-konge*, *-kóngur*, *-kongur*, *-kung*, *-konung*) both suggest functions analogous to that of a *vörðr* ('guardian').

One might even conjecture that in the *vejrfisker* of northern Norway, which 'predicted the direction of the wind and were regarded as a kind of primitive barometer',<sup>394</sup> the functions of guardian of a shoal or species of fish, and that of

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391 Svanberg 1999:129.

392 Svanberg 1999:133.

393 Svanberg 1999, *passim*.

394 Svanberg 1999:136.

predicting the weather—perhaps even for the coming season (*árferð*)—are combined.

This conception must derive partly from the fact that the appearance of shoals of a fish such as herring at a given locality at a given time of year, year after year, was uncertain and unpredictable, leading (presumably) to conjecture that when they did not appear, it was because a wise or cunning *sildekonge* had outwitted the fishermen, perhaps by means of some power of foreknowledge of its own.

Notably—and analogous to the conception of the *fiskestyrja*—luring and tethering the dominant bull in a reindeer herd, who literally led or guided the rest of the herd during migrations, was a method employed by the Sámi in hunting the reindeer herd as a whole. Alternatively a female reindeer was tethered during mating season, reindeer bulls would come to investigate, whereupon they were shot.<sup>395</sup> This method of using so-called ‘decoy reindeer’ was also used by Scandinavian reindeer herders and hunters, as statements made by the north Norwegian chieftain Ohthere at the court of King Alfred indicate:

hé wæs swyðe spedig man on þæm æhtum þe heora speda on beoð, þæt is, on wilderorum. he hæfde þagyt, ða hé þone cyninge sohte, tamra deora unbebohtra syx hund. þa deor hý hátað ‘hránas’; þara wæron syx stælhranas; ða beoð swyðe dyre mid finnum, for ðæm hy foð þa wildan hranas mid. he wæs mid þæm fyrstum mannum on þæm lande: Næfde he þeah ma ðonne twentig hryðera, & twentig sceapa, & twentig swyna; & þæt lytle þæt he erede he erede mid horsan.<sup>396</sup>

The act of luring the reindeer—albeit in this case by a less than supernatural method—is essentially the same, with the same motivation and end result, as that of luring animals through the use of *seiðr*—and perhaps then also through the singing of

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395 Niskanen 2005:302.

396 Ed. Ross 1981:20.

*varðlok(k)ur*.

The significance of the tame, so-called 'decoy reindeer' in the economy of the hunter-farmers of this region cannot be underestimated,<sup>397</sup> and as such the same concept might well have found expression and attained similarly prominent significance within these same communities' religious ideas and the practices they inspired and ideologically underpinned.

If both Scandinavian and Sámi elements of the population of northern Norway made use of decoy reindeer, this may indicate an intra-ethnic matrix of religious ideas (and corollary rituals), specifically those ideas which arose from and came to be bound up with this shared economic strategy. It is not unlikely that the two communities were more economically (and socially) integrated with one another than has hitherto been assumed; Ohthere's account certainly suggests as much, as does the statement of the composer of *Historia Norwegie* regarding 'Hálogaland, whose inhabitants dwell a good deal with the Finns [i.e. the Sámi], so that there are frequent transactions between them'.<sup>398</sup>

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397 'Ottar opplyser også at han sjolv hadde ein flokk tamrein og dessutan seks lokkereinar til bruk under jakt på reinsdyr. Slike dyr var høgt verdsatte mellom samane. Som Ottars melding viser, var denne jaktmetoden teken opp mellom andre enn samene i Nord Norge.' ('Ohthere also relates that he himself had a flock of domesticated reindeer and in addition six decoy reindeer for use in hunting wild reindeer. Such animals were highly valued among the Sámi. As Ohthere's account shows, this hunting strategy was adopted by other communities in northern Norway besides the Sámi'), Bø 1962:551; 'Under större delen av medeltiden och tidigare bestod renskötsel huvudsaklig i att man höll några tamrenar for transport och som lockmedel vildrensfångst [...] Det er som lockdjur det äldsta nordisk belägget anger tamrenens funktion [...] lockrenarna bör ha varit honor som utställdes under brunsttiden, att döma av senare skildringar från 1600-talet, och uppgiften att de voro "mycket dyra hos lapparna" på grund av användningen i vildrensfångst är belysande för tidens kombination av jakt- och vårdmetoder.' ('For the greater part of the medieval period and earlier reindeer husbandry consisted chiefly in keeping a flock of domesticated reindeer for transport and as a decoy when hunting wild reindeer [...] It is the role of decoy that the oldest Scandinavian record assigns domesticated reindeer [...] decoy reindeer appear to have been does which were put out during the mating season, to judge from later accounts from the seventeenth century, and the statement that they were 'highly prized amongst the Sámi' due to their role in hunting wild reindeer is illustrative of the combination of hunting and husbandry typical of the period.'), Sommarström 1969:73.

398 Trans. Fisher in Ekrem, Mortensen & Fisher 2003:57. 'Halogia, cuius incole multum Finnis

Markku Niskanen describes more fully the way these religious ideas were integrated into the hunting economy of the Sámi:

Before they set off, the hunters would usually visit their gods, the reindeer spirits. The reindeer *sieidi* shrine was often located on the fells. It could be in the form of some special stone or rock or even a whole fell. [...] In Muddusjärvi, the hunters used to call out a list of names and ask the local reindeer *sieidi* who were the best qualified to set out on the hunt. Powerful shamans might begin to chant, fall into a trance and summon the reindeer to be killed. According to the folklorist Samuli Paulaharju, Sammu Karhula and Murri-Pekka chanted and made the following promises to the *sieidi* of Taatsijärvi: 'If we catch reindeer, we will bring the great antlers to you.' The large antlers of bull reindeer were the best offering a hunter could make to his *sieidi*, and the area around the shrine was often strewn with them. In later times, piles of antlers could still be seen around the *sieidi* of Outakoski. The shrines also received other offerings: the skulls and shank bones of wild reindeer were brought to the *shrines* of Muddusjärvi and Ailigastunturi.<sup>399</sup>

The circumstance that skulls were offered by the Sámi community to their reindeer *sieidi* brings to mind the walrus skulls buried in the churchyard at Garðar.<sup>400</sup> Given the abundant evidence of how central the walrus was to the economy of the Norse Greenlanders, one wonders if by honouring the animal which they had hunted in this way—treating its remains with such reverence as to bury them around and beneath the cathedral in the churchyard at the seat of the bishops of Greenland—they sought (perhaps in the bishop's absence) to ensure its resurrection, so that it could then be

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cohabitant, et inter se commercia frequentant.' (ed. Ekrem & Mortensen in Ekrem, Mortensen & Fisher 2003:56)

399 Niskanen 2005:303.

400 On which see Degerbøl 1929.

hunted anew; the goose would continue to lay golden eggs.

This would be in keeping with the pattern found in analogous religious practices recorded amongst other circumpolar communities, for instance the rituals surrounding the hunting of the bear by the hunters of Sámi communities of the Scandinavian peninsula.<sup>401</sup>

It should be noted too that within the Sámi culture the *noaidit* (the Sámi shamans) continued to have a vital and central role in the Sámi economy long after the communities began to be taxed by the Norse, the Kvens and the Russians. This demonstrates that shamanism can be employed not only to influence the success of hunting for food (for the community's sustenance), but also hunting for other economic reasons, such as for trade or for the paying of taxes or tithes.

### ***verðir* as undead reindeer herders?**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Finnish-Sámi preacher and ethnologist Lars Levi Læstadius recorded a tradition from the Sámi milieu in which he grew up concerning a certain *noaidi* named Kutavuorok who was able to recover a stolen reindeer herd by enlisting the aid of dead people, who function as his tutelary spirits (*tjensteåndar*).<sup>402</sup> This may be compared with conceptions recorded in older missionary accounts from other parts of Sápmi concerning the employment of the dead as reindeer herders, as for instance related by the Norwegian missionary Hans Skanke:

Naar nu Noider, som have bekjendt sig mangfoldige saadanne reyser een hver at have giort, haver skullet forklare omstændighederne af disse Jamik-aimo-Reyser, saa have de bekjendt, at deres Saiwo-guelle kommer til dem, som raabes og jauges paa, og paa

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401 Cf. e.g. Edsman 1960, 1965.

402 Læstadius 1997:162.

hans rygg føres de til Jamik-aimo; og som dem der megen modstand kand møde, at Jamikerne enten ikke ville slippe den døding, som Noiden derfra vil tage med sig, eller endelig ville have den Syge ned til sig (som gierne skeer af nogen dødning der er den Syges Slegt, og her haver efterladt sig den som syg er, enten hand er den Jamikes Søn, datter, Mand, Qvinde, eller anden paarørende, da Noiden staaer een stoor fare, og ded gielder om hans liv) saa gjør hans Guelle ham mægtig bistand, og saalænge kjæmpes og holder ud med den fortrødne Jamike, indtil den enten maa consentere, eller Noiden faaer komme sin vey med den Jamike, som hand skal opføre til Rein-vogtere. [...] Lappernes bekjendelser have ogsaa forklaret, at saadanne fra Jamik-aimo optagne Jamiker lykkeligen og vel have vogtet deres Reenshjord, saalenge de aarligen have faaet ded offer, som dennem haver været tilsagt, og ded i et eller fleere aar, ligsom de i Jamik-aimo have accorderet.<sup>403</sup>

Can it be that the *náttúrur* or *verðir* whom Þorbjörg, with Guðríðr's help, has summoned, are in fact undead shepherds, who are to herd the wild reindeer back to the hunting grounds?—this would fit very well with the name *vǫrðr* (even if the conventional Old Icelandic word for shepherd was *féhirðir* or simply *hirðir*). And if these *verðir* were dead members of the community, this would make them eminently qualified—according to the conception widely attested elsewhere in Norse tradition—to provide the *vǫlva* with knowledge of the future and other matters previously hidden to her and to others 'þeir hlutir er áðr var bæði ek ok aðrir dulðir'.

We possibly have an example of an undead shepherd in *Skírnismál* in the *hirðir* encountered by Skírnir upon his arrival at *Gymis garðar*. This depends on an identification of the *jǫtnar* with the dead and their realm with the underworld (or one among several underworlds), an identification which is tenable but which space does

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403 Skanke [1728-1731] 1945a:195-6.

not permit me to elaborate upon here.<sup>404</sup>

The idea of shamans and practitioners of magic employing the dead as shepherds is found in Sámi tradition, but is unattested in Norse tradition, although the tradition of the *huldufólk*—if one accepts the hypothesis that these traditions developed from conceptions of the immanent dead—may represent a link here, inasmuch as the *huldufólk* were also frequently encountered herding their cattle close to the farms of the living, cattle which with a bit of cunning could be appropriated by the living from the *huldufólk*, to the benefit of one's own herd and of one's prospects for longer term prosperity.

Of course there is a contradiction between a shepherd herding wild, rather than tame, reindeer, but the process of taming would have taken some generations and so we could not expect that so early in the period of Greenland's settlement they would have already managed to tame the wild reindeer there (if they in fact ever did). So there is no immediate model 'in the land of the living' on Greenland itself for such a conception.

Nonetheless the fact that Norse farmers did herd reindeer in the homelands—we know for instance that the north Norwegian chieftain Ohthere (or Óttarr) had a herd of six hundred tame reindeer, and that was just the stock he hadn't yet sold that year: 'he hæfde þagyt, ða hé þone cyninge sohte, tamra deora unbebohtra syx hund. þa deor hý hátað 'hránas'' ('At the time he visited the king he still had six hundred tame beasts unsold; these animals they call 'reindeer''')<sup>405</sup>—could account for the presence of the conception of a supernatural reindeer herder in the religious imagination of the

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404 See, however, the arguments I put forward in support of such an identification in the paper 'vpp ec þér verp oc á avstr vega: throwing up in Ægir's hall', presented at the 14th International Saga Conference, Uppsala, Sweden 9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> August 2009. Electronic copy available at: [http://independent.academia.edu/HughAtkinson/Papers/627092/vpp\\_ec\\_ther\\_verp\\_oc\\_a\\_avstr\\_vega\\_t\\_hrowing\\_up\\_in\\_AEgirs\\_hall](http://independent.academia.edu/HughAtkinson/Papers/627092/vpp_ec_ther_verp_oc_a_avstr_vega_t_hrowing_up_in_AEgirs_hall)

405 Ross 1981:20-1.

Norse settlers of Greenland.

The snowstorm which accompanies the appearance of the reindeer herd—or perhaps the two initial ‘ghost’ reindeer herds—in the tradition related by Læstadius is notable in light of the snowstorm which accompanies the disappearance, through a comparable, if inverted, act of magic, of the fish from the bay beside which Grímr *loðinkinni* and his men have holed up for the night (in the episode mentioned earlier),<sup>406</sup> inside a hut not incommensurable with the *káta* inhabited by the rich Sámi’s family, though the former is perhaps more akin to the hut at a fishing station (in fact this is doubtless precisely what it is meant to represent, or was in any case its historical model).

If we now recall the Norwegian traditions of the ‘king of the herring’ (*sildekonge*, *sildtust*, *sildstorje*), it is perhaps significant that it is precisely herring with which Þuríðr *sundafyllir* filled every sound in Hálogaland during another *hallæri* described in *Landnámabók*: both the Hauksbók and Skarðsárabók redactions of this passage mention *sild* specifically (as opposed to simply *fiskum*, as in the Sturlubók redaction).<sup>407</sup> We may presume given the nature of the topographical and environmental conditions in Hálogaland—very much comparable with those pertaining in the Greenland settlements—that this *hallæri* had much the same ecological and

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406 'En er þeir vǫru í svefn komnir um nóttina, vöknuðu þeir við þat, at kominn var með svartahríð. Svá mikil grimmd fylgdi veðri þessu, at allt sýldi, bæði úti ok inni. Um morguninn, er þeir vǫru klæddir, gengu þeir út ok til sjóvar. Sáu þeir þá, at á burtu var allr veiðifangi, svá at hvergi sá staði. Þóttust þeir nú ekki vel staddir, en ekki gaf á burtu. Gengu þeir nú heim til skála ok vǫru þar um daginn.' ('And after they had fallen asleep that night they were awoken by a violent storm. So fierce was the storm that everything froze, outside and in. The next morning when they had dressed they went outside and down to the sea. They saw there that the whole of their catch had been swept away, leaving nothing behind. They did not consider themselves to be in a good position now, but there was no wind to set sail. They returned to their hut and remained there for the rest of the day.'). ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:186.

407 Note that *Eiríks saga rauða* and this redaction of *Landnámabók* are part of the same compilation, both texts, as Stefán Karlsson has it, having been copied by Haukr Erlendsson himself in the same period (Gunnar Harðarson & Stefán Karlsson 1993).



economic character in both regions.

In summary we may conclude that, although it is not explicitly characterised in such terms, it might be that what Þorbjörg is engaged in is act of *at seiða til sín*, what Bo Almqvist terms 'attraherande sejd', which constitutes the particular kind (or more properly the particular application) of *seiðr* which makes up a significant proportion of the accounts of *seiðr* to be found in the extant corpus of Old Norse texts. This is to say that *at seiða til sín* may be both the method and the purpose of the *seiðr* ritual allegedly performed in the last years of the first millennium at Herjólfssnes. If so it would be an act of magic wholly congruous with and appropriate to the requirements of the immediate crisis situation: the environmental, economic and social circumstances which the weight of evidence suggests would have obtained on such a farm (indeed precisely that outer fjord farm) at that time.

At the same time the hypothesised effect (and function) of the *seiðr* worked at Herjólfssnes would be very much in keeping with other instances of the application of *seiðr* to the similar ends as described in a number of accounts from different periods, ranging from both early and relatively reliable texts such as *Landnámabók*, to traditions recorded much later, as late as the folk traditions documented by Jón Árnason in the nineteenth century.<sup>408</sup>

In this connection it is illuminating to consider instances from the folk traditions of the Sámi, amongst others from accounts of *sieidi* ritual, of the conception that once the guardian spirit or spirits of a given group of game animals or fish were pacified with offerings, the animals or fish it protected would then be willing to be (or even complicit in being) caught.<sup>409</sup>

These acts of tractive, locative (or binding) and pacifying ritual magic may

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408 See Chapter One.

409 Reference the survey of these traditions in Chapter One.

profitably be related to and compared—within the same sphere of magical means of maintaining an abundance of game stock—with acts of magic analogous to *at seiða til sín* both by Sámi *noaidit*.<sup>410</sup>

Returning to the matter of the specific context of the element of tractive magic in the ritual purportedly performed at Herjólfssnes, we can compare these widely attested instances of conceptions of similar magical acts in other parts of the Norse cultural sphere (and that of its closest neighbours to the north and east) to the manner in which the 'margar nattvrur higat at sott ok þotti fagurt at heyra. þat er kuedit var. er adr uilldi fra oss snuazt ok oss avngua hlydni veita.'<sup>411</sup> It would seem semantically apt if this tractive action were the result of the singing of a song whose effect appears to be made explicit in its name, the second element of which, *lok(k)a*, Strömbäck identifies as a noun derived from the verb *at lokka*.<sup>412</sup>

This act of *at lokka* would then seem to involve essentially the same tractive force as the act of *at seiða til sín* and the corresponding magical act performed by the Sámi *noaidit*, when 'Powerful shamans might begin to chant, fall into a trance and summon the reindeer to be killed.'<sup>413</sup>

Might the *hlyðni* that the *náttúrur veita* correspond to the aforementioned willingness on the part of game animals to allow themselves to be caught?<sup>414</sup> That

410 Qvigstad 1927:459-61; Qvigstad 1929b:353-5; Grundström 1943-4; Bäckman 1982a:124f.; Læstadius 1997:162; Niskanen 2005:303) and attested widely in medieval and post-medieval Scandinavian tradition. See also Almqvist 2000:262-3.

411 *Eiríks saga rauða* (AM 557 4to) ch. 4, ed. Jansson 1945:43.

412 Thus: 'I andra sammansättningsleden vill jag se ett substantiv till verbet *lokka*, locka, bildet som *banna*, f., till *banna*, v., eller som *elska*, f., till *elska*, v. Det blir då den äldre handskriftens (Hauksbóks) form *-lokka*, som följes. I första leden vill jag se en kompositionsform *varð-* till *vörðr*' ('The second element in the compound I read as a noun derived from the verb *lokka*, 'lure', formed on the paradigm of *banna*, noun f., from *banna*, verb, or *elska*, noun f., from *elska*, verb. I thus take the form which appears in the Hauksbók version of the text, *-lokka* as the proper form. The first element I read as *varð-*, derived from *vörðr*'), Strömbäck 1935:130.

413 Niskanen 2005:303.

414 Zoëga ([1910] 2004:204) glosses *hlyðni* with 'obedience, homage'; Kunz translates its inversion, *oss ongva hlyðni veita*, as 'refused to do our bidding' (Kunz 1997:7).

these same *náttúrur*, as Þorbjörg explains, 'áðr vildi frá oss snúask' would then represent the situation that the game animals have mysteriously (got wise and) absented themselves from the hunting grounds, a circumstance assigned a supernatural cause within the archetypical shamanic cosmology. Note how Þorbjörg here, in speaking of 'oss' is now part of the communal 'us' though only a temporary visitor to the community, emphasising perhaps the fact that this crisis situation—the absence of game which has resulted in failed hunting expeditions—is affecting the entire settlement (which naturally includes Þorbjörg herself), as the first lines of the chapter likewise indicate. Furthermore the bond of solidarity between shaman and community is congruous with that found in commensurable rituals performed by shamans in other circumpolar communities.<sup>415</sup>

By way of exemplifying the use of *seiðr* to lure a herd of animals from one locale to another, we can look at an example from another Icelandic saga. The disappearance of Ingunn Þórólfsdóttir's cattle in *Laxdæla saga* is attributed to the Hebridean family of Kotkell, who have by this stage made themselves notorious as workers of *seiðr*: 'kvað hon Kotkel ok konu hans ok sonu gera sér óvært í fjárránum ok fjölkynngi'.<sup>416</sup> Later they perform two acts of *seiðr* which have a pronounced tractive effect, first upon a ship,<sup>417</sup> later upon a teenage boy.<sup>418</sup> It is reasonable then to characterise these acts more precisely as examples of *at seiða til sín*. We might then speculate, in light of both earlier and later traditions of the use of this particular kind of *seiðr* to draw animals to a given place,<sup>419</sup> whether it could be by this same method

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415 Gilberg 1984:27; Pentikäinen 1984:127.

416 *Laxdæla saga* ch. 35, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:98.

417 *Laxdæla saga* ch. 35, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:99–100.

418 *Laxdæla saga* ch. 37, ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:105–6.

419 The earlier being those of Þuríðr *sundafyllir* and of Ásólfr *alskik* in *Landnámabók*, cf. *Landnámabók*, Sturlubók, ch. 145, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:186; *Landnámabók*, Sturlubók, ch. 24, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:62–4, and Hauksbók ch. 21, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:61–5. Of Ásólfr it is said 'hann var kristinn vel ok vildi ekki eiga við heiðna menn og eigi vildi hann þiggja mat at þeim' ('he was

that Kotkell and family are rustling Ingunn's cattle.

This then would represent a Norse precedent for an act of magic to draw cattle—and why not then also wild game such as reindeer, as attested in Sámi tradition—to a given place. And this may be precisely the intended effect of Þorbjörg's *seiðr* at Herjólfssnes. And if it was not reindeer which were the object of this tractive magic, then, given Herjólfssnes' location, close to marine mammal resources—as Nørlund observes, 'for fishing and hunting Herjólfssnes was a good spot. Not only is there seal in plenty [*sic.*], but even the white bear may happen to pass that way'<sup>420</sup>—it may well have been not *jarðar hjarðir* but rather *báru hjarðir* who were lured there for the community's hunters to cull.

### Conclusion:

#### ***seiðr* in a Norse-Sámi, Norse-Inuit and circumpolar perspective**

In the foregoing I have made a comparison between Norse *seiðr*, Sámi shamanism (*noaidevuohta*) and circumpolar shamanisms. Comparison with *noaidevuohta* is very much in keeping with the contextualist approach, inasmuch as the Sámi, historically, in the medieval period as still today, shared the same landscape (broadly speaking) as the Scandinavian peoples, and—most strikingly in a region such as northern Norway—the same or very similar environmental conditions and consequent economic strategies.

When we then observe either similarities or differences in the response the respective cultures had to these conditions, these become more meaningful and the

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a good Christian a would have nothing to do with heathen men nor accept food from them'). This is particularly interesting in light of the dominant influence which some scholars assume the representatives of the Church in Greenland had on the overarching economic strategy of the settlements there (on which see e.g. Keller 1991:135).

420 Nørlund 1924:7.

comparison that much more fruitful, for the reason that there are that many fewer differences in the experience of the two cultures. That is to say, they are not worlds apart. Whilst all circumpolar cultures share to a certain degree similar environmental circumstances, the Norse and the Sámi shared the same—or at the very least neighbouring and overlapping parts of the same—geography, the same topographies (but keeping in mind the inner fjord : outer fjord dichotomy described earlier). This basis for comparison applies then also to comparisons made between the religious culture of the Norse Greenlanders and that of the Greenlandic (or Thule) Inuit.

Whilst then the Sámi have been adduced in the foregoing discussion as a comparative example from within Scandinavia of a culture—or a group of more or less interrelated communities (that make up Sápmi)—employing shamans and subscribing to a shamanic cosmology, what the Sámi and their religious activities do not constitute in the approach taken here is a putative source of a putative Norse form of shamanism, a status which they are on the other hand assigned for instance in what is perhaps still the definitive study of *seiðr*, Dag Strömbäck's doctoral thesis on the subject, published as *Sejd*.<sup>421</sup> In this much I concur with Neil Price when he postulates that '*sejd* was firmly a part of the circumpolar shamanic sphere, evolving *not under the influence of Sámi religion but alongside it*, as part of the common spiritual heritage of the North.'<sup>422</sup>

What this presupposes then is that similar—often strikingly similar—but nonetheless distinct and ethnocentric religious ideas and ritual methods developed in the two neighbouring cultures due at least in part to the fact that they were subject to the same environmental and economic conditions, and ultimately therefore shared the same needs and motivations, the most fundamental being the need to put food on the table, to eat. And as will have become evident from the foregoing presentation, both

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421 Strömbäck 1935.

422 Price 2006b:290, my emphasis.

cultures, in common also with the Thule Inuit culture of Greenland, addressed this need through an economic strategy based to a significant degree around hunting.

In order to influence the efficacy of their hunting endeavours—so as to empower their hunters with the preconditions for success in the hunt—the respective cultures employed not so very dissimilar magical techniques, one of the principle concrete aims of which was, I suggest, to lure or otherwise draw the game animals (for instance reindeer) to the hunting grounds, animals which were a staple of the respective communities' diets, and in certain regions in certain seasons their principle source of food. The stocking of a lake with fish—an idea known from both early and late Icelandic tradition,<sup>423</sup> and likewise from Sámi tradition—is also commensurable with this same method, albeit in a perhaps even more active and direct form.<sup>424</sup>

Þorbjörg lítilvölva's *spá* is more than just a weather forecast. It is arguably, and in the opinion of several scholars (Reichborn-Kjennerud, Steffensen, Larsen, Solli), a shaping of the future,<sup>425</sup> including not just future weather conditions but also

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423 See the traditions of Ásólfur alskik in *Landnámabók*, Sturlubók ch. 24, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:62ff., and of Api á Apavatni in Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. II, p. 84.

424 The Sámi tradition of 'Manden, som var sin god utro' is discussed above. Note the different agent in each case: supernatural beings. human magical practitioner (with or without the help of the former).

425 Thus: 'Seiden som hjelp til å se inn i fremtiden, var for de gamle mere enn en spådomskunst, da volven både ordner fremtiden for den som spør og spår om den. Således blev hun sett på som årsaken til vedkommendes skjebne, og spår hun vondt om en mann, kan hun vente sig å komme ut for hans vrede.' ('*Seiðr* as a means to see into the future was for people at that time more than simply the art of prophecy, since the *völva* both shapes the future for her client and [also] prophecies it. Thus she was seen as the cause of the fate of the person concerned, and if she prophecised unfavourably for a man then she could expect to be the object of his anger.') Reichborn-Kjennerud 1928:80; 'Flere ting tyder på at samernes divinatorik, der allerede i norrøne tid var kendt, for ikke at sige berygtet, hos skandinaverne under betegnelsen at "spyrja spá", ikke bare var en teknik til at udforske visse kræfters aktiviteter, men i lige så høj grad var en metode hvormed man styrede disse kræfter, så at man så at sige fremkaldte det man spåede.' ('Several things hint at the fact that the Sámi divinatory technique, which already in Norse times was known, not to say notorious, among [Nordic] Scandinavians in the phrase *at spyrja spá*, was not just a means of investigating the activities of given supernatural powers, but was just as much a method whereby one controlled these forces, so that one so to speak brought about what one prophecised.') Steffensen 1988:34; 'Gjennom å spå om fremtiden, «så» ikke bare Torbjørg hva som skulle skje, hun påvirket fremtidige hendelser i en positiv retning. Sjamanens oppgave består ikke bare av å se inn i fremtiden. Sjamanen kan eksempelvis kurere sykdommer, jfr. Torbjørg som «så» at

economic conditions, and specifically (I would argue) the provision of an abundance of game in the locales where the community's hunters hunted. By *at lokka veiði til sín*, Þorbjörg resolves the *hallæri*, the economic crisis, providing the hunters with game to hunt and the community with food to eat.

What the several phenomenological and contextual points of concordance between *seiðr* at Herjólfssnes and documented circumpolar shamanisms speaks for is not merely that *seiðr* in this time and more than anything this place may reasonably be regarded as a '(form of) shamanism', or at the very least something closely akin to a 'shamanism', but also that it plausibly actually took place there and then, for the aims and motivations of the ritual are wholly congruous with the demonstrable ecological and economic circumstances in southwestern Greenland at this time.

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farsotten ville stanse, virke renende, rensende og reparerende.' ('By prophesizing the future, Þorbjörg not only "saw" what would come to pass, she influenced future events in a positive direction. The shaman's duties consisted not only of seeing into the future. The shaman can for example cure illnesses—compare this with Þorbjörg who "saw" that the epidemic would come to an end—and perform acts of cleansing, purifying and repairing.') Solli 1997-8:18.

## APPENDIX A

**Compendium of source text citations with parallel translations<sup>1</sup>**

*Page reference, text title and citation (see citation in thesis proper for bibliographical reference)*

*Translation (my own unless otherwise stated)*

**78-79 *Ynglinga saga***

Drífa keypti at Hulð seiðkonu, at hon skyldi síða Vanlanda til Finnlands eða deyða hann at oðrum kosti. En er seiðr var framiðr, var Vanlandi at Uppsölum. Þá gerði hann fúsan at fara til Finnlands, en vinir hans ok ráðamenn þönnuðu honum ok sögðu, at vera myndi fjölkynngi Finna í fýsi hans.<sup>2</sup>

Drífa hired the seiðr woman Hulð to lure Vanlandi to Finland by means of *seiðr*, or failing that to kill him. And when the *seiðr* was performed Vanlandi was in Uppsala. At once he became impatient to set off for Finland, but his friends and advisors forbade him from doing so, and said that it must be Sámi sorcery that was giving him itchy feet.

**80 *Njáls saga***

Hon tók hendinni um háls honum ok kyssti hann ok mælti: “Ef ek á svá mikit vald á þér sem ek ætla, þá legg ek þat á við þik, at þú megir engri munúð fram koma við konu þá, er þú ætlar þér á Íslandi, en fremja skalt þú mega vilja þinn við aðrar konur.” [...] En fátt var um með þeim Hrúti um samfarar, ok ferr svá fram allt til várs. [...] “Þegar hann kemr við mik, þá er hqrund hans svá mikit, at hann má ekki eptirlæti hafa við mik, en þó hqfum vit bæði breytni til þess á alla vega, at vit mættim njótask, en þat verðr ekki. En þó áðr vit skilim, sýnir hann þat af sér, at hann er í æði sínu rétt sem aðrir menn.”<sup>3</sup>

She put her arms around his neck and kissed him and said, “If I have as much power over you as I think I have, then I place this spell on you: you will not have any sexual pleasure with the woman you plan to marry in Iceland, though you'll be able to enjoy yourself with other women.” [...] But there was little intimacy between her and [Hrútr], and so it went all through the winter. [...] “When he comes close to me his penis is so large that he can't have any satisfaction from me, and yet we've both tried every possible way to enjoy each other, but nothing works. By the time we part, however, he shows that he's as normal physically as other men.”<sup>4</sup>

1 Texts are here presented in the same sequence as they appear in the thesis proper. Refer to the Indices for an alphabetical list of texts with page references to both appendix and thesis proper.  
2 Ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1941:29.  
3 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954:20-22, 24.



**80 *Egils saga***

Ok er fleir Egill sátu ok mǫtuðusk þá sá Egill, at kona sjúk lá í þverpallinum. Egill spurði Þorfinn hver kona sú væri er þar var svá þungliga haldin. Þorfinnr segir at hon hét Helga ok var dóttir hans; ‘hefir hon haft langan vanmátt,’ ok flat var krǫm mikil; fekk hon enga nótt svefn ok var sem hamstoli væri. ‘Hefir nǫkkurs í verit leitat,’ segir Egill, ‘um mein hennar?’ Þorfinnr segir: ‘Ristnar hafa verit rúnar ok er sá einn bóndason heðan skammt í brott er þat gerði ok er síðan miklu verr en áðr; eða kanntu, Egill, nǫkkut gera at slíkum meinum?’ Egill segir: ‘Vera kann at ekki spillisk við þó at ek koma til.’ Ok er Egill var mettr gekk hann þar til er konan lá ok ræddi við hana. Hann bað þá hefja hana ór rúminu ok leggja undir hana hrein klæði ok nú var svá gǫrt. Síðan rannsakaði hann rúmit er hon hafði hvílt í ok þar fann hann tálkn ok váru þar á rúnar. Egill las þær ok síðan telgði hann af rúnarnar ok skóf þær í eld niðr; hann brenndi tálknit allt ok lét bera í vind klæði þau er hon hafði haft áðr. Þá kvað Egill:

Skalat maðr rúnar rísta

nema ráða vel kunní.

Þat verðr mǫrgum manni

er um myrkvan staf villisk.

Sá ek á telgðu tálkni

When Erik and his men sat down to eat, he saw a sick woman lying on the cross-bench. Egil asked Thorfinn who the woman was and why she was in such a poor state. Thorfinn said she was his daughter Helga – “She has been weak for a long time”. She was suffering from a wasting sickness, and could not sleep at night for some kind of a delirium. “Has anyone tried to find out the cause of her illness?” Egil asked. “We had some runes carved,” said Thorfinn. “The son of a farmer who lives close by did it, and since then she's been much worse. Do you know any remedy, Egil?” Egil said, “It might not do any harm if I try something.” When Egil had eaten his fill he went to where the woman was lying and spoke to her. He ordered them to lift her out of her bed and place clean sheets underneath her, and this was done. Then he examined the bed she had been lying in, and found a whalebone with runes carved on it. After reading the runes, Egil shaved them off and scraped them into the fire. He burned the whalebone and had her bedclothes aired. Then Egil spoke a verse:

No man should carve runes

unless he can read them well;

many a man goes astray

around those dark letters.

On the whalebone I saw

tíu launstafi ristna.

Þat hefir lauka lindi

langs ofregga fengit.

Egill reist rúnar ok lagði undir hægindit í hvíluna þar er hon hvíldi. Henni þótti sem hon vaknaði ór svefni ok sagði at hon var þá heil, en þó var hon máttlítil, en faðir hennar ok móðir urðu stórum fegin.<sup>5</sup>

### 81-2 'Peysan og prestsdóttir að norðan' (variant 1)

Miklar og margar sögur fóru af Eiríki presti um landið og sögðu menn að enginn mundi standa honum jafnfætis í listum sínum. Þetta heyrði prestsdóttir ein fyrir norðan; hún vildi reyna hvort engin ráð væru til að yfirbuga Eirík. Vann hún þá nærpeysu mjög vandaða og sendi Eiríki hana að gjöf. Eiríkur tók við sendingunni og leit á án þess að segja neitt og lét hana síðan ofan í kistu. En nokkru síðar fór hann eitthvað frá bænum í brunagaddi og kulda; tekur hann þá peysuna og fer í hana. Hann hafði mann með sér. Eiríkur biður hann að muna sig um það að ef hann sjái nokkur missmíði á sér þá skuli hann rista af sér fötin hið allra bráðasta og ná sér úr peysunni. Síðan fara þeir á stað, en þegar þeir koma út að vallargarðinum fellur prestur af baki hestinum með froðufalli. Fylgdarmaðurinn þrífur þegar til klæða prests, ristir þau af honum og nær honum úr peysunni; raknar Eiríkur þá undireins við og þakkar manninum hjálpina, tekur síðan peysuna, snýr heim aftur og læsir hana niður í kistu

ten secret letters carved,  
from them the linden tree  
took her long harm.

Egil cut some runes and placed them under the pillow of the bed where she was lying. She felt as if she were waking from a deep sleep, and she said she was well again, but still very weak.<sup>6</sup>

There were many and great tales told all across the land of the priest Eiríkur and people said that no one could match him in his mastery of the magical arts. This came to the attention of the daughter of a priest to the north; she wanted to find out if there was any way to bring Eiríkur to his knees. So she made an undershirt of good quality and she sent it to Eiríkur as a gift. Eiríkur received the *sending* and looked at it without saying anything and afterwards he put it away in a chest. And some time later he set off from the farm out onto slippery, icy frozen ground and cold; he then takes the shirt and puts it on. There was another man with him. Eiríkur told him to remember that if he saw that there was anything amiss with him then he should take off his clothes as fast as he could and get out of the shirt. After that they set off, and when they come out to the wall of the homefield the priest falls off the back of the horse, foaming at the mouth. The man accompanying him at once grabs hold of the

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Bjarni Einarsson 2003:136-7.

<sup>6</sup> Trans. Scudder in Viðar Hreinsson et al. (eds.) 1997 vol. I:142-3.

sem áður.<sup>7</sup>

## 82 'Peysan og prestsdóttir að norðan' (variant 2)

Leið nú fram á vetur svo ekki bar til tíðinda. Eitt kvöld á vökunni er barið á dyr í Vogsósum; þá var bylur ákaflegur og frost mikið. Eiríkur segir: “Einhver er þar seint á ferð og látum hann berja annað sinn.” Skömmu seinna er barið aftur; þá stendur Eiríkur upp og fer sjálfur til dyra. Hann lýkur upp og er þá prestsdóttir þar komin, sú sem hafði sent honum peysuna; hún var í tómunum nærfötunum. Eiríkur biður hana að ganga í bæinn og segir að nú sé ekki meyjaveður úti, “og munt þú hafa brýnt erindi, heillin.” Hún lét litið yfir því og fór inn. Var hún þar hjá Eiríki um veturinn og námu þau hvort að öðru það sem annað kunni framar hinu. Eiríkur hafði seitt stúlkuna til sín í hefndaskyni fyrir peysuna. Það segja sumir að þau hafi síðan átt og búið í Vogsósum.<sup>8</sup>

## 82 'Jóhanna'

[...] og af því hún var í húsum dvergsins þá gat hann ekki náð henni, því þangað mátti hann ekki koma og komst hann því ekki nema að dyrunum, og því gat hann ekki

priest's clothes, shakes them off him and gets him out of the shirt; Eiríkur then regains consciousness at once and thanks the man for his help, and after that takes the shirt, turns back towards home and locks it away down in a chest as before.

Winter now draws on and nothing of note happens. One evening when people were still awake there is a knocking on the door at Vogsós; there was a fierce snowstorm blowing and a heavy frost. Eiríkur says: “Somebody is out travelling late, let him knock once more.” Shortly afterwards there is more knocking; then Eiríkur gets up and goes himself over to the door. He opens it and standing there before him is the priest's daughter, the one who had sent him the jumper; she was in nothing but her underclothes. Eiríkur invites her into the farm and says that this is no kind of weather for young maidens, “and you must be on an urgent errand, my child.” She scarcely showed any reaction and went in. She was there on Eiríkur's farm through the winter and each of them learnt from the other that (knowledge of magic) which the other was more skilled in. Eiríkur had *seiðed* the girl *til sín* in knowing retaliation for the shirt. Some say that they later got married and lived at Vogsós.

[...] and because she was in the dwarf's house it could not catch her, because it could not go in there, and he only got as far as the doorway, and for that reason was unable

7 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:521.

8 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:521-2.

tekið hana með valdi svo hann varð með göldrum að reyna að seiða hana til sín, en það tókst heldur ekki af því dvergurinn hafði svo um búíð að ekkert óhreint gat komizt inn fyrir dyr hjá honum.<sup>9</sup>

### 83 Þiðreks saga

Her eptir samnaz saman með Hertnið konungi mikill hær. Oc hans kona Ostacia fær út oc rærði sinn gand. þat kollom ver at hon færi at sæiða sem gort var i forneskio. at fiolkungar konor þær er ver kollum volor skylldo sæiða honom sæið. Sua mikit gerði hon af ser i fiolkyngi oc trollskaþ. at hon sæiddi til sín margskonar dyr. leona oc biorno oc flugdræka stora. hon tamði þa alla þar til at þær lyddo henne oc hon matti visa þæim a hændr sinom uvinom. Sua sægir i kvæðom þyðærskom. at hennar hærr væri likr fiandom sialfom. hon siolf var ok sem æinn flugdreki.<sup>10</sup>

### 84 Kormáks saga (Möðruvallabók redaction)

Kormákr bað Steingerðar, ok var hon honum fóstnuð ok ákveðin brulaupsstefna, ok stendr nú kyrrt um hríð. Nú fara orð á milli þeira, ok verða í nokkurar greinir um fjárfar, ok svá veik við breytiliga, at síðan þessum ráðum var ráðit, fannsk Kormáki fátt um, en þat var fyrir þá sök, at Þórveig seiddi til, at þau skyldi eigi njótast mega.<sup>11</sup>

to take her by force, and so he resorted to magic and tried to *seið* her into his arms, but that didn't work either because the dwarf had seen to it that nothing unclean would be able to cross the threshold.

After that a great army assembled around king Hertnið. And his wife Ostacia went out and *rærði* her gand. We call this to *sæiða* [perform *seiðr*], as people did in days gone by, that women skilled in magic, those we call *vǫlur*, were to *seiða* him *seiðr*. She was so accomplished at magic and witchcraft that she succeeded in attracting many different animals by means of her *seiðr*, lions and bears and great big flying dragons. She tames them all so that they obeyed her and she could send them against her enemies. It is said in German lays that her army was like the devil himself, and she herself was like a winged dragon.

Kormákr asked for Steingerðr's hand in marriage, and they were engaged and a date was set for the wedding, and things remained quiet for a period. Messages passed between them, and sometimes these included disagreements over money, and events took a peculiar turn, for after the marriage had been arranged, Kormákr lost interest, and that was on account of Þórveigr having worked *seiðr* such that the two of them would not be able to enjoy each other's love.

9 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. V:95.

10 Ed. Unger 1853:303-4.

11 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1939:223.

**84 *Gísla saga Súrssonar***

Þat er næst til tíðinda, at Þorkr kaupir at Þorgrími nef, at hann seiddi seið, at þeim manni yrði ekki at björg, er Þorgrím hefði vegit, þó at menn vildi duga honum. Oxí níu vetra gamall var honum gefinn til þess. Nú flytr Þorgrímr fram seiðinn og veitir sér umbúð eptir venju sinni ok gerir sér hjall, ok fremr hann þetta fjölkynngilega með allri ergi ok skelmiskap.<sup>12</sup>

[...]

Svá er sagt at, Gísli var þrjá vetr í Geirþjófsfirði, en stundum með Þorkatli Eiríkssyni, en aðra þrjá vetr ferr hann um allt Ísland ok hittir hofðingja ok biðr sér liðs. En sakar þess trollskepar, er Þorgrímr nef hafði haft í seiðinum, ok atkvæða, þá verðr þess eigi auðit, at hofðingjar tæki við honum, ok þó at stundum þœtti þeim eigi svá ólíkliga horfa, þá bar þó alls staðar nokkut við.<sup>13</sup>

[...]

Ok þat hafa menn mælt, at Ingjaldr hafi Gísla mest veitt ok þat at mestu gagni orðit; ok þat er sagt, at þá er Þorgrímr nef gerði seiðinn, at hann mælti svá fyrir, at Gísla skyldi ekki at gagni verða, þó at menn byrgi honum hér á landi; en þat kom honum eigi í hug at skilja til um úteyjar, ok endisk því þetta hótí lengst, þótt eigi yrði þess á lengðar auðit.<sup>14</sup>

The next thing to tell is that Þorkr hired Þorgrímr nef to work *seiðr* such that the man who had killed Þorgrím would never have a safe haven, even if people wished to help that person. In payment for this he was given a nine-year-old bull. Þorgrímr now performs *seiðr* and arranges things according to his custom, preparing a platform, and he performs this sorcery with in the most shameful and evil manner.

It is said that Gísli spent three winters in Geirþjófsfjörður, sometimes with Þorkell Eiríksson, and spent another three winters wandering throughout Iceland, and met chieftains and asked them for their protection. But as a consequence of the witchcraft with which Þorgrímr nef had imbued the *seiðr* and in his curse, this never worked out, the chieftains did not take him in, and even though it sometimes seemed ever so improbable that things would turn out as they did, it came to nothing.

And people have said that Ingjaldr had done the most to help Gísli and to most avail; and it is said that when Þorgrímur nef worked *seiðr* he determined that Gísli would not benefit from assistance here in Iceland even though people offered it; but it did not occur to him to include in this the offshore islands, and for that reason this curse lasted the longest, although this state of affairs did not last for long.

12 Ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson & Guðni Jónsson 1943:56-7.

13 Ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson & Guðni Jónsson 1943:68-9.

14 Ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson & Guðni Jónsson 1943:84.

**86 *Laxdæla saga***

[S]agði Kotkell þá sonum sínum, hvat þar hafði í gǫrzk. Þeir bræðr urðu óðir við þetta ok kváðu menn ekki hafa fyrr gengit í berhogg við þau um svá mikinn fjándskap. Síðan lét Kotkell gera seiðhjall mikinn; þau færðusk þar á upp ǫll; þau kváðu þar harðsnúin frœði; þat vǫru galdrar. Því næst laust á hríð mikilli. Þat fann Þórðr Ingunnarson ok hans fǫrunautar, þar sem hann var á sæ staddr, ok til hans var gǫrt veðrit. Keyrir skipit vestr fyrir Skálmarnes. Þórðr sýndi mikinn hraustleik í sæliði. Þat sá þeir menn, er á landi vǫru, at hann kastaði því ǫllu, er til þunga var, útan mǫnnum; væntu þeir menn, er á landi vǫru, Þórði þá landtǫku, því at þá var af farit þat, sem skerjótast var. Síðan reis boði skammt frá landi, sá er engi maðr mundi, at fyrr hefði uppi verit, ok laust skipit svá, at þegar horfði upp kjǫlrinn. Þar druknaði Þórðr ok allt fǫruneyti hans, en skipit braut í spán [...] <sup>15</sup> Þessi tíðendi spyrjask víða ok mælask illa fyrir; þóttu þat ólífismenn, er slíka fjǫlkynngi fǫmðu, sem þau Kotkell hǫfðu þá lýst. <sup>16</sup>

**87-8 *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar***

Svá er sagt at Gunnhildr lét seið efla ok lét þat seiða at Egill Skalla-Grímsson skyldi aldri ró bíða á Íslandi fyrr en hon sæi hann. En þat sumar er þeir Hákon ok Eiríkr hǫfðu hizk ok deilt um Nóreg þá var farbann til allra landa ór Nóregi ok kómu þat

Kotkell told his sons what had happened. The brothers became angry about this and said that no one had openly opposed them before with such open aggression. Kotkell then had a great seiðr platform set up; they all mounted it; then they chanted a powerful formula; these were *galdrar*. Then an almighty blizzard blew up. Þórðr Ingunnarson and his shipmates, who were at sea, felt how the weather was targeted at them. The ship was blown west of Skálmarness. Þórðr showed great courage attempting to control the ship. People on the shore saw how he threw overboard everything that weighed anything at all, everything but the men aboard. They thought that Þórðr would make it safely back to land because the worst of the bad weather was past. Then a skerry appeared out of the waves, which nobody was aware of there having been one before, and the ship ran into it and capsized at once. Þórðr and all of his crew drowned there, and the ship was smashed to pieces [...] These events were widely reported with grave words; people thought that anyone who worked such magic as Kotkell had done was wicked indeed.

It is said that Gunnhildr saw to it that *seiðr* was performed such that Egill Skalla-Grímsson would never find peace in Iceland before she laid eyes on him. And that same summer when Hákon and Eiríkr had met and divided Norway up between them

15 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:98-9.

16 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:100.

sumar engi skip til Íslands ok engi tíðendi ór Nóregi. [...] Egill varð ekki snemmbúinn ok er hann lét í haf þá byrjaði heldr seint, tók at hausta ok stærði veðrin; sigldu þeir fyrir norðan Orkneyjar; vildi Egill þar ekki við koma, því at hann hugði at ríki Eiríks konungs mundi allt yfir standa í eyjunum. Sigldu þeir þá suðr fyrir Skotland ok hófðu storm mikinn ok veðr þvert; fengu þeir beitt fyrir Skotland ok svá norðan fyrir England. En aptan dags er myrkva tók var veðr hvasst; finna þeir eigi fyrr en grunnföll váru á útbörða ok svá fram fyrir. Var þá engi annarr til en stefna á land upp ok svá gerðu þeir, sigldu þá til brots ok kómu at landi við Humru mynni. Þar heldusk menn allir ok mestr hluti fjár, annat en skip; þat brotnaði í spán.<sup>17</sup>

### 88 'Galdra-Antoníus'

Jón leitaðist við að komast úr Grímsey, en Antoníus hindraði ætíð ferð hans með því að gjöra á hríðarbyl áður hann fór. Að lyktum hafði Jón leynilegan viðbúnað á náttarþeli, komst á stað með skipverjum sínum við dögum og nær því fram á mitt sundið, þá fréttir Antoníus til ferða hans, fyllist forneskju og fer á seið.

Nú vikur sögunni til Jóns; hann sér hvar upp gengur hríðarbakki ógurlegur að baki sér. Hann snýr sér við og sezt móti hríðinni, en hvað hann hefur tautað veit enginn, en eigi skall á hríðin. Þeir héldu til Flateyjar, en þá er þeir voru skammt frá

there was a ban on ships sailing to any other land from Norway, and no ship came to Iceland that summer and no news from Norway reached Iceland. [...] Egill took a while to prepare his voyage and he set off rather late, autumn was coming on and the seas were rough; they sailed north of the Orkneys; Egill did not wish to make landfall there, for he thought that king Eiríkr's power purveyed throughout those islands. They then sailed south past Scotland and encountered a violent storm and strong headwinds; they weathered the Scottish coast and continued to the north of England. And late in the day as darkness fell the weather was fierce; they did not know where they were before they saw waves breaking on a reef on the seaward side and up ahead. There was then nothing else for it but to go ashore and that is what they did, ran aground and made landfall by the mouth of the Humber. All hands were saved along with most of their possessions, apart from the ship itself, which broke into pieces.

Jón tried to get off Grímsey, but Antoníus always hindered his passage by causing a snowstorm before he set off. In the end Jón secretly prepared a night-frost, set off with his ship's crew at daybreak and made it as far as the middle of the sound, and then Antoníus got wind of his movements, was filled with sorcery and began to work *seiðr*.

Now the story turns to Jón; he sees where an immense bank of snowstorm rises up behind him. He turns around and looks towards the snowstorm, and no one

<sup>17</sup> Ed. Bjarni Einarsson 2003:101.

landi skipar Jón öllum að skinnklæðast, en svo fór að þá þeir voru lentir varð að bera einn heim að kominn dauða, en eigi bar á Jóni.<sup>18</sup>

knows what he murmured, but the storm did not break. They made for Flatey, and when they were close to land Jón orders everyone on board to strip naked, and it happened that when they had landed (the ship) they had to carry one of the crew home who had died, but Jón was unscathed.

### 88 *Friðþjófs saga ins frækna (Holm papp 17 4to text)*

síðan sendu þeir eptir seid konum tueimur heidi og hamglámu og gáfu þeim fie til að þær sendi<sup>19</sup> vedur fo ftórt að fridþiofi og monnum hanz að þeir tynduft aller j hafe, þær Efldu seidinn og færduft á hiallinu med gølldrum og giorningum. Enn er þeir fridþiofur komu vt vr sógni þá giørði að þeim huaft vedur og ftorm mykinn.

After that they sent for two *seiðr*-women, Heiðr and Hamgláma, and paid them to conjure a storm so violent that Friðþjófr and his men would drown at sea. They performed the *seiðr* and mounted a scaffold chanting magical spells. And when Friðþjófr and his men came out of the inlet they were met with severe weather and a violent storm.

### 88-9 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper'

Om sine Bedrifter have de gjort adskillige sælsomme og ublue Bekiendelser: De have foregivet, sig i Svaners, Ravnes, Falkes, Giæsses, Ænders, Maagers, Sælhundes, Marsviins, Hvalfiskes, samt andre Fugles, firefødtte Dyr og Fiskes Gestalt at have opvakt Storm-Veyr, og ombragt Fartøyer paa Vandet. [...] Een sagde, sig at have opvakt Skade-Veyr ved Vind i en Sæk, som hun opløste, bekiendte derhos, at hun havde ombragt et Bergens Skib, og under den Forretning havt Tilhold i en stor Bølge, som omkastede Skibet. [...] Een bekiendte sig at have forrasket en Baad ved slig Omgang, at, da Folket lagde fra Landet, holdt hun sig afsides i en Viig, og at, da

They have made all kinds of strange and extravagant confessions about their deeds: They claim to have taken on the shape of swans, ravens, falcons, geese, ducks, seagulls, seals, porpoises, whales, as well as other birds, four-legged animals and fish and [in that shape] brought about storms and sunk ships on the sea. [...] One said that she had brought about a destructive storm through the use of wind in a sack, which she opened, and admitted that she had thereby sunk a ship from Bergen, and during the course of this business was herself hidden in a large wave which capsized the ship. [...] One of them confessed to having sunk a boat with such treatment so that when

18 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954-61, vol. III:590.

19 The ÍB 43 fol. text reads <seyde>, ed. Larsson 1893:10.



de med Baaden vare komne et Stykke fra Landet ud paa Fiorden, svømmede hun the crew set off from land, she [the witch] lay in a secluded spot in a cove, and when  
 efter i en paatagen Sælhunds Skikkelse og kuldkastede den.<sup>20</sup> they in the boat had come out some distance from land out into the fjord, she swam  
 after in the shape of a seal and overturned them.

### 90 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper'

hun havde givet en ung Karl, et til en Steen anbundet Stykke Knøst, samt budet ham she had given a piece of *knøst* tied to a stone to a young man, and commanded him  
 at kaste samme ud paa Vandet, naar en stor Bølge kom anfaldende, og tillige nævne to throw it out into the water when a large wave drove in, and at the same time say  
 hendes Navn 3 Gange; hvorefter da Bølgen skulde legge sig, og ingen Skade tilføye her name three times; after doing this the wave should dissolve and no harm come to  
 ham. 2) At hun havde flyed nogle unge Karle en blandet Drik, bestaaende af Hav- him. 2) That she had prepared some young men a drink consisting of seawater, weak  
 Vand, tyndt Øl, Melke-Valle, Elve-Vand og Peber, til en Befrielse fra at omkomme beer, milk whey, river water and pepper, so as to protect them against dying at sea;  
 paa Søen; Samme maatte ey drikkes, men søbes med Skeer, saafremt den skulde have this drink was not to be drunk, but rather eaten with a spoon, if it was to have the  
 bemeldte Virkning.<sup>21</sup> intended effect.

### 90-2 *Kristni saga*

Þann vetr tók út skip Þangbrands ór Hítará ok braut mjök ok rak á land fyrir sunnan That winter Þangbrandr's ship was driven out to sea from its mooring on the river  
 Hítará and was badly damaged and swept ashore to the south of Kálfalæk. Steinunn,  
 Kálfalæk. Þar um orti Steinunn, móðir Skáld-Refs, þetta: the mother of Skáld-Réf, composed a verse about that:

Dórr brá Þvinnils dýri

Þangbrands ór stað lǫngu,

hristi blakk ok beysti

brands ok laust við sandi. [variant: barðs ok laust við jörðu]

Dórr drew Þvinnill's animal,

Þangbrandr's long ship, from land,

shook the prow's horse and hit it,

and hurled it against the sand.

20 Leem 1767:453-5.

21 Leem 1767:458.

Muna skíð á sjá síðan [variant: Muna skíð of sæ síðan]

sundfært Atals grundar,

hregg því at hart nam leggja,

hónum kennt, í spónu.

Braut fyrir bjöllu gæti,

bönd meiddu val Strandar,

mogfelliandi mellu

móstalls vísund allan.

Hlífði ei Krístr, þá er kneyfði

kólgu hrafn með stöfnum, [variant: knorr, malmfeta varrar,]

lítt hygg ek at Guð gætti

Gylfa hreins it eina.<sup>22</sup>

On sea the ski of Atall's land

will not swim henceforth,

for a harsh tempest sent by him

has hewn it into splinters.

Before the bell's keeper (bonds

destroyed the beach's falcon)

slayer of the giantess-son

broke the ox of the seagull's place.

Christ was not watching, when

the wave-raven drank at the prows.

Small guard I think God held

—if any—over Gylfi's reindeer.<sup>23</sup>

## 92 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*

Annan dag eptir reri Ingjaldr á sjó ok var einn á skipi ok rær allt þar til er frammi var fjallit ok svá nesit. Heldr þótti honum lengra en hann hugði. Veður var gott um morgininn. En er hann kom á miðit, var undir fiskr nógr. Litlu síðar dró upp flóka á Ennisfjalli ok gekk skjótt yfir. Þar næst kom vindr ok fjúk með frosti. Þá sá Ingjaldr mann á báti, ok dró fiska handstinnan; hann var rauðskeggjaðr. Ingjaldr spurði hann

Two days later Ingjaldr rowed out to sea alone, as far as the mountain and the peninsula. It seemed to him a good deal further than he had thought. The weather was good in the morning. But when he reached the middle he found fish there. A little after that dark clouds gathered over Ennisfjall and moved quickly across the sky. It became windy and a frosty blizzard blew up. At that moment Ingjaldr saw a man in

22 Ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafr Halldórsson and Peter Foote 2003:24.

23 Trans. Grønlie 2006:43-4.

at nafni; hann kveðst Grímr heita. Ingjaldr spurði, hvárt hann vildi ekki at landi halda. a boat reeling in fish hand over fist; he had a red beard. Ingjaldr asked him his name; Grímr kveðst eigi búinn, —"ok máttu bíða, þar til er ek hefi hlaðit bátinn." Veðr gekk he said his name was Grímr. Ingjaldr asked whether he oughtn't to be heading for upp at eins ok gerði svá sterkt ok myrkt, at eigi sá stafna í milli. Tapat hafði Ingjaldr shore. Grímr said he wasn't finished, — “and you must wait until I've filled the boat.” önglum sínum öllum ok veiðarfærum; váru ok árar mjök lúnar.<sup>24</sup> All at once the weather worsened, becoming so rough and dark that you couldn't see from one end of the boat to the other. Ingjaldr had by then lost all of his fishing tackle and his catch; his oars were also very battered.

### 93 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*

Það bar til um daginn heima at Ingjaldshváli um miðdegi, at komit var upp á skjá um It happened that day at Ingjaldshváll around midday that someone came to the máltíð í stofu ok kveðit þetta með dimmri raust: window while people were eating in the living room and recited the following verse in a hollow voice:

Út reri einn á báti

Ingjaldr í skinnfeldi,

týndi átján önglum

Ingjaldr í skinnfeldi

ok fertugu færi

Ingjaldr í skinnfeldi;

aptr kom aldri síðan

Ingjaldr í skinnfeldi.

A man road out alone in a boat

Ingjaldr in his leather cloak

lost eighteen hooks

Ingjaldr in his leather cloak

and a fishing line forty yards long

Ingjaldr in his leather cloak

may he never come back again

Ingjaldr in his leather cloak.

Mönnum brá mjök við þetta, en þat hafa menn fyrir satt, at Hetta tröllkona The people there were very shaken by that, and it was thought that it must muni þetta kveðit hafa, því at hon ætlaði, sem hon vildi, at Ingjaldr skyldi aldri aptr have been the witch Hetta who recited the verse, because she hoped and believed that

<sup>24</sup> Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:126.

hafa komit, sem hon hafði ráð til sett.<sup>25</sup>

### 93-4 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*

Þóttist hann þá vita, at hann mundi ekki at landi ná sakir fjölkynngis Hettu ok þetta mundu allt hennar ráð verit hafa.

### 94-5 *Sörli saga sterka*

“Höfum vit Skrímnir minn haldit helli þennan í förutigi ár ok æ nokkut til matfanga orðit, því at á hverju ári höfum vit seitt hingat þrjú skip með mönnum. Höfum vit ok einninn byggðir rændar hestum, úlföldum ok ösnum allra mest. Þar með höfum vit ok töfrat hingat marga góða gripi frá ýmsum herrum, ok get ek nú,” sagði hún, “sýnt yðr hér til nokkur merki.”

Sörli kvað hana kunna sér margt at greina. Klæddist hann síðan skjótt. En er hann var klæddr, settist hann undir borð, ok bar kerling fram dýrlega fæðu með alls konar ilmandi drykk. Dúkar váru þar af pelli ok purpura, en ker ok skálir af gulli með gimsteinum sett. Ok er Sörli hafði etit ok drukkit sem hann lysti, leiddi kerling hann í afhelli einn ok sýndi honum þar stóra nægð gulls ok gimsteina, ok þar af gat hún honum eitt tafl af gulli gert, ok þóttist hann aldri þvílíkt sét hafa annat.<sup>26</sup>

### 95 'Rauðkufl, Blákufl og Græнкуfl'

Sagði hún honum að hann yrði fyrst að seiða til sín svervið hans Græнкуfls því að

that Ingjaldr would never return, just as she had planned.

At that point it seemed to him he knew that he would not get back to land on account of Hetta's magic, and that this was all her doing.

“Me and my dear Skrímnir have lived in this cave for forty years and always had a well-stocked larder, because every year we have *seiðed* hither three shiploads of men. And we have also robbed settlements of a good deal of horses, camels and donkeys. Besides that we have also conjured hither many fine treasures from various lords, and I can now,” she said, “show you some examples of these.”

Sörli said that she had very good taste. Afterwards he quickly got dressed. And when he was dressed, had sat down at a table, and the old woman brought out fine food with all kinds of sweet-smelling drinks. Her tablecloths were woven of costly materials, the pots and bowls of gold with jewels set in them. And when Sörli had eaten and drunk his fill, the old woman led him into a side-cave and showed him there a great deal of gold and jewels, and from that hoard she gave him a chess-set made of gold, and he thought he had never seen anything quite so remarkable before.

He said he first had to *seiða* Græнкуfl's sword to himself because it was the very best

25 Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:127.

26 Ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954 vol. III:376-7.

væri allra sverða bezt og ekkert biti á hann annað en það.

### 96 'Hálfðan prestur og Ólöf í Lónkoti'

Einu sinni átti Hálfðan prestur úti sæti mikið. Lætur hann síðan Ólöfu kerlingu binda allt sætið um nóttina, en lét sjálfur niður heyið. Kerling sagði við hverja sátu sem hún batt: “Upp, upp og heim í tóft til Hálfðanar prests!” Flugu þá sáturnar til Hálfðanar, en hann tók við og sagði: “Niður – eins og þú átt að liggja!” Þetta létu þau ganga alla nóttina þangað til heyið var buið. Sagt er að ein kerling hafi komið út um nóttina og orðið vitstola.<sup>27</sup>

### 96-7 *Laxdæla saga*

En litlu síðar gera þau heimanferð sína, Kotkell ok Gríma ok synir þeira; þat var um nótt. Þau fóru á bæ Hrúts ok gerðu þar seið mikinn. En er seiðlætin kómu upp, þá þóttusk þeir eigi skilja, er inni váru, hverju gegna myndi; en fögr var sú kveðandi at heyra. Hrútr einn kenndi þessi læti ok bað engan mann út sjá á þeiri nótt, – “ok haldi hverr vöku sinn, er má, ok mun oss þá ekki til saka, ef svá er með farit.” En þó sofnuðu allir menn. Hrútr vakði lengst ok sofnaði þó. Kári hét sonr Hrúts, er þá var tólf vetra gamall, ok var hann efniligastr sona Hrúts. Hann unni honum mikit. Kári sofnaði nær ekki, því at til hans var leikr görr; honum gerðist ekki mjök vært. Kári spratt upp ok sá út; hann gekk á seiðinn ok fell þegar dauðr niðr. Hrútr vaknaði um morgininn ok hans heimamenn ok saknaði sonar síns; fannsk hann ørendr skammt frá

of swords and no other weapon could harm him.

One time Hálfðan wanted build a haystack outside. After that he made Ólöf [gather up and] bind all the hay during the night, and himself laid the hay down. The old woman said after every haystack she bound up: “Up, up and home into to Hálfðan the priest’s hay shed!” The haystacks then went flying to Hálfðan, and he received them and said: “Down, just as you ought to lie!” They went on with this all night until the hay was stacked. It is said that an old woman had come out during the night and gone out of her mind.

A little later Kotkell and Gríma and their sons were on their way homewards; this was in the nighttime. They went to Hrútr's farm and performed a powerful *seiðr* ritual. Kotkel, Grima and their sons set out at night for Hrut’s farm, where they began to practice strong magic rites. As the magic proceeded, the inhabitants of the farmhouse were puzzled by the sounds. The chants were sweet to the ear. Only Hrut realized what the sounds meant and told his household that no one was to leave the house to see what was going on, ‘but everyone is to remain awake, if he possibly can, and if we manage to do so no harm will come to us’. Eventually, however, they all fell asleep. Hrut managed to keep awake the longest, but finally even he fell asleep. Hrut’s son Kári was twelve years old at the time and

<sup>27</sup> Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. I:501.

durum. Þetta þótti Hrúti inn mesti skaði ok lét verpa haug eptir Kára.<sup>28</sup>

### 97-8 Þorhalls þáttur knapps

"Þér skuluð fara sem skjótast at reka saman ok heim ór høgum allt kvikfé vart, bæði naut ok sauði ok hross, byrgja síðan í húsum eða réttum, því at þat mun ekki líf hafa er hér er úti í høgum várum í dag, því at Þórhallr nábúi minn á Knappsstöðum er ærr orðinn ok vitlauss, svá at hann sendir til menn sína at brjóta ofan þat virðuliga hof er þar stendr, ok þar fyrir verða in ágætu goð er þar hafa áðr dýrkuð verit at flýja nauðig ok í grimmum hug ok ætla sér hælís at leita ok bústaðar allt norðr á Siglunes. Nú vil ek eigi at minn fénaðr verði á vegum þeirra, því at þau eru svá reið ok í beiskum hug at þau munu engu eira því sem fyrir þeim verðr."

Nú var svá gort sem hon mælti fyrir, at öll hennar kykvendi váru heim rekin ok varðveitt, útan einn kapalhestr hafði eptir staðit í haganum ok fannsk hann síðan dauðr.<sup>29</sup>

the most promising of his children. He was a great favourite with his father. Kari slept lightly and uneasily, as the incantations were directed at him. Eventually he sprang to his feet and looked outside. He went outside into the magic and was struck dead immediately. The next morning Hrut awoke, along with the rest of his household, to find his son was missing. His dead body was found a short distance from the entrance to the house. It was a great blow to Hrut and he had a burial mound made for Kari.

"They are to round up all of our livestock and drive them home from the fields, as quickly as possible, cattle and sheep and horses, get them safe inside the barns and byres, because no living thing left outdoors in our fields will survive, for my neighbour Þórhallr of Knappsstaðir has gone mad and lost his wits, and is sending his men to tear down the venerable temple there, which will force the kind gods which have been worshipped there to flee, enraged and against their will, and they will seek refuge as far north as Sigluness. And I don't want my livestock to be in their way, because they're so angry and bitter that they will spare nothing that lies in their path."

They did as she said, all of her livestock were driven home and stalled, all except for one old nag which was left behind in the field; it was later found dead.

28 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1934:105-6.

29 Ed. Foote et al. 2003:157-8.

**99-100 *Hrólfs saga kraka***

Og nu lætur hann galldra menn sem eptir öllu gieta rijnt, þui sem þeir vilia, en þeir seigia honum að eigi muni þeir á landi fæddir, enn þö muni þeir eigi fiærri konginum. K(ongur) s(uaradi), výða höfum vær þeirra leitad, og þiki mier það sijst von að þeir sieu hier nærri. Ein ey er það er vier höfum ecki þrátt vm leitad, og nær einginn bygd j, nema einn fátækur kall byr þar.

**100 *Hrólfs saga kraka***

Það var einn morgun snemma að kallinn Vífill vaknar og m(ælir), margt er kinligt á ferd og flugi, og miklar fylgiur ok máttugar eru hingad komnar j eina. Standid vpp Hald(anar) sinir, og halldidyckur j skögar runnum m(ijnum) j dag.

**102 'Mjólk seidd af Íslandi'**

Þegar Kristján konungur fjórði réði Danaríki fór hann oft í dularbúningi um lönd sín. Kom hann í einni þeirri ferð til Norvegs. Heyrði hann getið um eina finnska frú göfuga og gestrisna, en það var honum sagt undarlegt í háttsemi hennar að hún hefði alltaf mjólk án þess þó að hafa nokkurn mjólkurpening. Til þeirrar sömu kom hann og fekk meðal annars mjólk hjá henni. Fór hann að spurja hana um þetta, en hún skeytti því ekki. Aftur seinna kom hann til þessarar sömu frúr án þess að leynast, spurði hana enn hins sama. Feilaði hún sér fyrir honum og lét uppi allt hið sanna. Gekk hún að tré einu, tók úr því tappa, setti pípu í gatið og bunaði þar úr mjólk þar til full var fjórðungsskjóla. Konungur bað hana að mjólka meira. Hún fór til aftur sárnauðug og fyllti aðra. Konungur bað hana að mjólka meira, en hún mælti ákaft á móti, fór þó

And now the king sought out sorcerers who could find out whatever they wanted, and they told him that they [viz. his nephews] were not being raised on land, but that they were nonetheless not far from the king. The king replied: “We have searched far and wide, and it seems to me unlikely that they are nearby. There is one island we haven't searched, with almost no inhabitants, apart from a poor fellow who lives there.”

Early one morning Vífill wakes up and says “I sense many things flying about in the air around us, and great and powerful fetches and have come here to the island. Get up, sons of Halfdan, and remain in my hideout in the forest undergrowth today.

When king Christian the fourth ruled Denmark he often travelled about the land in disguise. On one such journey he came to Norway. He heard tell of a Finnish woman,<sup>31</sup> noble and hospitable, and he was told that there was something strange in her habits, namely that she always had milk even though she lacked money for milk. He went to visit this same woman and in her home was given, amongst other things, milk. He began to ask her about this, but she didn't take any notice. Later he came back to visit this same woman, this time without disguising his identity, and he asked her the same question. She faltered before him and confessed to him the whole truth of the matter. She went to a tree, pulled a cork out of it, put a pipe into the hole and milk gushed out of it until the quarter-pail was quite full. The king asked her to milk

enn til fyrir ótta sakir. En er sopakorn var komið í skjóluna var mjólkin blóðblönduð og því næst tómmt blóð. Sagði hún þá vera dauða þá beztu kú á Íslandi. Sagt er að konungur léta áflífa hana fyrir fjölkynngi sína; aðrir segja að hann hétu henni lífi ef hún segði sér hið sanna.<sup>30</sup>

### 102-3 'Enn seidd mjólk frá Íslandi'

Utanlands bjuggu systkin tvö ein sér. Einu sinni komu gestir til þeirra og voru hjá þeim nætursakir. Um kvöldið sáu þeir að fjórir þráðarspottar hangdu niður úr loftinu, og fyrir háttur fór stúlkan að toga í spottana. Þar kom mjólk og svo mjólkaði hún fulla fötu. Þegar gestirnir komu til byggða sögðu þeir frá, og þókti mönnum þetta undarlegt. Kom það fyrir yfirvöldin. Tóku þau systkinin undir rannsókn og kröfðu þau til sagna. Jæja, það kom þá upp að þau völdu beztu kýrnar á Íslandi og toguðu til sín með fjölkynngi sinni mjólkina úr þeim.<sup>32</sup>

### 103-4 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper'

Een [Troid-Qvinde] paastod, at hun kunde skaffe sig Melk af andres Køer, ved at sette et Horn under Koens Bug, og malke den i den Ondes Navn; hvorefter den først

some more. She did the same again, though unwillingly, and filled another pail. The king asked her to milk some more, but she was very much against doing this, but nevertheless did so out of fear. And when but a bare mouthful of milk had come into the bucket the milk was mixed with blood and after that pure blood. She said then that this had caused the death of the best cow in Iceland. It is said that the king had her executed for her sorcery; others say that he promised her she would live if she told him the truth.

In foreign parts there dwelt two siblings, a brother and sister, alone. On one occasion two guests came to them and they were wearing nightclothes. In the evening they saw that there hung four short ropes from the ceiling, and out of habit the girl went and pulled on the ropes. Milk came out and so she milked a whole pail full. When the guests got to town they told of this, and people thought it was very strange. This came to the attention of the authorities. They seized and interrogated the siblings and demanded that they confess. Yes, it turned out that they had chosen the best cows in Iceland and by their sorcery *togðu til sín* the milk from their udders.

One woman claimed that she could get milk from other people's cows by placing a horn underneath the cow's belly, and milking it in the name of the Evil One;

30 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III, p. 622.

31 *finnska* could conceivably signify 'Sámi'.

32 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III, p. 622.



gav Melk, siden Blod, og derpaa døde.<sup>33</sup>

#### 104 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper'

Som Trolld-Qvinderne gave sig ud for ved deres Hexe-Kunst at kunde beskadige Folk og Fæ, saa foregave de iligemaade, sig en allene at kunde helbrede syge Mennesker ved 3 Ganges Haands Paalæggelse, ved at røge med tændt Knøsk under Skiorten paa den Syge etc. men endogsaa at kunde hielpe med Svaghed behæftet Qvæg til rette, saasom: ved at tage paa en Søndag Salt med sig i Kirken, naar Qvæget ey vilde trives, ved at læse over det, naar det ey vilde give Forraad af Melk, en bespottelig, meget absurd Bøn, hvis Indhold jeg ey vil anføre.<sup>34</sup>

#### 104 'Hálfðan prestur og Ólöf í Lónkoti'

Í Lónkoti í sókn Hálfðanar prests á Felli bjó kerling ein gömul sem Ólöf hét. Hún var fjölkunnig mjög og áttu þau Hálfðan margar brösur saman. Eitt haust reri Hálfðan til fiskjar með mönnum sínum og drógu þeir flyðru eina stóra. Þá var harka mikil og var hásetum kalt. Þá segir prestur þegar þeir kvörtuðu um kuldann: “Hvað ætli þið vilduð gefa mér til þess að draga nú heitan blóðmörskjepp til að hressa ykkur á?” Þeir sögðu að hann mundi ekki geta það þó hann vildi. En litlu síðar kemur prestur með sjóðheitan blóðmörskjepp á önglinum. Snæddu þá allir hásetarnir og þótti vænt um. En á meðan hvarf flyðran úr skipinu. Þá segir Hálfðan prestur: “Hafa vill kerling

whereafter it first gave milk, then blood, and with that it died.

(‘Just as these witches professed to be able to harm people and cattle with their witchcraft, so they claimed likewise to be able to heal sick people by laying their hands upon them 3 times, by fumigating with burning knøsk [a.k.a. Bjørke Sop] under the shirt of the sick person etc. but also being able to help cattle afflicted by weakness back to health, for example: by taking a salt to church on a Sunday when the animal is not fattening up well; by reading over it a blasphemous and quite absurd prayer, the content of which I do not wish to repeat, when the animal does not give sufficient milk.’)

In Lónkot in the parish of Hálfðan the priest at Fell there lived an old woman by the name of Ólöf. She was very skilled in magic and there was a lot of trouble between her and Hálfðan. One autumn Hálfðan rowed out to fish with his men and they landed a big flounder. The weather was very severe at that time and the fishermen were cold. Then the priest said, when they complained about the cold weather: “What would you give in return for me conjuring up a hot blood sausage to warm you boys up?” They said that he wouldn’t be able to do that even if he wanted to. And a little later the priest pulled up a piping hot blood sausage on his hook. All the fishermen

33 Leem 1767:457.

34 Leem 1767:458.

nokkuð fyrir snúð sinn.” Hálfðan seiddi keppinn frá Ólöfu, en hún aftur flyðruna frá honum.<sup>35</sup>

### 105 'Kerlingin á tjörnum'

Þegar séra Hálfðan var í Felli bjó á Tjörnum bjó kerling ein. Þau áttu oft glettur saman. Eitt sinn var það að séra Hálfðan var á sjó í kuldaveðri; rauk þá vel á Tjörnum. Segir þá einn hásetinn: “Gaman væri nú að eiga heitan blóðmör.” – “Atli þið ætuð hann ef ég drægi hann hérna upp?” segir prestur. Það halda þeir. “Þið verðið þá að éta allir og enginn að biðja guð að blessa sig,” segir prestur. Að þessum kosti ganga þeir. Nú rennir prestur og kemur upp fullt blóðmörstrog. Nú fara þeir að éta nema einn gat ekki étið, en þegar þeir eru nýfarnir að éta stökkur stóreflis flyðra út úr skutnum hjá þeim. Þá segir prestur: “Já, alténd vill kellingin [*sic.*] mín hafa nokkuð fyrir snúð sinn.” Sagan segir að sá sem ekki gat blóðmörinn hafi dáíð.

Kellingin á Tjörnum var velmegandi og byggði nýjan bæ á Tjörnum. Prestur hafði einhver umráð yfir jörðunni og byggði henni út litlu seinna. Hún vildi þá að minnsta kosti fá einhverja þóknun fyrir nýja bæinn, en þess var eigi kostur. Tók hún þá sokkaband sitt og hnýtti í bæjarkenginn og dró bæinn með sér spottakorn niður

tucked in and were very happy. And meanwhile the flounder disappeared from the boat. Then Hálfðan the priest said: “The old woman wants something for her pains.” Hálfðan *seided* the sausage from Ólöf, and then she *seided* the flounder from him.

When the Reverend Hálfðan was in Fell there lived alone at Tjörn an old woman. They often played tricks on one another. On one occasion the Reverend Hálfðan was out on the sea in cold weather; there was a lot of smoke coming from the house at Tjörn. Then a deckhand said: “Would it be lovely to have a nice hot blood sausage.” – “Do you think you could eat one if I drew (conjured) it over here?” says the priest. They reckon they could. “You understand you’ll have to eat the whole lot and ask God to bless you,” says the priest. They agree to this condition. Now the priest puts out his line and pulls in a whole trough full of blood sausages. Now they get stuck into them except for one who can’t eat it, and when they have just finished eating an enormous flounder leaps out over the stern of the boat beside them. Then the priest says: “Yes, the dear old woman always takes something for her pot.” The story goes that the one who couldn’t eat his share of the blood sausage died.

The old woman at Tjörn was well-to-do and built herself a new farm at Tjörn. The priest had a certain jurisdiction over that patch of land and built upon it shortly after that. She then wanted to at the very least get some remuneration for her new farm, but there was no question of this. She then took her garter and tied it around

<sup>35</sup> Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. I:500.

fyrir túnið á Tjörnum og settist þar að í honum. Er þar enn byggður bær og heitir Glæsibær.<sup>36</sup>

### 105 'Fiskiveiðin'

Það var einhverju sinni að Hálfðan prestur réri á sjó með alla vinnumenn sína til fiskiveiða; var veður blítt og logn; lágu þeir beint undan Tjörnum og höfðu úti handfæri. En er leið að miðjum degi tók að rjúka heima á Tjörnum og ræða vinnumenn prests á milli sín um það hvað Steinunn gamla muni hafa til soðningar í dag. Prestur segir hvert þeir muni mikið vilja til vinna að fá sjá það er kerling syði. En hásetar verða upp til handa og fóta og biðja prest fyrir hvern mun að freista ef hann gæti veitt þeim það eftirlæti. Og er lítil stund leið kemur prestur með á önglinum inn að borðstokknum trog fullt af sauðaslátri. Prestur réttir hásetum sínum trogið og segir þeim muni óhætt að neyta slátursins því ekki muni Steinunn telja það eftir þeim; taka þeir til matar og eru kátir yfir feng sínum. Prestur hafði dregið lúðu mikla um daginn og lá hún fram í barka skipsins, og er stund leið frá því að hásetar höfðu lokið slátrinu verður prestur þess var að lúðan er horfin. Verður honum ekki annað að að orði en að hann segir: “Alténd vill kerling hafa nokkuð fyrir snúð sinn,” og er þetta haft að máltæki síðan, enda er þess eigi getið að Hálfðan prestur hafi gjört rekstur að um lúðuhvarfið.<sup>37</sup>

the farm's horseshoe and dragged the farm a short distance to down below the hayfield at Tjörn and settled down there in it. And there is still a farm standing there and it is called Glæsibær.

On one occasion the priest Hálfðan rowed out to sea with all of his farmhands to fish; the weather was mild and calm; they lay right by Tjörn and put out their (hand-drawn) line-and-tackle. And as the middle of the day approached smoke rose from the house at Tjörn and the priest's farmhands get to discussing amongst themselves what old Steinunn might be cooking up today. The priest asks them how hard they would be willing to work to see what the old woman was boiling. And the deckhands jump to their feet and ask the priest if he might attempt that, if he would grant them that wish. And when a little time had passed the priest pulled up onto the gunwale on his hook a trough full of boiled meat. The priest handed the trough to his deckhands and says it wouldn't be possible for them to eat the meat because Steinunn would begrudge them for it; they tuck into the food and are delighted with their catch. The priest had caught a big halibut earlier in the day and it lay out in the front part of the boat, and when some time had passed from when the deckhands had polished off the meat the priest notices that the halibut has vanished. He didn't say anything except: “The old woman always wants something for her pot,” and this has become a saying

36 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III:536–7.

37 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III:537.

**107-8 *Hálfðanar saga Brønufóstra***

héldum fyrir land fram í fyrra sumar. Seiddi Járnefr mik hingat ok öll oss, ok ætlaði hann sér at eiga mik, en drepa kerlingu sína, en ek vilda þat ekki.<sup>38</sup>

**108 *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss***

Þórðr spurði, hvárt hon væri dóttir Kolbjarnar. Hon sagðist eigi hans dóttir vera, segir hann hafa numit sik í burt af Grænlandi undan Sólarfjöllum, – "frá Bárði, föður mínum, með fjölkynngi, ok ætlar mik sér til handa ok frillu, en nú hefi ek ekki viljat samþykkjast honum, ok því hefir hann jafnan illa haldit mik, en þó verst, síðan hann játaði mik þér. Fyrirman hann hverjum manni at eiga mik, hverjar glósur sem hann gerir þar á."<sup>39</sup>

**108 'Þórálfrur útilegumaður'**

Stúlka nokkur átján vetra gömul, að nafni Valgerður, sat hjá kindum húsbónda síns er bjó á Hofi í Skagafjarðardölum. Það vildi til að hana vantaði seint um sumarið sex ær og leitaði hún þeirra langt á fjöll upp, og þegar hún var nær því yfirkomin af þreytu varð fyrir henni dalverpi nokkurt og sá hún þar kotbæ lítinn.

**108 'Þórálfrur útilegumaður'**

á hverju kvöldi las karl bæn þessa að henni sýndist mjög trúaræknislega:

ever since, and it is said that Hálfðan priest had prosecuted (Steinunn) for the disappearance of the halibut.

We were putting to sea last summer. Járnefr *seiddi* me hither and all the rest of us too, and he wanted to marry me, and kill the old woman, but I did not want that.

Þórðr asked if she was Kolbjörn's daughter. She said that she was not his daughter, and that he had abducted her in Greenland under Sólarfjöll, – “from Bárður, my father, by means of sorcery, and intends to have me as his whore, and up to now I have not assented to this, but he has often treated me badly, and still worse since he agreed to let you marry me. He begrudges any man to marry me, in spite of all of his claims to the contrary.”

A certain girl, eighteen years of age, by the name of Valgerður, sat by the sheep of her master, who lived at Hof in Skagafjarðardalur. It happened that summer that she was short six ewes and searched for them far up in the mountains, and when she was almost overcome with tiredness she came across a small valley and saw there a small farm.

every evening the old man spoke the following prayer, which seemed to Valgerður

38 Ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954d:300.

39 Ed. Þórhallur Vilmundarson & Bjarni Vilhjálmsson 1991:151-2.

"Skeggalvaldur, skjólið þitt  
skíni yfir landið mitt  
svo enginn geti á það hitt  
af öllum landsins lýðum;  
forða þú oss hriðum,  
forða þú oss hriðum."<sup>40</sup>

### 110 'Mjóafjarðar-skessan'

Fyrir framan Fjörð í Mjóafjarði er gil eitt sem kallað er Mjóafjarðagil. Þar hafðist fyrr meir við skessa sem síðan hefur verið kölluð Mjóafjarðarskessa og var hún vön að seiða til sín í gilið prestana frá Firði; gjörði hún það á þann hátt að hún fór til kirkjunnar þá er presturinn var uppi í stólnum, og brá til annari hendinni fyrir stólglugganum utanverðum; urðu prestarnir þá ærir og sögðu:

“Takið úr mér svangann og langann;  
nú vil eg að giliinu ganga.  
Takið úr mér svilin og vilin;  
fram ætla eg í Mjóafjarðagilið.”

Hlupu þeir að svo mæltu út úr kirkjunni fram að giliinu og sagði eigi af þeim úr því.<sup>41</sup>

40 Ed. Jón Árnason 1956 vol. IV:393.

41 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. I:146.

showed great devotion:

"Skeggalvaldur, your protection  
shines over my land  
so that no one can find it  
out of all the people in the land;  
you save us from the snowstorm,  
you save us from the snowstorm."

In front of Fjörður in Mjóafjörður there is a gully which is called Mjóafjarðagil. In days gone by there dwelt there a giantess who since then has been called Mjóafjarðarskessa and it was her custom to *seiða til sín* into the gully the priests from Fjörður; she did that in this way, that she went to church when the priest was up in the pulpit, made movements with her hand outside the pulpit window; the priests then went mad and said:

“Take from me the hunger and the longing;  
now I will go to the gully.  
Take from me the spunk and the desire;  
I’m bound for Mjóafjarðagil.”

After saying that they ran out of the church and over to the gully and no one knows

**111 'Seiðkerlingar í Kaupmannahöfn'**

Hún fór til móður sinnar og mælti fram með honum. Kerling kallaði á hann inn í eldhús og sýndi honum holu ofurlita ofan í öskustóna. Þar ofan í dorgaði hún og dró upp silung. Hann spurði hana að hvaðan hann væri. Hún sagðist seiða hann til sín úr Vatnsdalstjörn fyrir sunnan land á Íslandi. Fór hann að loknum lærdómsiðkunum sínum til Íslands. Lagði hún þá á tjörnina að allur silungur úr henni skyldi verða að hornsílum og aldrei frammar í henni veiðast.<sup>42</sup>

**112 'Seiðkerlingar í Kaupmannahöfn'**

Hjá annari kerlingu var og stúdent utanlands til lærdómsiðkunar á háskólanum, en til húsanna hjá henni. Hann undraði sig á því hvað oft hún hafði nýtt ket eða slátur á borðum. Vingott var með honum og dóttur kerlingar og það svo að hún treysti því að hún mundi fá hann til manns. Fór hún því eftir bæn hans til móður sinnar, en þar eð kerling var sömu trúar sem dóttir hennar lét hún það eftir honum. Sagðist hún seiða til sín sauði þá sem vænstir væru í Vatnsdalshellir. En er hann kom til Íslands fór hann að Vatnsdal og sagði frá háttum kerlingar. Hættu menn þá að undrast sauðahvarf það sem lengi hafði verið og menn höfðu margs til getið hvað valda mundi. Var féð því tekið úr hellinum og minnkaði sauðahvarfið eftir það.<sup>43</sup>

what became of them.

She went to her mother and introduced him. The old woman called him into the kitchen and showed him a tiny hole down in the ash pit. She fished down into it with a line and pulled up a herring. He asked her where it had come from. She said she had *seidd it til sín* from Vatnsdalstjörn in the south of Iceland. In the end he transferred his studies to Iceland. Then she put a spell on the *tjörn* so that all the herring in it turned to sticklebacks and never again could be fished in it.

Next door to another old woman there likewise dwelt a foreign student who was pursuing his studies at the university, in the next house. He was mystified over how often she had fresh meat and sausages on the table. He and the daughter of the old woman were on intimate terms with one another, such that she was sure that she would get him as a husband. She therefore went at his request to her mother, and because the old woman was of the same belief as her daughter she consented to satisfying his curiosity. She told him she *seiddi til sín* the fattest sheep in Vatnsdalshellir. And when he came home to Iceland he went to Vatnsdalur and related [to the people there] what the old woman got up to. Then the people there were no longer mystified over the disappearance of sheep which had gone on for a

42 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III:621–2.

43 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III:622.

**114 *Landnámabók, Sturlubók redaction***

Þórólfr son Qrnólfs fiskreka bjó í Mostur; því var hann kallaðr Mostrarskegg; hann var blótmaðr mikill ok trúði á Þór. Hann fór fyrir ofríki Haralds konungs hárfagra til Íslands ok sigldi fyrir sunnan land. En er hann kom vestr fyrir Breiðafjörð, þá skaut hann fyrir borð ǫndvegissúlum sínum; þar var skorinn á Þór. Hann mælti svo fyrir, at Þór skyldi þar á land koma, sem hann vildi, at Þórólfr byggði; hét hann því at helga Þór allt landnám sitt ok kenna við hann.

Þórólfr sigldi inn á fjörðinn ok gaf nafn firðinum ok kallaði Breiðafjörð. Hann tók land fyrir sunnan fjörðinn, nær miðjum firðinum; þar fann hann Þór rekinn í nesi einu; þat heitir nú Þórsnes.<sup>44</sup>

**114 *Eyrbyggja saga***

Þórólfr Mostrarskegg fekk at blóti miklu ok gekk til fréttar við Þór, ástvin sinn, hvárt hann skyldi sættask við konung eða fara af landi brott ok leita sér annarra forlaga, en fréttin vísaði Þórólfi til Íslands. Ok eptir þat fekk hann sér mikit hafskip ok bjó þat til Íslandsferðar ok hafði með sér skuldalið sitt ok búferli. Margir vinir hans réðusk til ferðar með honum. Hann tók ofan hofit ok hafði með sér flesta við, þá er þar hǫfðu í

long time; people had speculated a great deal on what the cause of it might be. The livestock were then taken out of the cave and the disappearances of sheep decreased after that.

Þórólfr, the son of Qrnólfr fish-herder, lived at Mostur; for that reason he was known as Þórólfr Mostur-beard. He was a diligent observer of sacrifice, Þórr was his patron. He fled to Iceland from king Haraldr Fine-Hair's tyranny, following the south coast until he reached Breiðafjörður in the west, whereupon he threw his high-seat pillars overboard; they were carved with the image of Þórr. He declared that Þórr would come ashore in that part of the land where he wanted Þórólfr to settle; he swore an oath that he would dedicate his land claim to Þórr and name it after him.

Þórólfr sailed into the fjord and named it, calling it Breiðafjörður. He claimed land on the southern side, about half way up the fjord; he found Þórr washed ashore there on a headland; that headland is nowadays called Þórsness.

Þórólfr Mostrarskegg was a keen observer of sacrifice, and asked his patron Þórr whether he should come to terms with the king or leave the country and start a new life, and the answer came that he should go to Iceland. And after that he acquired a large seagoing vessel and prepared it for the voyage to Iceland, and took with him his household and livestock. Many of his friends undertook the voyage with him. He

44 Ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:124-5.

verit, ok svá moldina undan stallanum, þar er Þórr hafði á setit. Síðan sigldi Þórólfr í haf, ok byrjaði honum vel, ok fann landit ok sigldi fyrir sunnan, vestr um Reykjanes; þá fell byrrinn, ok sá þeir, at skar í landit inn fjörðu stóra. Þórólfr kastaði þá fyrir borð qndvegissúlum sínum, þeim er staðit hqfðu í hofinu; þar var Þórr skorinn á annarri. Hann mælti svá fyrir, at hann skyldi þar byggja á Íslandi, sem Þórr léti þær á land koma. En þegar þær hóf frá skipinu, sveif þeim til ins vestra fjarðarins, ok þótti þeim fara eigi vánnum seinna. Eptir þat kom hafgula; sigldu þeir þá vestr fyrir Snæfellsnes ok inn á fjörðinn. Þeir sjá, at fjörðrinn er ákafliga breiðr ok langr, ok mjök stórfjöllótt hvarumtveggja megin; Þórólfr gaf nafn firðinum ok kallaði Breiðafjörð. Hann tók land fyrir sunnan fjörðinn, nær miðjum, ok lagði skipit á vág þann, er þeir kqlluðu Hofsvág síðan. Eptir þat kqnnuðu þeir landit ok fundu á nesi framanverðu, er var fyrir norðan váginn, at Þórr var á land kominn með súlurnar; þat var síðan kallat Þórsnes.<sup>45</sup>

took down his temple and took with him most of the wood which had been inside, including the earth under the altar on which Þórr had sat. After that Þórólfr put out to sea and got a good sailing wind. They sighted land in the south of Iceland, to the west of Reykjanes; the wind now dropped and they saw a large fjord cutting into the land. Þórólfr threw the high seat pillars overboard, the ones which had stood in the temple; the image of Þórr was carved into one of them. He announced that he would settle that part of Iceland where Þórr would have them come ashore. And when they floated away from the ship, they hove into the western edge of the fjord, and it seemed to them rather speedily. After a sea breeze began to blow; they sailed west around Snæfellsnes and into the fjord. They saw that the fjord was very long and wide, with high mountains on either side; Þórólfr named the fjord Breiðafjörður. He settled land to the south of the fjord, near its middle, and moored his ship in an inlet which afterwards was called Hofsvág. After that they reconnoitered the surrounding land and on the seaward side of the peninsula to the north of the inlet they found Þórr washed ashore with the pillars; that spot was given the name Þórsnes.

### 117 *Landnámabók*, *Sturlubók redaction*

Ásólfr hét maðr. Hann var frændi Jqrundar í Gqrdum; hann kom út austr í Ósum. Hann var kristinn vel ok vildi ekki eiga við heiðna menn og eigi vildi hann þiggja mat at þeim. Hann gerði sér skála undir Eyjafjöllum, þar sem nú heitir at Ásólfskála enum austasta; hann fann ekki menn. Þá var um forvitnazk, hvat hann hafði til fœzlu,

There was a man named Ásólfr. He was the cousin of Jqrundr of Garðar; he reached Iceland in the east at Ósar. He was a devout Christian and didn't wish to associate with heathens nor eat their food. He built himself a house in the neighbourhood of Eyjafjall, at a place which is nowadays called East Ásólfskáli. He kept himself to

<sup>45</sup> Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:7-8.



ok sá menn í skálunum á fiska marga. En er menn gengu til lækjar þess, er fell hjá skálunum, var hann fullr af fiskum, svá at slík undr þóttusk menn eigi sét hafa. En er heraðsmenn urðu þessa varir, ráku þeir hann á brutt ok vildu eigi, at hann nyti gæða þessa.

Þá færði Ásólftr byggð sína til Miðskála ok var þar. Þá hvarf á brutt veiði oll ok læknum, er menn skyldu til taka. En er komit var til Ásólfis, þá var vatnfall þat fullt af fiskum, er fell hjá skála hans. Var hann þá enn brutt rekinn. Fór hann þá til ens vestasta Ásólfsskála, ok fór enn allt á sǫmu leið.<sup>46</sup>

### 118 *Jarteinabók Þorláks byskups ǫnnur*

Síðan hétu þeir á inn sæla Þorlák byskup, at þeim skyldi aftr koma þat, er týnt var, ok sungu fimmtán sinnum *Pater noster*, ok hétu þeir at gefa fátækum mǫnnum af veiði sinni Þorláki byskupi til þakka. Tekr hann þá inn þriðja ǫngul ok lét þann fyrir borð, ok beit fiskr á, þegar er þess mætti fyrst ván vera, ok þurfti þá báða til, áðr sá yrði dreginn.<sup>47</sup>

### 119 *Grágás*

Þat er mellit vm drottins daga veiþi all. oc messv daga veiþi. þar scal gefa af inn .v. hlvt. oc hafagefit a .vij. nottvm envm næstvm. fra þvi er veitt er. Þat scal gefa innan hreps mauNvm. þeim er eigi gegna þingfarar kaupi. Ef maþr gefr eigi sva. oc verþr hann sekr vm þat .iij.morkvm. sa a sok er vill.

himself. The locals wondered what he was eating, and saw that there was a lot of fish in his house. And when they looked in the brook that ran by his house it was teeming with fish. Never before had they seen anything so miraculous. And when word spread about this the locals drove him away, begrudging him the bounty on his doorstep.

Ásólftr then moved his house to Miðskála. All the fish disappeared from the brook, when people went to catch it. So they went to Ásólftr's new house, and there they found a waterfall that was full of fish. Once again the locals drove him away. Then he moved to West Ásólfsskáli, and once again things went the same as before.

Afterwards they prayed to the blessed Bishop Þorlákr, that they should regain that which had been lost, and sang the *Pater noster* fifteen times, and they promised to give poor men some of their catch out of gratitude to Bishop Þorlákr. He then takes the third fish-hook and cast it overboard, and no sooner had he done so than a fish bit, and it took both of them [pulling] before it could be hauled aboard.

It is stipulated that a fifth part of everything caught on Sundays and feast days is to be given away within seven days of the catch being bagged, donated to those local people who do not pay fees to attend the assembly. If this is not done the culprit will be fined three marks. Anyone may prosecute this offence at their own discretion.

46 Ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:62, 64.

47 Ed. Guðni Jónsson 1953:210-11.

**120 'Api á Apavatni'**

Þegar Api bjó á Apavatni var galdramaður einn við Þingvallavatn; hann seiddi allan fiskinn úr Apavatni upp í Þingvallavatn. Þetta líkaði ekki Apa og seiddi á móti, en silungurinn snéri allur móti Þingvallavatni og rann nú á sporðinn til baka. Af þessu segja menn að allur silungur í Apavatni komi upp á sporðinn. Þar er enn silungsveiði.<sup>48</sup>

**121-2 Gríms saga loðinkinna**

Þat bar þá til sem oftár, at hallæri mikit kom á Hálogaland. Grímr loðinkinni bjóst þá heiman ok fór á ferju sinni við þriðja mann. Hann helt norðr fyrir Finnmark ok svá austr til Gandvíkr. Ok er hann kom í víkina, sá hann, at þar var nógr veiðifangi. Setti hann þar upp skip sitt ok gekk síðan til skála ok kveykti upp eld fyrir sér.

En er þeir váru í svefn komnir um nóttina, vöknudu þeir við þat, at kominn var með svartahríð. Svá mikil grimmd fylgdi veðri þessu, at allt sýldi, bæði úti ok inni. Um morguninn, er þeir váru klæddir, gengu þeir út ok til sjóvar. Sáu þeir þá, at á burtu var allr veiðifangi, svá at hvergi sá staði. Þóttust þeir nú ekki vel staddir, en ekki gaf á burtu. Gengu þeir nú heim til skála ok váru þar um daginn.

Um nóttina vaknar Grímr við þat, at hlegit var úti hjá skálanum. Hann spratt

When Api lived at Apavatn there was a *galdramaður* living by Þingvallavatn; he *seided* all the fish out of Apavatn up into Þingvallavatn. Api was none too pleased about this and in response *seided* against [the *galdramaður*], and the trout all veered away from Þingvallavatn and slid back tail first. Because of this people say that all the trout in Apavatn comes up tail first. There is still trout fishing there.

It happened, as it often does, that Hálogaland suffered a severe hallæri . Grímr loðinkinni got ready to set off from his home and set off on his journey with two men. He headed north along the coast of Finnmark and then east to Gandvík. And when he sailed into the bay, he saw that there was a great deal of fish to be caught there. He had his ship pulled up on shore there and went afterwards to the hut and kindled a fire for himself.

And when they had fallen asleep that night, they were awoken by a snowstorm. So harsh was this weather that everything froze, both outside and inside. In the morning, when they had got dressed, they went out and down to the sea. They saw then that all of the fish had gone, such that there wasn't even a trace of them. They now didn't consider themselves to be in a good situation, but none of them wanted to leave. They now went back to the hut and spent the day there.

During the night Grímr woke up when he heard someone laugh outside of the

<sup>48</sup> Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. II:84.

upp skjótt ok tók օxi sína ok gekk út. Hann hafði ok með sér sem ávallt endrarnær hut. He leapt to his feet at once and grabbed his axe and went outside. He had with  
 օrvarnar Gusionauta, er Ketill hængr, faðir hans, hafði gefit honum. En er hann kom him, as always, the arrows Gusionaut, which his father Ketill hængr had given him.  
 út, sá hann tvær tröllkonur við skip niðri, ok tók í sinn stafninn hvár þeira ok ætluðu And when he came outside he saw two troll women down by his ship, and each of  
 at hrista í sundr skipit.<sup>49</sup> them had grabbed one end of the stem of the ship (one the prow, one the stern) and  
 were intending to tear the ship apart.

### 122 embedded in *Gríms saga loðinkinna*

'fædd var eknorðarla, / Hrímnis dóttir / ór háfjalli'

I was born in the north, / the daughter of Hrímnir / of the high mountains.

### 122 embedded in *Gríms saga loðinkinna*

'vǫrgum senda víst til bráðar'

the wolves I'll send / for sure to the prey.

### 123 embedded in *Gríms saga loðinkinna*

'faðir okkarr / burtu seiddi / báru hjarðir. / Skuluð aldri, / nema skǫp ráði, / our father / seiddi away / the herds of the waves. / You and your companions shall  
 heilir heðan / heim of komast' never / – lest fate decree – / come home / from here in one piece.

### 124-5 'Einar seiðir að sér hval'

Það var eitt sinn þá hart var í ári að prestur vildi seiða hval að sér á Skinnastaðareka, It was on one occasion during a hard year that a priest wanted to *seiða að sér* a whale  
 en kirkjan á jörð þá er Akur heitir, fimm hundruð að dýrleika, og þriðjung sjóarlands at Skinnastaðareka, and [to] the church on the piece of land which is called Akur, five  
 með rekum og ítökum. hundred in value, and one third of the coastline with rights to driftwood, wrecks and  
 other flotsam and jetsam that washed up there, and usufruct rights on the land.

En er prestur kom á rekalandið tók hann það ráð að hann lét grafa sig í sand And when the priest reached the driftwood beach he decided to have himself  
 niður við sjó og hafði þar hjá sér Þórarin son sinn að gæta þess ef hann sæi skýja buried in the sand down by the sea and had his son Þórarinn there beside him to keep  
 nokkuð til hafsins því veður var heiðríkt. Prestur starfaði að fjölkynngissærinum niður an lookout and tell him if he saw any clouds out at sea because at the weather was

<sup>49</sup> Ed. Guðni Jónsson 1954b:186.

í sandgröfinni um hrið, en Þórarinn gætti veðrabrigða. Að lyktum sá hann að syrti til hafs og segir föður sínum. Lét prestur þá nokkurs af von og gól enn ákafar galdrana. Því næst dró ský upp í hafi og bakka mikinn; rak þegar á æsings norðanveður með brimróti miklu. Kastaði þá hval miklum upp. Við það skreið prestur úr sandinum og bauð mönnum að skera hvalinn, lét til sín heim flytja og sjóða áður aðrir fengi neins af neytt. En prestur lét niðursetning sinn éta fyrsta bitann og datt hann dauður niður, át sjálfur síðan og sakaði ekki. Kvað hann þá öllum óhætt að neyta. Sakaði hann og öngan mann síðan. Er talið að mjög byrgi hann sveit sinni með hval þessum ókeypis.<sup>50</sup>

### 125–6 *Eiríks saga rauða*, AM 557 4to text

litlu sidar kom þar hvalr ok drifv menn til ok skaaru hann . enn þo kenndu menn eigi huat hual þat. Var. karl kunni mikla skyn a hualnum ok kenndi hann þo eigi. þenna hval sudu matsveinar ok atu af ok vard þo aullum illt af. þa gengr . þorhallr at ok mællti . var eigi svo at hinn raud skeggiadi vard driugarr enn kristr . yduar þetta . hafða ek nu firir skalld skap minn er ek a orta um þor fulltruan . sialldan hefir hann

clear and bright and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. The priest was occupied with magical incantations down in the sand-grave for some time, and Þórarinn reported on the changes in the weather conditions. At last he saw that the weather was turning sour out at sea and informs his father of this. The priest then said that was more or less to be expected and carried on crowing the *galdrar*-songs enthusiastically. The next thing a cloud rose up in the sea and a great cloudbank; suddenly a violent storm broke from the north with furious crashing waves. The sea then cast a whale up onto the beach. With that the priest crawled out of the sand and asked the men to cut up the whale, had it brought to his home and boiled before anyone else could get their hands on the slightest bit of it. But the priest had his pauper eat the first piece and he fell down dead, and ate the second piece himself and suffered no ill effects. He said then that it was not possible for everyone to eat the meat. And no harm came to any of his men after that. It is said that he fed many in his district with this whale, asking nothing in return.

Soon afterwards a whale washed ashore there and people arrived to carve it up; although they did not recognise what species of whale it was. One man knew a lot about whales and even he didn't know what it was. The cooks boiled the whale and they ate but it made them ill. Þórhallr then piped up: “Was it not the case that Red Beard proved to be greater than your Christ? This is teh reward for the poetry I

<sup>50</sup> Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. I:513.

mer brvgdizt

ok er menn uissu þetta villdv avnguir nyta ok kaustudu firir biavrg ofan ok sneru sinv maali til guds miskunnar . Gaf þeim þa uut at roa ok skorti þa eigi birgdir<sup>51</sup>

### 127 'Göldrótti presturinn'

Einu sinni var prestur á Suðurlandi og sögðu menn hann væri göldróttur. Hann keypti sér far með hollenzkri duggu austur til Njarðvíkur. Lögðu þeir nú í haf og fengu óveður ok hrakninga. Ímynduðu þeir sér að þessi óveður væru að kenna þessum íslenzka manni; tóku þeir því ráð sín saman að drepa hann, og áður en hann yrði var við tóku þeir hann og skáru fyrir borð, en í þessu sáu þeir að þetta var káetuhundurinn. Í öðru sinni skáru þeir hann fyrir borð, en þá var það kokkurinn. Í þriðja sinni gjörðu þeir hið sama; sáu þeir þá að það hafði verið bátsmaðurinn. Urðu þeir þá hreiddir við prest og hlýddu honum í öllu. Tók hann nú við stjórn og stýrði undir Njarðvíkurfjöll og bað þá að flytja sig til lands. Fluttu þeir hann í land, en hann skipaði þeim að snúa bát frá landi og bíða sín, því annars skyldi það verða þeirra bani. Sáu þeir að hann gekk upp fjallið og þar hvarf hann inn í hellinn og var þar tímakorn, kemur síðan aftur með mikilli ferð og skipar þeim að halda frá landi það hraðasta. En þegar þeir voru komnir í dugguna hljóp fjallið í sjó ofan. Hafði hann ekki annað meðferðis úr fjallinu en eina bók en hann bar undir hendinni. Fluttu þeir hann síðan aftur heim til sín.<sup>52</sup>

composed about Þórr, my patron; he has seldom turned his back on me.”

And when they heard this none of them which to eat it and threw it over a cliff and asked God for mercy. They then set out to fish and from then did not lack provisions.

Once upon a time there was a priest in southern Iceland and people said that he was skilled in magic. He got himself passage with a Dutch *dugga*<sup>53</sup> east to Narvik. They put to sea and sailed into bad weather and hardships. They got it into their heads that this bad weather was the doing of this Icelander; they agreed that they would kill him, and before he knew what had happened they took him and cast him overboard, and at that moment they saw that it was the cabin dog that they had thrown overboard. A second time they threw him overboard, and then it was the cook. A third time they did the same; they saw then that it had been the pilot. They now became afraid of the priest and did whatever he said. He now took command and steered the ship under Njarðvíkurfjöll and asked them to take him ashore. They took him ashore, and he ordered them to turn the boat away from shore and wait for him, otherwise it would be the death of them. They saw that he hiked up the mountain and there he vanished into a cave and was there for a moment, and afterwards rushed back out again and instructs them to make away from the land as fast as they could. And when they were back in the ship the mountain fell down into the sea. He didn't have anything else

51 Ed. Jansson 1945:66.

**128 'Göldrótti presturinn'**

Um vetturinn rak hval á reka hans. Sögðu menn hann mundi hafa seitt hann. Margir voru þurfsandi og kom því mikill fjöldi fólks er báðu hann að gefa sér og selja, en hann skipti upp öllum hvalnum og gaf hann allan og tók ekkert til sín af honum. Annan og þriðja vetrana ráku hvali, en hann gaf þá alla, en þegar þeir fátæku og hungruðu báðu guð að launa honum fyrir gjafir sínar sagði hann: “Guð blessi ukkur, en fyrirgefi mér.” Hafði prestur þessi verið hugljúfi hvers manns og dó í góðri elli.<sup>54</sup>

**129 'Hvalurinn'**

Það er sagt að séra Hálfðan hafi einu sinni lofað kölska að fá honum son sinn sem þá var nær því fullorðinn ef hann færði sér hval. Morguninn eftir er hvalur rekinn á rekanum prestsins. Rétt þar eftir rær prestur fram á sundið og hefir son sin á bátnum. Kom þá upp úr sjónum grá hend loðin og grípur drenginn út og hverfur hann þar. Litlu síðar finnast mannsbein rekin hjá hvalnum. Segir þá prestur: “Það var ekki von hann vildi skrokkinn þegar hann fékk ekki sálina.”<sup>55</sup>

with him from out of the mountain than a single book and he carried it under his arm. After that they took him back home.

In the winter a whale washed up on his patch of shore. People said that he must have *seiðed* it ashore. There were many needy people there and consequently there came a big crowd of people and asked him to give them the meat and sell it to them, and he divided up the whole whale and he gave it all away and took nothing for himself. A second and third winter a whale washed ashore, and he then gave it all away, and at once those poor and hungry people prayed to God to reward him for his generosity, and he said: “God bless you all, and forgive me.” This priest was loved and admired by all, and died an old man.

It is said that the Reverend Hálfðan on one occasion had promised the Devil that he would give him his son who was then almost grown-up, if the Devil would get him a whale. The morning after a whale was washed up on the priest's stretch of beach. With that the priest rowed out into the sound and had his son with him in the boat. A furry grey hand came up out of the water and seized the boy out of the boat and he disappeared into the water there. A little later some human bones washed up beside

52 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III:619.

53 A small fishing-vessel.

54 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III:619–20.

55 Ed. Jón Árnason 1954–61, vol. III:537. Jón remarks that 'Þó að þessi sé ekki greinilega sögð sýnist auðráðið að sonur prestsins hafi verið dáinn þegar prestur lofaði kölska honum.' (*ibid.*)

**130 *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, book 4, ch. 31**

Eos adhuc fertur magicis artibus sive incantationibus in tantum praevalere, ut se scire fateantur, quid a singulis in toto orbe geratur. Tunc etiam potenti murmure verborum grandia cete maris in litora trahunt, et alia multa, quae de maleficis in scriptura leguntur, omnia illis ex usu facilia sunt.<sup>56</sup>

**131 *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, book 4, ch. 32**

In eisdem montanis agrestium ferarum tanta est multitudo, ut plurima pars regionis ex solis vivant silvaticis. Schol. Ibi capiuntur uri bubali et elaces, sicut in Sueonia [...] <sup>58</sup>

**131 *Historia Norwegie***

Et de longinquis prouinciis res concupiscibiles miro modo sibi alliciunt, nec non absconditos thesauros longe remoti mirifice produunt.<sup>60</sup>

**131-2 *Historia Norwegie***

Item dum Finni unacum christianis gregem squamigeram hamo carpere

the whale. Then the priest said: “Who’d have expected he’d want his body when he didn’t get his soul?”

These people, it is said, are to this day so superior in the arts or incantations that they profess to know what every one is doing the world over. Then also draw great sea monsters to shore with a powerful mumbling of words and do much else of which one reads in the Scriptures about magicians. All this is easy for them through practice.<sup>57</sup>

In those same mountains there are such large numbers of big game that the greatest part of the country subsists only on the beasts of the forest. Aurochs, buffaloes, and elk are taken there as in Sweden [...] <sup>59</sup>

Furthermore they attract to themselves desirable objects from distant parts in an astounding fashion and miraculously reveal hidden treasures, even though they are situated a vast distance away.<sup>61</sup>

Again, when the Finns, together with the Christians, had gone about catching by

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56 Ed. Schmeidler 1917:265-6.

57 Trans. Tschan 2002:212.

58 Ed. Schmeidler 1917:266-7.

59 Trans. Tschan 2002:213.

60 Ed. Ekrem & Mortensen in Ekrem, Mortensen & Fisher 2003:60.

61 Trans. Fisher in Ekrem, Mortensen & Fisher 2003 2003:61.

attemptassent, quos in casis fidelium pagani perspexerant, sacculis fere plenis unco suo de abyssis attractis scapham cum piscibus impleuerunt.<sup>62</sup>

### 132-3 'Noaiden Linke-Ola'

Der var i gamle dager en gammel noaide, som var en overmåte stor noaide, og han het Linke-Ola. Han pleide å fiske på sjøen og undertiden å få litt fisk, sild og annen fisk. Engang hadde hans granner drept en liten hval og holdt på å belegge den i land. Da kommer Linke-Ola roende; han hadde en båt som lignet en lappepulk, og den het Gushærga (Piss-Okse). Linke-Ola spør: ”Har I en lot til mig i denne fisken?” De sa: ”Vi gir dig ikke lot i den; for det er vår egen døde fisk.” Da begynte Linke-Ola å ro med båten sin rundt om (hvalen), og da han hadde rodd tredje gang rundt, sa han: ”Havets døtre (havfruene) får dele eders fisk.” Da slet hvalen båndene av og satte ut gjennom fjorden.

Så kom Linke-Ola hjem og reiste med kona si ut på sjøen; de begynte å fiske, og det var så lite fisk, at de ikke fikk kokning engang. Der var sild og fisk i mengde i en fjord; men det var ikke der hvor Linke-Ola bodde. Han reiste for å hente sig sild og fisk hjem og kom til den fjorden hvor der var sild, og han gandet. Silden og fisken

hook a flock of fish such as these heathens had seen in Christian dwellings, they drew almost full traps out of the deeps [sic.] with their wand [sic.], and so loaded the boats to capacity.<sup>63</sup>

There was in the old days an old *noaidi*, who was an exceptionally powerful *noaidi*, and he was called Linke-Ola. He used to fish out on the sea and from time to time even catch a few fish, herring and other fish. On one occasion his neighbours had killed a small whale and were in the process of anchoring/securing it to land. Then along comes Linke-Ola rowing in his boat; he had a boat which resembled a Sámi reindeer sledge, and it was called Gushærga (Piss-Ox). Linke-Ola asks: “Have you got a share of this fish for me?” They said: “We’re not giving you a share; for this is our own dead fish.” Then Linke-Ola began to row his boat around (the whale) and when he had rowed around for the third time, he said: “The daughters of the sea (the mermaids) can share your fish.” Then the whale broke its moorings and swam out into the fjord.

Then Linke-Ola came home and put to sea with his wife; they began to fish, and there were so few fish, that they didn’t even have enough for a meal. There was herring and other fish in abundance in another fjord; but that wasn’t where Linke-Ola lived. He set off to fetch herring and other fish home and came to that fjord where

62 Ed. Ekrem & Mortensen in Ekrem, Mortensen & Fisher 2003:62.

63 Trans. Fisher in Ekrem, Mortensen & Fisher 2003:63.



drog bort derfra og gikk til den fjorden hvor Linke-Ola bodde, og det blev storfiske. Linke-Ola hadde ingen med sig uten kona; med henne måtte han ro på sjøen og fikk litt fisk, og han gandet så at andre folk næsten ikke fikk noget. Hans kone het Gedomelli.<sup>64</sup>

### 134 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper'

Trold-Qvinderne have ogsaa i deres Bekiendelse tilskrevet sig adskillige andre selsomme Bedrifter. Eens Udsagn var, [...] At hun havde leveret en ung Karl en linnet, samt en anden en ulden Traad, som de skulde binde til deres Fiske-Krog, og forsikkert dem om, at de derved skulde have god Lykke til Fiskefangst. Een foregav, at hun havde redet paa en Feye-Kost over Søen fra Vasøe til Kiberg, da en anden, som var i Følge med hende, reed paa et sort Faar. Een sagde, at hun samt flere Trold-Qvinder havde ved deres Trold-Kunst fordrevet Fiske fra Landet, under hvilken udædiske Giernings Iverksettelse, en af dem fremviiste sig i en Størje (et Slags store Fiskes) Skikkelse, en anden udi sin egen Gestalt, værende iførte sort Trøye, blaat Boffel-bays Skiort, en rød med Guld-Kniplinger ziret Hue, samt hviid Hals-Klud, og siddende paa Vandet, omgiven med Tang rundt om, og holdende i Haanden en Tare-Leg (saa kalder man et tykt Tang, som noget ligner en tyk Ride-Pidsk), hvormed hun jagede. Een bekiendte sig at have udrettet samme i en Hval-Fiskes Skikkelse. Een foregav, at hun kunde gaae paa Havet med sin Spand i

there were herring, and he worked *gand*. The herring and the other fish left that place and went to that fjord where Linke-Ola lived, and they made an exceptionally large catch of fish. Linke-Ola didn't have anyone else but his wife; with her he had to row out on the sea and caught some fish, and he worked *gand* so that other people caught next to none. His wife was called Gedomelli.

These witches have in their confessions also ascribed themselves various other such feats. One stated that [...] she had given a young man linen thread, and another a woollen thread, which they were supposed to tie to their fishhooks and assured them that this would bring them good fortune on fishing expeditions. One claimed that she rode a broomstick over the sea from Vadsø to Kiberg, while another who accompanied her rode on a black sheep. One said that she and several other witches had through their witchcraft driven fish away from the land, and whilst they perpetrated this immoral act one of them took on the shape of a *størje* (a kind of large fish), another in her own shape, wearing a black shirt, blue shirt, a red cap with pieces of gold lace embroidered onto it, along with a white neck scarf, and sitting on the water surrounded by seaweed and holding in her hand a *tareleg* (which is what one calls a thick piece of seaweed which somewhat resembles a thick riding whip), with which she drove [the fish away]. One confessed to having done the same thing in the shape of a whale. One claimed that she could walk on the sea with her bucket in her

<sup>64</sup> Ed. Qvigstad 1929b:353-5.

Haanden, og derudi opsamle Fiskes Lever.<sup>65</sup>

### 135 'Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper'

Een sagde, at hun kunde omskabe sig til en Kat, til hvilken Kunst den Onde maatte skaffe hende Katte-Blod at smørre sig, samt Katte-Skind at bedække sig med. Om en anden sagdes der, at hun udi sin Forstue i en Tønde herbergerede en hende saa tilhaande gaaende Kat, at hvorhen den blev sendt, derfra skaffede den, hvad hun forlangede. En anden blev beskyldt at eye en graa, saa kaldet Smør-Kat, der tilbragte hende fra andre Folkes Spise-Kammer, saavelsom og fra andre Steder, hvad hun vilde have.<sup>66</sup>

### 136 *Fragmenter i lappska mythologien*

Jag har i min Barndom hört en historia om den förut omtalta Spå Lappen *Kutavuorok*; När Vargane en gång hade förskingrat en rik Lapps Renhjörd, hade *Kutavuorok* skaffat till baks hela Renhjorden genom sin magt öfver de döde. Han hade nemligen bedt hela Lappfamiljen lägga sig och sofva i godan ro. Sjelf hade han lagt sig bredevid den rika Lappens Äldsta doter. Spå Lappen började då att hvisla; straxt infunno sig hans tjensteandar som ett starkt susande, så att *Kutavuorok* sjelf tillsade dem, att de icke skulle trampa ned folket, som låg i kåtan. Han gaf dessa andar ordres, att hämta till baks Renhjorden, hvilket äfven skedde. 3 gånger efter hverandra hörde folket i kåtan, huru Renhjorden kom som ett urväder sättandes till kåten; men först 3<sup>dje</sup> gången var

hand and gather the livers of fish into it.

One said that she could transform herself into cat, for the accomplishment of which trick the Evil One had to provide her with cat blood with which to smear herself, as well as cat skin to cover herself with. It is said of another woman that she had living in a barrel in her hall a cat which would do her bidding, such that wherever it was sent it would fetch from that place whatever she asked for. Another one was accused of owning a grey, so-called buttercat, which fetched her whatever she wanted from other people's larders, as well as from other places.

I have in my childhood heard a story about the aforementioned Spå Lapp *Kutavuorok*; when wolves on one occasion scattered a rich Sámi's reindeer herd, *Kutavuorok* got the whole of the reindeer herd back again through his power over the dead. For he had asked the whole of this Sámi man's family to lie down and sleep in peace. What he himself did was to lie beside the rich Sámi's eldest daughter. The Spå Lapp then began to whistle; at once his helping spirits [*tjensteandar*] appeared with a powerful swish, so that *Kutavuorok* himself told them in addition that they must not trample on the people who lay in the *kåta*. He gave these spirits orders, to fetch back the reindeer herd, which they then did. Three times one after another the people in

65 Leem 1767:458-9.

66 Leem 1767:459-60.

det den verkliga Renhjorden, som hade infunnit sig vid kåtan.<sup>67</sup>

### 136-40 'Villrenene på Akkoberget'

I gamle dager var der en noaide her i Neiden. Han pleide alltid å hente en villren fra Akkoberget når han hadde bruk for en. Men hornene la han alltid igjen i hornjerdet på Akkoberget.

Da gamlingen skulde til å dø, sier han til sin sønn: ”Når du har bruk for en villren, skal du hente en fra Akkoberget; men hornene må du legge i hornjerdet, der hvor du ser det trenges.” Og så døde faren.

Så gikk der en tid. Da tenkte gutten at han skulde reise til Akkoberget og hente sig noen villrener; så får han se om der er noe der. Han lurte sig op på høiden; da ser han virkelig villren. Han skjøt en og den falt. Men de andre sprang ikke sin vei, slik som villren pleier å gjøre; men de kom enda nærmere. Mannen reiste sig op og skjøt en til. Men de kom enda nærmere og var ikke redde. Han skjøt en tredje; den traff han også. Men da blev de andre villren så tamme at de gikk rundt om ham. Da tok redsel mannen; han brydde sig ikke om renene eller om hornene, men skrev et stort kors i fjellveggen på Akkoberget.

the *kåta* heard how the reindeer herd came like a snowstorm arriving at the *kåta*; but it was only on the third occasion that it was the actual reindeer herd, which had appeared by the *kåta*.

In the old days there was a noaidi here in Neiden. He was in the habit of always getting a wild reindeer from Akkoberget when he needed one. But he would always place its antlers back in the antler corral at Akkoberget.

When the old *noaidi* was approaching death, he says to his son: “When you need a wild reindeer, you should go and get one from Akkoberget; but you must put its antlers in the antler corral, there where you will see it is needed.” And with that the father died.

Some time passed. Then the boy thought he should go to Akkoberget and get himself some wild reindeer; then he could find out if there were any there. He crept up onto the bluff; then he sees real wild reindeer. He shot one and it fell. But the others didn't bolt, the way wild reindeer tend to do; instead they came even closer. The man stood up and shot another. But they just moved even closer and showed no sign of fear. He shot a third; he hit that one too. But with that the other wild reindeer became so tame that they milled around him. Then the man got spooked; he wasn't interested in these reindeer or their antlers, instead he carved a large cross in the rock face on Akkoberget.

<sup>67</sup> Læstadius 1997:162.

Tre noaider på Skogerøy hadde også rodd ut for å jage villren på Akkoberget; men da de fikk se korset i berget, blev de til sten. De stener kalles ennu Noaidestenene og ligger rett overfor Akkoberget på Skogerøysiden av sundet. Fra den tid har det ikke mere vært villren på Akkoberget. Men horngjerdet finnes ennu, og korset står også i berget.<sup>68</sup>

#### 141-2 informant Johan Kitti, 1888, Loppa

Den dag fisket de, men fikk ikke mange fisk, nettop så meget at de kokte, og fiskene var meget magre, så de fikk meget lite fett. Men den gamle mannen gjemte fettet i koppen sin. Den unge mannen skjønnte det meget godt; han la sig til å sove; for han visste hvad den gamle manne skulde. Da denne var kommet tilbake, gikk den unge mannen ut og rodde hen til stenen; han tok den i båten og bandt en annen stor sten riktig fast til den med tæger, rodde midt ut på sjøen og kastet den der, kom tilbake og la sig. Da det var blitt morgen gikk han ut og så at stenen igjen var på samme plass. Han blev meget forundret, med tidde stille.

Den dag fisket de også, men fikk ingen fisk, skjønt de så riktig mange, når de kastet noten. Men når noten kom i land, fikk de ingen. Da sa den unge mannen: "Din gud er nok dårlig." Den gamle mannen skjønnte at hans gud var utskjemt, og han blev så sint på kameraten sin, at han vilde drepe ham. Den unge mannen måtte flykte, jo

Three *noaidit* on Skogerøy had also ridden out to hunt wild reindeer on Akkoberget; but when they saw the cross in the rock face they were turned to stone. These rocks are still known as the Noaidi Stones and lie directly above Akkoberget on the Skogerøy side of the sound. Since that time there haven't been any more wild reindeer on Akkoberget. But the antler field is still there, and the cross is also to be seen in the rock.

They fished that day, but didn't catch many fish, just enough to cook that evening, and the fish were very lean, so they didn't get much fat. But the old man saved the fat in his cup. The young man knew full well; he lay down to sleep; for he knew what the old man was going to do. When he had come back, the young man went and rowed over to the stone; he put it in the boat and tied another large stone very securely to it with root fibres, rowed out to the middle of the lake and cast it overboard there, came back and lay down to sleep. When morning came he went outside and saw the stone again in the same spot. He was quite surprised, but kept quiet about it.

They fished that day, too, but didn't catch any fish, even though they saw a great many when they cast the seine. But when the seine was brought ashore, there weren't any fish in it. Then the young man said: "Your god isn't much good." The old man realised then that his god had been ruined, and he became so angry with his friend that he wanted to kill him. The young man had to make his getaway, the

<sup>68</sup> Ed. Qvigstad 1927:459-61.

snarere, dess bedre. Den gamle mannen blev alene igjen med noten og båten; men han fikk så mange fisk at han ikke kunde gjøre dem til.<sup>69</sup>

### 142-3 informant Elen Ucce, 1926, Kautokeino

Han tenker: nu skal jeg bære den stenen der ut i vatnet, og så gikk han og tok stenen og kastet den ut i vatnet. Selv gikk han avsted og vandret en dag og kom igjen til den samme sieiden. Da ser han at den hvite stenen igjen ligger oppe på sieidestenen. Han tok igjen den hvite stenen, bar den til vatnet og kastet den enda meget lenger. Så gikk han avsted og vandret igjen et døgn. Da han vendte om, kom han til den samme stenen. Da ser han at den hvite stenen igjen ligger oppe på den samme stenen.<sup>70</sup>

### 143 informant Elen Ucce, 1926, Kautokeino

Så la han sig, og sovnen tok ham. Da drømte han at en gammel gubbe kom til ham og sa: "Nu får du ikke røre stenen mer. Hvis du nu enda tredje gang bærer den ut i vatnet, går det dig ikke godt." Da han hørte det, rørte han ikke stenen mer; han gikk sin vei.<sup>71</sup>

### 145 informant Ole Hansen, 1892, Kvænangen

Engang gikk en mann efter villren på Kvitebergneset. Da han hadd gått hele dagen og ikke funnet noen, lovtte han at hvis han enda traff på én villren, vilde han gi hornene til Kvitebergkirken. Da han hadde gått en stund, traff han på to store villrenokser som

sooner the better. The old man remained there alone with the seine and the boat; and he caught so many fish that he couldn't even prepare them all.

He thinks to himself: now I will carry that stone out into the water, and then he went and took the stone and threw it out into the water. He went off himself and wandered for a day and came once again to the same *sieidi*. Then he sees that the white stone is lying once again on top of the *sieidi* stone. He took the white stone once again, carried it to the water and threw it even further out into the water than before. Then he set off and wandered once again for a day and a night. When he turned back he came back to the same stone.

Then he lay down and drifted off to sleep. Then he dreamt that an old man came to him and said: "Now you may not touch the stone any more. If you now nonetheless carry it out into the water a third time, things won't go well for you." When he heard this, he didn't touch the stone again; he went on his way.

One time a man was out looking for wild reindeer at Kvitebergneset. When he had walked all day and not found any, he promised that if he only ran across a wild reindeer, he would give the antlers to Kvitebergkirken. When he had walked for a

69 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:509.

70 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:517.

71 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:517.

hadde slåss så lenge at hornene var viklet i hverandre. Mannen kom ganske nær; da tenkte han på hvem av dem han nu skulde skyte. Han la da merke til at den ene som var størst, også hadde meget store horn. Da tenkte han: "Ikke gir jeg Kvitebergkirken noe; jeg får nu nok allikevel den ene." Som han tenkte det, skiltes renene fra hinannen og var som blåst vekk for hans øine.<sup>72</sup>

#### **145-6 informant Isak Eira, 1921, Kautokeino**

Det var en mann som het Ole Isaksen; han kokte kaffe; da tenker han: han skal prøve om der er gitt den onde så stor makt at han formår noe. Han gikk da til Lykkestenen og sa: "Hvis der nu kommer to villrenokser, skal jeg skyte dem og gi den ene til stenen, forat renlykken skal vare." Da han hadde sagt det, møttes to villrenokser fra to kanter. De stanget hinannen, og hornene blev sittende så fast at mannen tenkte: de der slipper aldri løs. Han tok børsen og begynte å sikte og i det samme tenkte han: jeg gir ikke den stenen der noe, når jeg nu skyter de renoksene der. Da slapp renoksene løs før han nådde til å skyte, og løp avsted og fór sin vei.<sup>73</sup>

#### **146 informant Elen Ucce 1926, Kautokeino**

while, he came across two large wild reindeer bulls which had fought for so long that their antlers had become entangled with one another. The man got pretty close; then he thought about which one of them he ought to shoot. He then noticed that the one which was biggest also had very large antlers. Then he thought to himself: "Don't give the Kviteberg church anything; I will probably only get one of them." Just as he thought that, the two reindeer unlocked their antlers from one another and it was as if they were whisked out of sight.

There was a man called Ole Isaksen; he was cooking some coffee; then he thought to himself: he should see if the evil one was given so much power that he is really capable of something. He went to the Lykkesten ['Lucky Rock'] and said: "If two reindeer bulls come along, I will shoot them and give one to the stone, so that the reindeer luck will continue." When he had said that, two reindeer bulls appeared from two different directions. They butted one another, and their antlers got stuck so fast that the man thought to himself: they will never get free. He took the hunting rifle and began to take aim and in that same moment he thought to himself: I won't give that stone anything, when I shoot those two reindeer. At once the two reindeer bulls freed themselves before he could manage to shoot, and set off and ran away.

72 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:513.

73 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:515.

Det var en gut som het Morten; han satt ved sieiden og laget et håndtak av renhorn til en kastetømme. Da tenkte han: han skal nu prøve om der er så megen makt i den stenen der at den formår noe. Da sa han til stenen: "Hvis der nu kommer to rener, skal jeg slakte dem til stenen for å bli rik." Da han hadde sagt det, kom to renkalver dit. Det var hans farbrors kalver. Da sa Morten: "En lort gir jeg dig." Da han sa det, forsvant renkalvene.<sup>74</sup>

#### 146-7 anonymous informant from Holm, Polmak

Det var en rik fjell-lap som het Klemet. Engang kom han til en sieide og så at der ved den var samlet svært mange renhorn. Da tenkte han: "Om jeg skulde få en villren, skulde også jeg gi sieiden noe." Nettop som han tenkte dette, fikk han se to villrensimler som kom løpende mot ham. Ofte stanser de for å se sig bak, og de stanset likeoverfor ham i samme skuddlinje. Han skjøt begge ihjel, flådde dem og gjorde dem til, men gav ikke sieiden noe. Siden gikk han og hentet kjøttet, kokte og satte det tillivs. Klemet var en svært rik fjell-lapp og hadde mange rener.

Næste år nettop på samme tid, da han med sin heim var i nærheten av sieiden, kom han hen til den, og da ser han i en avstand som skuddvidden for villren likesom et tett vidjekratt. Han tenkte at der skulde det ikke være vidjer. Han gikk da

There was a lad called Morten; he sat by the *sieidi* and made a handle for a lasso out of reindeer antler. Then he thought to himself: he should now see whether there was as much power in that stone that it was capable of doing something. Then he said to the stone: "If two reindeer come along, I will slaughter them in sacrifice to the stone in order to become rich." When he had said this, two reindeer calves came along. They were his paternal uncle's calves. Then Morten said: "I will give you some muck." When he said that, the reindeer calves disappeared.

There was a rich mountain Sámi named Klemet. One time he came to a *sieidi* and saw that beside it were collected a great many reindeer antlers. Then he thought: "If I were to catch a wild reindeer, I would also give the *sieidi* something." Just as he thought this thought, he saw two wild reindeer does which came running towards him. Sometimes they stop to look back, and then they run again and come within shooting distance right in front of him, and they stopped just opposite him in the same line of fire. He shot them both dead, flayed them and prepared them, but didn't give any to the *sieidi*. Afterwards he went and fetched the meat, cooked it and ate it. Klemet was a very rich mountain Sámi and had many reindeer.

The same time the following year, when he was in the neighbourhood of this *sieidi* with his house, he went over to it, and then he sees, at a distance about the same as shooting range for wild reindeer, something like a thicket of willows. He

74 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:515-7.

tit for å se, go se, femti okserener lå døde i en dunge, og deres horn så for ham ut som et vidjekratt. Da kjente han at det var hans okserener allesammen; men kroppene lå helt under sneen og ikke annet enn hornene såes. Renflokket var død, fordi han løi for sieiden og ikke gav den noe; for den som lover en sieide noe og ikke gir det, ham går det aldri godt.<sup>75</sup>

#### 147-50 'Manden, som var sin god utro (Fortælling fra hedenskabets tid)'

I gamle dager var der i Enare en mand, som dyrkede en sten ved stranden. Når han drog ud på fiske, lovede han at smøre stenen med fiskeindvold. Fik han 10 fisk, så skulde han ofre til stenen én indvold, og fik han 100 fisk, så skulde han ofre 10 indvolde. En nat drog han ud på notfiske. Han kastede sin not i sjøen ret ud for afguden og sagde til denne: »Får jeg nu stor fisk her, så skal jeg smøre dig«. Da han drog noten på land, se, da var der bare stor fisk i den; alligevel undlod han at smøre stenen, da han så, at det var fed fisk, men drog hjem med sin fangst, kogte indvoldene og lagede *vuodjabæce* deraf.

En tid efter reiste han atter på fiske. Han kastede mange gange noten sin ud og drog den på land, men fik ikke en eneste fisk. Da reiste han til stedet ret ud for afguden og lovede, at om han der fik fisk, så skulde han ganske sikkert smøre stenen, og begyndte så at kaste noten ud. Men da han skulde til at drage den til land, satte

thought to himself that there shouldn't be willows there. He went over to see, and behold, fifty reindeer bulls lay dead in a heap, and their antlers looked to him like a willow thicket. Then he realised that they were all his reindeer bulls; but the bodies lay completely under the snow and nothing but the antlers could be seen. The reindeer herd was dead, because he had lied to the *sieidi* and not given it anything; for he who promises a *sieidi* something but does not keep his promise, things never go well for that person.

In olden days there was a man in Enare who worshipped a stone by the shore. When he went out to fish, he promised to smear the stone with fish guts. If he caught 10 fish, then he would offer one gut to the stone, and if he caught 100 fish, then he would offer 10 guts. One night he put out to fish. He cast his seine into the sea directly out from the idol and said to it: "If I catch a big fish here, then I will smear it on you." When he pulled the seine ashore, you see, there were only big fish in it; all the same he omitted to smear the stone when he saw that they were fat fish, but instead went home with his catch, cooked the guts and made *vuodjabæce* with it.<sup>77</sup>

Some time later he set off to fish again. He cast out his seine many times over and drew it ashore, but did not catch a single fish. Then he went to the place directly out from the idol and promised that if he landed fish there, then he most certainly would smear the stone, and then he began to cast out the seine. But when he tried to

<sup>75</sup> Ed. Qvigstad 1928:507.



noten sig så fast i bunden, at han ingen vei kunde få den, skjønt bunden var aldeles slet og ren. Han måtte da tilsidst skjære noten over på to steder og reise hjem uden at have fåt en eneste fisk.

Atter drog han på fiske og arbeidede hele natten, men fik bare én fisk. Da blev han arg og sagde til afguden: »Nu vil jeg ikke ofre dig noget for fremtiden, siden jeg intet får«, og så gik han hen for at rive ned stenen. Men da han kom til sin gud, se, da blev han hængende fast ved den. Hans hustru gik da til en gammel kjærring, som var på et andet sted, og bad hende komme til hendes mand. Da gik kjærringen hen til manden og spurgte ham: »Hvorledes er du blevet hængende her?« Manden svarede: »Jeg gik her hen for at nedrive guden, siden jeg ingen fisk fik, og så blev jeg siddende fast, og nu ved jeg ikke, hvorledes jeg igjen skal slippe løs herfra«.

Kjærringen sagde: »Dersom du gir det løfte, at du vil smøre stenen to dage og to gange om dagen, dagsiden (formiddagen) med smør og natsiden (eftermiddagen) med fløde, så slipper du igjen løs«. Han lovede at gjøre det og slap løs. Manden gik nu for at smøre stenen, men vilde ikke spandere smør, tog derfor kjødfedt og smurte den ind dermed, blev igjen hængende og holdtes således fast i tre dage. Atter gik den gamle kjærring til ham og sagde: »Hvorledes er du nu igjen blevet hængende her?« Han svarede: »Da jeg gik for at smøre min gud, tog jeg kjødfedt; thi jeg troede, at den ikke kunde skjelne mellem fedt og smør; men da jeg begyndte at smøre den ind, se, så blev jeg atter hængende her«. Kjærringen sagde »Du får smøre med smør og fløde,

draw it ashore, the seine caught fast on the seabed so that there was no way he could get it back in, despite the fact that the seabed was quite smooth and clean. Eventually he had to cut the seine through in two places and go home without having caught a single fish.

Again he set out to fish and worked all night, but caught just one fish. Then he became bitter and said to the idol: “Now I will no longer offer you anything for the future, since I don’t receive anything in return,” and then he went over to pull down the stone. But when he reached his god, you see, he became stuck fast to the stone. His wife then went to an old woman, who was somewhere else, and bade her to come to help her husband. Then the old woman went to the man and asked him: “How did you come to be stuck here?” The man answered: “I came here to tear down the idol, since I didn’t catch any fish, and then I ended up stuck fast, and now I don’t know how I will ever become free from here again.” The old woman said: “If you make the promise that you will smear the stone for two days and twice a day, in the morning with butter and in the afternoon with cream, then you will be free again.” He promised to do it and was set free. Now the man went to smear the stone, but did not want to waste butter, and so he used meat fat and smeared that in, became once again stuck fast and was stuck there in this way for three days. The old woman came back to him again and said: “How is it that you are once again stuck here?” He answered: “When I went to smear my god, I used meat fat; because I thought that it

som du lovede, tre dage og tre gange om dagen«. Manden lovede det og slap atter løs. Alligevel smurte han ikke stenen, men drog på fiske. Da blev der storm, så at han med nød og neppe slap iland. Kjærringen sagde nu igjen til ham: »Smører du nu ikke stenen, førend du atter drar på sjøen, så er jeg sikker på, at du blir (omkommer)«. Endda smurte manden ikke, men drog på fiske. Da blev der så stærk storm, at båden kandrede og manden druknede.<sup>76</sup>

### 151-2 informant Isak Eira, 1921, Kautokeino

Det var en mann som drev en renflokk, og han vilde ikke bli sett av folk med den flokken. Så drev han den forbi en sieide, og han fikk øie på mange folk i nærheten av sieiden nettop på hans vei, så han kunde ikke gjøre en omvei på en annen kant. Han lot da renflokken stanse bak en bakke, og den la sig til hvile der og såes ikke av folkene; det var i en senkning. Da hele flokken hadde lagt sig, lurte han sig bak bakkene og gikk hen til sieiden og folkene så ham ikke. Og han sa til sieiden: "Hvis du nu hjelper mig, så jeg slipper forbi med min renflokk, uten at hine folk ser eller hører det, skal jeg gi dig gode drammer, når jeg næste gang kommer her forbi dig, og jeg skal attpå gi dig et godt og friskt tobakksblad." Da han hadde sagt det, trodde han

couldn't tell the difference between lard and butter; but when I started to smear it in, you see, then I became stuck fast here again." The old woman said: "Now you'll have to smear with butter and cream, like you promised, for three days and three times a day." The man swore he would do this and was once again set free. All the same he didn't butter the stone, but instead went out to fish. Then a storm broke, so that he only barely managed to make it back to land. The old woman now said to him once again: "If you don't now smear the stone, before you put out to sea, then I am quite certain that you will die." Once again the man failed to smear the stone, but instead set out to fish. Then there broke such a fierce storm that the boat capsized and the man drowned.

There was a man who was driving a reindeer herd, and he didn't want to be seen by anyone with that herd. So he drove it past a *sieidi*, and he caught sight of a lot of people in the vicinity of the *sieidi* precisely where he was driving, so he wasn't able to take a detour on another side. He had the reindeer herd stop behind a hill, and it lay down to rest there and wasn't seen by the people nearby; it was in a hollow. When the whole herd had lain down, he lurked behind the hills and went over to the *sieidi* and the people didn't see him. And he said to the *sieidi*: "If you help me, so I can get by with my reindeer herd without those other people seeing or hearing it, then I will repay you with some good drams the next time I pass this way, and what's more I will

<sup>76</sup> Ed. Qvigstad & Sandberg 1887:115-7.

så meget på sieiden og tenkte: "Hvis jeg nu slipper forbi med denne flokken uten at hine folk ser mig, skal jeg bringe sieiden brennevin og skjenke en halv kopp og gi den et godt tobakksblad og gjemme det under sieiden." Og han tenkte bare disse ord, da han gikk til sin renflokk, og flokken lå fremdeles og hvilte således som da han forlot den, da han gikk hen til sieiden. Da han drev flokken avsted, sa han enda ganske høit: "Nu skal du hjelpe mig, sieide, og nu driver vi to flokken så at hine folk ikke skal se den", og han drev den avsted.

Det var ensteds meget flatt i nærheten av de folkene, og han måtte drive flokken over den flaten, da der ikke var vei annensteds; men folkene så ikke noe, og mannen gikk siden til sieiden og bragte den en halv kopp brennevin og et tobakksblad, således som han dengang hadde lovet.<sup>78</sup>

### 152 informant Isak Eira, 1921, Kautokeino

Han sier at der er særdeles megen hjelp i seiden, og den hjelper mange ganger, når en trenger den til hjelp; men en skal tro, og en skal gi, hvis en lover noe. Hvis en ikke gir, går det en dog ikke godt siden; en kommer i forlegenhet, når en siden kommer til det stedet eller der i nærheten, hvor en var før dengang da en bad sieiden om å hjelpe sig. Og derfor pleier folk å gi sieiden det de lover, og da går det dem alltid godt også

give you a nice fresh leaf of tobacco." When he had said this he believed very much in the *sieidi* and thought to himself: "If I now slip by with this herd of reindeer without those other people seeing me, I will bring the *sieidi* some *brennevin* and pour a half cup of it [over it, viz. a libation] and give it a nice tobacco leaf and hide it under the stone." And he only thought these words as he walked back to his herd of reindeer, and the herd was still lying down resting just as he had left them, when he went over to the *sieidi*. When he drove the herd off, he even said rather loudly: "Now you must help me, *sieidi*, and now we two will drive the herd so that those other people won't see it," and he drove the herd off.

In one place in the vicinity of those people the ground was very flat, and he was forced to drive the reindeer across that flat patch, since there was no other way around; but the people saw nothing, and the man went afterwards to the *sieidi* and brought it half a cup of *brennevin* and took a leaf of tobacco, just as he had promised before.

He says that there is a great deal of help to be got from the *sieidi*, and many times it helps when one really has need of help; but you have to believe, and you have to give, if you promise it something. If you don't give, then things really won't go well for you afterwards; you get into difficulty when later you come to that place or close by that place where on an earlier occasion you asked the *sieidi* to help you. And for

senere, når de er i nærheten av sieiden, og de er også meget flinke til å finne bortkomne rener, de folkene.<sup>79</sup>

#### 153-4 informant Per Bær, 1924

På baksiden (sydostsiden [*sic.*]) av Girunvarre er et stort berg, likesom et stort hus, bratt opover. Mattis Mattisen Hætta (det var min avdøde bestefars bror) gikk engang forbi der ok tok horn. Da blev han næsten vettskremt med dem; han begynte å bli likesom dåneferdig, og det sortnet for øiene hans. Han måtte vende om og bringe hornene tilbake til samme stenen.<sup>80</sup>

#### 154 informant Elen Ucce, 1926, Kautokeino

Der var en pike; hun het Elen Marie. Hun var tjenestepike hos Aslak Loggje. Så gjætte hun ok kom til Sieidedalen til Sieidestenen og fikk se en meget vakker hornskje, Hun kunde ikke bare sig; hun tok skjeen og gikk. Da de var nådd hjem, blev hun syk og blev meget dårlig. Da sier Aslak Loggje: "Du har kanskje rørt liggende ting." Piken svarte at hun hadde tatt en hornskje fra Sieidestenen. Da bad Aslak Loggje henne bringe skjeen tilbake. Hun gjorde det, og da hun kom hjem igjen, var hun frisk.<sup>81</sup>

#### 155 informant Isak Eira, 1921, Kautokeino

Det var en mann som engang gikk til den samme sieiden; han tok en meget vakker

that reason people tend to give the *sieidi* what they promise, and things always then go well for them later, when they are in the vicinity of the *sieidi*, and they are also very good at finding lost reindeer, those people.

On the rear side (the south-eastern side) of Girunvarre there is a large rock, like a large house, rising steeply. Mattis Mattisen Hætta (who was my late grandfather's brother) was walking one time past there and took some antlers. Then he was scared almost out of his wits with them; he suddenly became dizzy like he was about to faint, and his vision grew dim. He had to turn back and return the antlers to the stone where he had found them.

There was a girl; she was called Elen Marie. She was a servant girl with Aslak Loggje. So she was out herding and came to Sieidedalen [Sieidi Valley] to the *sieidi* rock and could see a very pretty bone spoon. She just couldn't help herself; she took the spoon and went on her way. When she got home she fell ill and was in a very bad way. Then Aslak Loggje says: "Maybe you have touched something that was left [somewhere]." The girl answered that she had taken a bone spoon from the Sieidesten. Then Aslak Loggje asked her to take the spoon back [to where she found it]. She did this, and when she got home again, she was in good health again.

There was a man who once went to this same *sieidi*;<sup>83</sup> he took a very beautiful bone

hornskje, som var meget pent utskåret, og den var meget pen, og han tok også en beltespenne av horn som var meget pen, og han gikk hjem. Men han fikk den første natten ikke fred til å sove. Så måtte han om morgenen da han stod op, gå og bringe hornskjeen og beltespennen tilbake, og da fikk han nok fred til å sove natten etter, og siden hadde han ikke mere lyst til å ta noe som han så ved sieidestenen.<sup>82</sup>

### 156 informant Samuelsen

I Smalfjorden er der innenfor Sundet på vestsiden av fjorden et frittstående, forferdelig stort berg, som heter Ibba-kirken. Det er på avstand å se til som en stue eller kirke. Dette berg har de gamle lapper dyrket som en gud og har ofret til det rener og kreaturer. Derfor finnes det mange horn og ben der.<sup>84</sup>

### 156 informant Salomon Nilsen

Kirkene er en fjellvegg på Kvitebergneset. Langs denne fjellvegg har vannet runnet og laget sådanne svarte bilder som er å se til som en dør og vinduer. Der i nærheten er også en stor sten, som er å se til som en prest. Den har hode som et menneske og hvit krave om halsen. Den pleide å kalles for Presten. Til de kirkene pleide folk for å ofre.<sup>85</sup>

### 164–5 *Eiríks saga rauða*, AM 557 4to text

bad hun fa sier konr þær. sem kynni frædi. þat er þyrfti til seidinnar fremia ok uardlokr heita. enn þær konr funnduzt eigi þa uar at leitad um bæinn. ef nauckr

spoon, which was very beautifully carved, and it was very pretty, and he also took a belt buckle made of horn which was very fine indeed, and he went home. But the first night he didn't get any peace in which to sleep. So when he got up in the morning he had to go and take the bone spoon and the belt buckle back to where he got them, and after that he certainly slept peacefully the following night, and since then he no longer had any desire to take anything which he saw lying by the *sieidi* stone.

In Smalfjord there is within Sundet on the western side of the fjord a free-standing, awfully large rock which is called the Ibba-church. From a distance it looks like a cottage or a church. The old Sámi worshipped this rock as a god and sacrificed reindeer and cattle to it. For this reason there are many antlers and bones to be found there.

The 'churches' are a rock face on Kvitebergneset. Along this rock face the water has trickled and formed such black images as resemble a door and windows. In the vicinity of this there is also a large stone, which looks like a priest. It has a head like a person and a white collar around the neck. It was usually referred to as 'the Priest'. People were in the habit of sacrificing to these 'churches'.

She requested women who had knowledge of that skill necessary for the prosecution of *seiðr*, which was called *varðlokr*. But no such women were available. Enquiries were

kynni. þa. svarar. Gvdridr. huerki er ek fiolkvnnig ne visennda kona. enn þo kenndi halldis fostra min. mer a. islandi. þat frædi er hun kalladi vard lokr.<sup>86</sup>

**165 *Eiríks saga rauða*, AM 557 4to text**

spakona. þackar henni kvædit. hun hafdi margar nattvrur higat at sott ok þotti fagurt at heyra. þat er kuedit var. er adr uilldi fra oss snuazt ok oss avngua hlydni veita. Enn mer erv nu margar þeir hluter aud synar. er aadr var bædi ek ok adrir dulder.<sup>87</sup>

**165 *Eiríks saga rauða*, AM 544 4to text**

spakonon þakkar henni kvæðit. ok kvað margar þer nattvrur nv til hafa sott ok þikkia fagvrt at heyra er kvæðit var sva vel flutt er adr villdv vid oss skiliaz ok enga hlydmi oss veita enn mer erv nv margir þeir hlvtir aydsynir er adr var ek dvlit ok margir adrir.<sup>88</sup>

**176 *Konungs skuggsjá***

Sva vil ec oc þæss mæð leyfi spyria við hvat sa lýðr lifir er þat lannd [viz. Greenland] bygger eða hværso landeno er farit hvart þat er isum þact sæm hafit eða er þat þítt þo at hafit se frosit eða er nocqvot sað alanndino sæm á aðrum lanndum.<sup>89</sup>

**176 *Konungs skuggsjá***

skaltu þat vist vita. at þat er litill lutr aflanndino er þitt er en allt annat þa erisum þact

made throughout the farm, to ascertain if anyone knew *varðlokr*. Then Guðríðr said: “I am neither skilled in magic or clairvoyant, but Halldís, my foster-mother in Iceland, taught me that skill which she called *varðlokr*.”

The prophetess thanks her for the song. Many spirits had now congregated around her, the same spirits which previously wanted to turn away from us and not heed us, for they thought the song she had sung was beautiful to listen to. And many things which were previously hidden from both me and others are now clear.

The prophetess thanks her for the song, and said that many of those spirits which previously wanted to part company with us and not heed our call had now congregated there, and they think the song is beautiful to listen to, because it was sung so well; and many things which previously were hidden from me and from many others are now clear.

With your permission I also wish to ask what the people who inhabit those lands live upon; what the character of the country is, whether it is ice-clad like the ocean or free from ice even though the sea be frozen; and whether corn grows in that country as in other lands.

I can state definitely that only a small part of the land thaws out, while all the rest

[...] En opt hafa menn freistað at ganga upp alandet þau fioll er hæst ero ímyisum stoðum at siaz um oc vildu vita æf þeir fynni noccot er þitt væri alandino oc byggiannde oc hafa menn hværgi þat funnit nema þar sem nu bua menn oc er þat litit fram mæð stronndonni sialfri.<sup>90</sup>

**226-7 Landnámabók** (Hauksbók 116, Sturlubók 145)

Þuríðr sundafyllir ok Völu-Steinn son hennar fór af Hálogalandi til Íslands ok nam Bolungarvík, ok bjöggu í Vatnsnesi. Hon var því kǫlluð sundafyllir, at hon seiddi til þess í hallæri á Hálogalandi, at hvert sund var fullt af fiskum.<sup>91</sup> Hon setti ok Kvíarmið á Ísafjarðardjúpi ok tók til á kollótta af hverjum bónda í Ísafirði.<sup>92</sup>

**227-8 Gríms saga loðinkinna** – see pages 280-1, above

**228 embedded in Gríms saga loðinkinna**

faðir okkarr

burtu seiddi

báruhjarðir.

Skuluð aldri,

nema skop ráði,

heilir heðan

heim of komast

remains under the ice. [...] Men have often tried to go up into the country and climb the highest mountains in various places to look about and learn whether any land could be found that was free from ice and habitable. But nowhere have they found such a place, except what is now occupied, which is a little strip along the water's edge.

Þuríðr sundafyllir and her son Völu-Steinn left Hálogaland for Iceland and claimed Bolungarvík.

our father

*seiddi* away

the herds of the waves.

You and your companions

shall never

– lest fate decree –

come home in one piece, from here.

**228 Óláfs saga helga** (Stockholm nr. 2 4to text)

þat havst var i Þrandheimi halleri a corni. en aðr hafði oc verit lengi goð arferð. en That autumn the grain harvest was poor, though previously there had long been

halleri var allt norðr i land oc því meira er norðar var. en corn var gott austr i land. oc bountiful crops. This was the case throughout the whole of northern Norway, the sva um Upplavnd. en þess navt við i Þrandheimi at menn atto þar mikil fornn cornn.<sup>93</sup> more acute the further north one went. But there was a good crop of grain in the eastern districts, and likewise in Uppland. And the people of Trøndelag were helped by the fact that they had a large stockpile of grain from previous seasons.

### 229 *Droplaugarsona saga*

Eptir um vetrinn gerði hallæri mikit ok fiarfelli. Þorgeirr bondi a Hrafnkelsst(oðum) In the course of the winter there was great economic hardship and a lot of livestock let mart fe.<sup>94</sup> died. Þorgeirr of Hrafnkelsstaðir lost a lot of cattle.

### 229 *Drauma-Jóns saga*

Nu kemr suo tima at arferd hallaz miog j landino geriz vedratta kolld suo at kornit Now it came to pass that the season took a profound turn for the worse; there was a friouaz ecki en saker þess at j slikum londum er þat mest almenningu matr sem jordin cold snap and the grain didn't mature, and because in countries like that the majority gefr vard fliott hit mesta hallæri ok varam suo at riker menn hofdu varla mat j of the population subsist on the fruits of the earth, the situation very soon became munn.<sup>95</sup> desperate, so much so that even the wealthy barely had a morsel.

### 229 *Konungs skuggsjá*

'En þar sæm þu rædder um þat hvart þar væri noccot sað eða æcki þa ætla ec þat land 'And if you are wondering whether any crops are sown in that country, well I reckon litit af því fram flytiaz en þo ero þeir menn þar er hællzt ero agetazter oc rikaztr there isn't much of that there, although it is said that the wealthiest and most highly-kallaðer at þeir leita við firi fræistni saker at sa. En þat er þo mæstr fiolde aþvi lannde esteemed men there have attempted to cultivate crops. Yet the vast majority of people er æigi væit hvat brauð er oc alldrægi sa ænn brauð<sup>96</sup> in that country don't know what bread is, having never laid eyes on the stuff.'

### 229 *Konungs skuggsjá*

'Þer gator þess oc fyrr iyðarri ræðu at æcki sað er aþvi lannde<sup>97</sup> 'You mentioned earlier in your monologue that grain is not sown in that country'

### 230 *Sturlunga saga*

»far ok helldr fameðr vm heraðit nv, er hallere er mikit a kornit, þui at nu er uetrar- “[...] privation and a shortage of men in the district now, for the grain crops are



riki mikit, ok er beðe illt til matar ok heyia<sup>98</sup>

failing, because the winter is now so severe, and people lack both food and fodder.”

### 230 *Njáls saga* (Möðruvallabók redaction)

Í þann tíma kom hallæri mikit, svá at menn skorti bæði hey ok mat, ok gekk þat um allir sveitir. Gunnarr miðlaði mǫrgum manni hey ok mat, ok hǫfðu allir þeir, er þangat kómu, meðan til var. Svá kom, at Gunnar skorti bæði hey ok mat.<sup>99</sup>

Then a catastrophic season followed, such that there was a paucity of both food and fodder. All of the districts were affected. Gunnarr supplied many people with fodder and food, and no one who came left empty-handed, while supplies lasted, until in the end Gunnarr himself lacked both food and fodder.

77 See Qvigstad & Sandberg 1887:117, note 2 for an explanation of what *vuodjabæce* is, in brief: a mixture of flour and chopped pine bark in a stock of meat or fish.

78 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:519.

79 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:519.

80 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:513.

81 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:517.

82 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:521.

83 A *sieidi* located by Qvigstad at Nordreisa in Sieidevagge, NB not the *sieidi* described in the previous tale.

84 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:505.

85 Ed. Qvigstad 1928:511.

86 Ed. Jansson 1945:42.

87 Ed. Jansson 1945:43.

88 Ed. Jansson 1945:43.

89 Ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:71.

90 Ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:73–4.

91 *Hauksbók* (AM 371 4to and AM 105 fol. (Jóns Erlendsson’s copy)) and *Skarðsárabók* (AM 104 fol.) have ⟨sild⟩ at this point, *Sturlubók* has ⟨fiskum⟩, ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:186.

92 Ed. Jakob Benediktsson 1968:186.

93 Ed. Oscar Albert Johnsen & Jón Helgason 1941:261.

94 Ed. Jakob Jakobsen 1902–1903:151.

95 Ed. Page 1957:39–40.

96 Ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:71–2.

97 Ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:74–5.

98 Edited from AM 122 a fol. with readings supplied from AM 122 b fol. by Kålund 1906–1911 vol. II:123.

99 Ed. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson 1954:121.

**230 Óláfs saga helga**

Vm þeirra daga var í Norgi hallæri mikit. beði a sę oc landi. var þa sulltr oc seyra um At that time Norway was afflicted by great economic hardship, with little reaped from allt land.<sup>100</sup> either the land or the sea. People throughout the land suffered hunger and starvation.

**233–4 Konungs skuggsjá**

En þar er þu leitar æpter því við hvat er þeir lifa a því lande mæð því at þeir hafa æcki ‘You ask what the inhabitants live on in that country since they sow no grain; but sað. En við fleira lifa menn en við brauð æitt Sva er sagt at men can live on other food than bread. It is reported that the pasturage is good and aGroenalande ero gros goð oc ero þar bu goð oc stor því at menn hafa þar that there are large and fine farms in Greenland since the farmers raise cattle and mart nauta oc sauða oc er þar smiorgerð mikel oc osta lifa mæn við þat sheep in large numbers, and make butter and cheese in great quantities. The people mioc oc sva við kiot oc við allz conar væiðe. bæðe við reina holld oc hvala oc subsist on these foods and on meat, and on the flesh of all kinds of game, both on sæla oc biarnar holld oc foedaz menn við þat þar alannde.<sup>101</sup> reindeer, whales, seals, and bears, and that is what people eat there in that land.’

**240 Orosius**

hé wæs swyðe spedig man on þæm æhtum þe heora speda on beoð, þæt is, on He was a very rich man in the kind of property in which their wealth consists, wilderorum. he hæfde þagyt, ða hé þone cyninge sohte, tamra deora unbebohtra syx namely, in wild animals. At the time he visited the king he still had six hundred tame hund. þa deor hý hátað ‘hránas’; þara wæron syx stælhrganas; ða beoð swyðe dyre mid beasts unsold; these animals they call ‘reindeer’; among them were six decoy-finum, for ðæm hy foð þa wildan hrganas mid. he wæs mid þæm fyrstum mannum on reindeer; these were very valuable among the finnas [Sámi], because with them they þæm lande: Næfde he þeah ma ðonne twentig hryðera, & twentig sceapa, & twentig catch the wild reindeer. He [Ohthere] was among the principal men of the country; he had, however, no more than twenty head of cattle, twenty sheep and twenty pigs; and swyna; & þæt lytle þæt he erede he erede mid horsan.<sup>102</sup> the little that he ploughed he ploughed with horses.

**243–4 'Epitomes Historiæ Missionis Lapponicæ. Pars Prima Anlangende de**

100 Edited from Stockholm nr. 2 4to by Oscar Albert Johnsen & Jón Helgason 1941:23–4.

101 Ed. Finnur Jónsson 1920:75.

102 Ross 1981:20.

### Nordske Lappers Hedendom og Superstitioner'

Naar nu Noider, som have bekjendt sig mangfoldige saadanne reyser een hver at have giort, haver skullet forklare omstændighederne af disse Jamik-aimo-Reyser, saa have de bekjendt, at deres Saiwo-guelle kommer til dem, som raabes og jauges paa, og paa hans rygg føres de til Jamik-aimo; og som dem der megen modstand kand møde, at Jamikerne enten ikke ville slippe den døding, som Noiden derfra vil tage med sig, eller endelig ville have den Syge ned til sig (som gierne skeer af nogen dødning der er den Syges Slegt, og her haver efterladt sig den som syg er, enten hand er den Jamikes Søn, datter, Mand, Qvinde, eller anden paarørende, da Noiden staaer een stoor fare, og ded gielder om hans liv) saa gjør hans Guelle ham mægtig bistand, og saalænge kjæmpes og holder ud med den fortrødne Jamike, indtil den enten maa consentere, eller Noiden faaer komme sin vey med den Jamike, som hand skal opføre til Rein-vogtere.

[...] Lapperne bekjendelser have ogsaa forklaret, at saadanne fra Jamik-aimo optagne Jamiker lykkeligen og vel have vogtet deres Reenshjord, saalenge de aarligen have faaet ded offer, som dennem haver været tilsagt, og ded i et eller fleere aar, ligsom de i Jamik-aimo have accorderet.<sup>103</sup>

When *noaidit* who have confessed to numerous such journeys made by each one of them, has had to explain the circumstances of these *Jamik-aimo* journeys, they have confessed that their Saiwo-guelle comes to them, who is called upon and joiked, and on his back they journey to Jamik-aimo; and since they can encounter a great deal of resistance there, so that the Jamikes either do not want to let the spirit of the dead person [who is to be a reindeer-herder], who the *noaidi* seeks to take with him thence [to perform this service], or they insist upon having the sick person down with them (which as a rule is perpetrated by some spirit of the dead who is a relative of the sick person, and has in these cases left behind the person who is sick, and whether he is the son, daughter, husband, wife or other kin of the Jamike, the *noaidi* is in great peril, and his life is in danger) then his Guelle provides formidable assistance, and fights and struggles with the discontent Jamike until it must either consent, or the *noaidi* manages to have his way with the Jamike who he wants to take to serve as a reindeer herder.

[...] The Sámi's confessions also clarify how such *Jamiker* taken from *Jamik-aimo* have happily and skilfully guarded their reindeer herds, for as long as they have received those annual sacrifices which have been promised them, and this has pertained for one or several years, according to the agreement made in *Jamik-aimo*.

103 Skanke, Hans [1728-1731] 1945a:195-6.

## APPENDIX B

***Eiríks saga rauða* chapter 4, AM 557 4to (Skálholtsbók) text, with parallel translation<sup>1</sup>**

|                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (I) þenna tíma. uar hallæri mikit. a grænlanndi                                                                                                                                 | At that time Greenland was suffering an exceptionally bad season.                                                                                                                                 |
| haufdu menn feingit litid. þeir sem i vedr ferd haufdu uerit enn sumir eigi apr komnir.                                                                                         | Those who had gone hunting had bagged a meagre catch, and some had not returned at all.                                                                                                           |
| sv kona uar i bygd er. þorbiorg. het. hun. var spa kona. hun. var kaullut litill volve.                                                                                         | A woman named Þorbjörg was in the neighbourhood. She was a prophetess and was known as the little <i>vólva</i> .                                                                                  |
| hun. hafdi aatt ser. niv. systr. ok var hun. ein eptir. aa lifi.                                                                                                                | She had had nine sisters but was now the only one of them still living.                                                                                                                           |
| þat var hatr. þorbiargar. a vetrvum. at hun for a ueizlr ok budv menn henni heim. mest þeir er forvitni var a. um forlug sin. eda. at ferdir <sup>2</sup>                       | In wintertime Þorbjörg was in the habit of turning up at feasts, and those hosts who were most curious about their fate or endeavours would invite her to stay.                                   |
| ok med þvi at. þorkell var þar mestr bondi þa. þotti til hanns koma. hvenær at vita letta mundi varani. þessv sem yfir stod.                                                    | And because Þórkell was the most prominent farmer in that district people considered it his responsibility to find out when the hardships they were suffering would ease.                         |
| þorkell bydr spakonv þangat ok er henni buin god vit taka. sem sidr var til þa er vit þess haattar konu skylldi taka                                                            | Þórkell invited the prophetess to his farm and she was given a warm welcome there, as was customary when a woman of her profession came visiting.                                                 |
| bvit var henni ha sæti ok lagt unndir hægindi. þar skylldi i vera hænsa fidri.                                                                                                  | A high seat was prepared for her and she was given a cushion to sit on, which was to be filled with hens feathers.                                                                                |
| enn er. hun. kom vm kuellidit ok sa madr er i moti henni uar senndr . þa var. hun suo buin at hun. hafdi yfir sier tygla mauttvl blann. ok var settr steinum. allt i skaut ofan | And when she arrived in the evening together with the person who had been sent to meet her, she was dressed as follows: she wore a dark buckled cloak decorated with gems all the way to the hem. |
| hun. hafdi a. haalsi ser gler taur. hun hafdi. a haufdi lamb skinz kofra suartann ok vid innan kattar skinn huitt staf hafdi hun. i henndi ok var.a. knappr                     | Around her neck she had a necklace of glass beads; on her head a black lambskin hood lined with white cat fur, and carried in her hand a staff with a knob on the end.                            |

hann uar buinn messingv. ok settum steinvum ofan vm knappinn  
 hun. hafdi vm sik hnioskv linda ok var þar aa skiodu punngr mikill. vardueitti hun  
 þar i taufr þau er hun þvrfti til frodleiks at hafva.  
 hun hafdi kalf skinnz sko lodna a. fotum ok i þveingi langa ok sterkliga. latuns  
 knappar. mikler. a enndvnm.  
 hun hafdi a. haundvm ser katt skinnz glofa. ok uoro hvitir innan ok lodner.  
 Enn er hvn kom inn. þotti avllvm mavnnum skyll at velia henni sæmiligar kvedivr.  
 enn hun tok þui eptir sem henni uoro menn skapfelldir til.  
 Tok. þorkell. bonndi. i haunnd visennda konunni. ok leiddi hann hana til þess sætis.  
 er henni var bvit.  
 þorkell. bad hana renna þar avgum yfir hiord ok hiv. ok hybyli.<sup>3</sup>  
 hun var fa malvg vm allt.  
 bord voru vpp tekin um tekinn um kvellidit.<sup>4</sup> ok er fra því at. segia at spakonvnni var  
 mat bvit.  
 henni var giorr grautr af kidia miolk enn til matar henni uoro buin hiortv ur allz  
 konar kvikenndum. þeim sem þar. var. til.  
 hun hafdi messingar spon. ok hnif tannskeftan tui holkadann af eiri. ok var af  
 brotinn . oddrinn.  
 Enn er bord uoro vpp tekin. gengr. þorkell bonndi firir. þorbiorrgv ok spyrr huersv  
 henni virdizt þar hybyli. eda. hættir manna. eda. huersv fliotliga hann mun þess vis

It had brass fittings and set with gems around the knob.  
 She wore a touchwood belt around her waist from which hung a leather purse in  
 which she kept the charms she required in order to perform her magic.  
 She wore fleeced calfskin shoes on her feet tied with long, thick laces which had large  
 brass knobs on the end.  
 On her hands she wore catskin gloves which were white and fleeced inside.  
 And when she entered the room everyone present felt obliged to greet her  
 respectfully.  
 And she responded to that according to how she felt towards each of them in turn.  
 Þórkell took the wise woman by the hand and led her to the seat which had been  
 prepared for her.  
 Þórkell invited her to cast her eyes over his herd, house and household.  
 She didn't have much to say about any of this.  
 In the evening tables were set up, and it is reported that the prophetess was served a  
 meal.  
 A porridge of goat's milk was prepared for her, and to eat she was given the hearts of  
 every kind of livestock kept on the farm.  
 She had a spoon made of brass and a knife with an ivory handle, the two halves of  
 which were held together with metal bands; the point of the knife had broken off.  
 And when the tables had been set up, Þórkell went before Þorbjörg and asked how  
 the farm and the behaviour of the household please her, and how soon he would be

uerda er hann hefvir spurt eptir ok menn uilldv vita.

Enn eptir a alidnvm degi var henni ueittr sa vm bvningr. sem hun skylldi sein fremia.

bad hun fa sier konr þær. sem kynni frædi. þat er þyrfti til seidinnar fremia ok

uardlokr heita. enn þær konr funnduzt eigi

þa uar at leitad um bæinn. ef nauckr kynni.

þa. svarar. Gvdridr. huerki er ek fiolkvnnig ne visennda kona. enn þo kenndi halldis

fostra min. mer a. islandi. þat frædi er hun kalladi vard lokr.

þorbiorg. svaradi. þa. ertu frodari enn ek ætladi.

Gvdridr. s. þetta er þesskonar frædi ok at ferli . at ek ætla i avngvm at beina at vera.

þviat ek er kona kristin.

þorbiorn.<sup>5</sup> suarar. svo mætti uerda at þu yrdir mavnnum at lidi. her vm enn værir

kona at verri

enn vid. þorkel met ek at fa þa hluti her til er þarf.

þorkell herdir nu at gvdridi. enn hun kuezst mundv giora sem hann villdi.

slogv konr hring vm hverfis. enn. þorbiorg vppi a seid hiallinvm.

qvad. Gvdridr. þa kuædit. suo fagurt ok uel at eingi þottizt fyrr heyrt hafva med fegri

ravst kvedit. sa er þar uar.

spakona. þackar henni kvædit. hun hafdi margar nattvrur higat at sott ok þotti fagurt

given an answer concerning what he had enquired about and the people there were anxious to know.

And the following day she was provided with those things [with the help of which] she would later perform.

She asked to be provided with women accomplished in that skill necessary for the performance of *seiðr*, which was called *varðlokr*. But no such women were available. Enquiries were made throughout the farm, to ascertain if anyone knew *varðlokr*.

Then Guðríðr pipes up: “I am neither skilled in magic nor clairvoyant, but Halldís, my foster-mother in Iceland, taught me that skill which she called *varðlokr*.”

Þorbjörg answered, “Then you are more learned than I thought.”

Guðríðr replied, “This is the kind of learning and that I wish to have nothing to do with, because I am a Christian woman.”

Þorbjörg answers, “It might be that [by doing this] you will help the people here, and be no worse a woman for having done so.

“And I am confident that Þorkell will see to it that I am provided with the necessary things.”

Þórkell then urges Guðríðr to consent, and she said she would do as he wished.

Women formed a circle, with Þorbjörg atop the *seiðr*-platform.

Guðríðr then sang the song so beautifully and well that nobody there thought they had ever heard it sung with a lovelier voice before.

The prophetess thanks her for the song. Many spirits had now congregated upon her,

at heyra. þat er kuedit var. er adr uilldi fra oss snuazt ok oss avngua hlydni veita.

Enn mer erv nu margar þeir hluter aud synar. er aadr var bædi ek ok adrir dulder.

Enn ek kann þat at segia at hallæri þetta mvn ecki halldazt leingr. ok mvn batna arangr. sem uarar.

Sottar far þat sem leingi hefir legit mvn batna vonv bradara.

Enn þier. Gvdridr. skal ek launa i havnd lid sinni þat sem oss hafir af stadit. þviat þin forlagv eru mer nu aull glaugg sæ

þat muntu gíaf ord fa hier. aa grænlanndi. er sæmiligazt er til þo at þier verdi þat eigi til langædar. þviat uegir þinir liggia vt til islanndz. ok mvn þar koma fra þier ætt bogi bædi mikill ok godr ok yfir þinvm ætt kvislvm mvn skina biartr geisli. ennda far nu uel ok heil. dottir min.

Sidan gengu menn at uisennda konunni. ok fretti hver eptir þvi sem mest foruitni. var a

var hun ok god af fra savgnvm geck þat ok litt i tavma. s. hun.<sup>6</sup>

Þessv næst var komit eptir henni af audrvm bæ ok for hun þa þanngat.

var. sennt eptir. þorbirni þui at hann uilldi eigi heima vera medan slik heidni var framan.

Vedradtta battnadi skiott. þegar er uora tok sem þorbiorgr hafdi sagt.

byr. þorbiorn. skip sitt ok fer vnz hann kemr i bratta hlið.

“the same spirits which previously wanted to turn away from us and pay us no heed, for they thought the song she had sung was beautiful to listen to.

“And many of those things which were previously hidden from both me and others are now clear.

“And am I able to tell you that this bad season will not last long, and the season will improve when spring arrives.

“The epidemic which has reigned for a long time will pass over sooner than expected.

“And you, Guðríðr, I will repay you in kind for the help you have given us, for your fate is now very clear to me.

“You will receive a worthy offer of marriage here in Greenland, although you will not be married for long, because your fate will lead you to Iceland. And there you will found a lineage both great and good, and a bright ray of light will shine over your bloodline. And go now in peace, my child.”

After that people came up to the wise woman and each of them enquired of her concerning whatever they were most curious about.

She was generous with her prophecies, and little of what she foretold went unfulfilled.

Then a man arrived to summon her to visit another farm, and off she went.

Someone was sent to fetch Þorbjörn because he did not wish to be present at the farm while such heathenism was afoot.

The weather improved as soon as spring arrived, just as Þorbjörg had said.

Þorbjörn prepared his ship and sailed until he came to Brattahlíð.

|                                                                                      |                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| tekr. Eirekr. vid. havnum baadum havnndvm ok kvad þat vel er hann var þar kominn     | Eiríkr gave him a warm welcome and said that it was wonderful that he had made it. |
| var. þorbiorn. med havnum vm ueturinn ok skullda lid hanss.                          | Þorbjörn stayed with him through the winter and was made to feel at home there.    |
| Eptir vm vorit. gaf. Eirekr. þorbirni. lannd a. stocka nesi ok var þar giorr sæmligr | The following spring Eiríkr gave Þorbjörn land at Stokkanes, and Þorbjörn built a  |
| bærr. ok bio hann þar sidan.                                                         | fine farm there and settled down there.                                            |



## NOTES TO THE TRANSLATION

1. I follow Sven B.F. Jansson's 1945 edition of both manuscripts texts of the saga (Jansson 1945:39–44).
2. <at **ferdir**> Tolley (2009:138) emends the AM 557 4to text to that of AM 544 4to, <ar ferd> 'season', without indicating having done so (his other emendations are marked).
3. <þorkell. **bad hana renna þar augum yfir hiozd ok hiv. ok hybyli.**> The use of the phrase *renna augum* here is interesting in light of a similar idiom used with respect to practitioners of magic: *renna gøndum*, 'to let ones *gandir* run' (cf. Bø 1960:184). Given that Þórkell would hereby appear (based on everything that precedes and follows) to be inviting Þorbjörg to undertake divination concerning the future of these three things, it might be that in addition to the literal and figurative sense of 'running ones eyes over' them, a further sense of sending out one's eyes—or one's second sight—to survey these things is intended here. *Fóstbræðra saga*, to which *Hauksbók* is the oldest witness, describes how a woman named Þórdís wakes from a fitful sleep to relate that 'Víða hefi ek gøndum rennt í nótt, ok em ek nú vís orðin þeira hluta, er ek vissa eigi áðr' ('I have let my *gandir* run far and wide tonight, and now know things I did not before'), ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson & Guðni Jónsson 1943:243. Comparison of this with Þorbjörg's announcement, after the core of the *seiðr* ritual has been performed, that 'mer erv nú margir þeir hlvtir avdsynir er adr var ek dvlit ok margir adrir' (ed. Jansson 1944:43) suggests textual borrowing in one direction or the other, or a conventional oral ritual formula known to the saga author.
4. <**bord voru vpp tekinn um tekinn um kvellit.**> Dittography, an instance of the orthographic corruption found in the AM 557 4to text of the saga compared to the more orthographically lucid AM 544 4to text, despite which the former is preferred due to its probable greater proximity to an older exemplar than that from which the latter was copied (see Chapter Three pp. 162–4 for further discussion of textual transmission).
5. <þorbiðzn. **suarar. svð mætti uerda at þu yrdir mavnnum at lidi. her vm enn værir kóna at verzi**> At this point the *Hauksbók* text reads <þozb> versus *Skálholtsbók*'s <þozbiozn>. The diacritic and suspension (þ̅) can be expanded either as '-jörn' or '-jörg', and editors of the text as a whole from both manuscripts (e.g. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson & Matthías Þórðarson 1935:208, Ólafur Halldórsson 1985:412; only Ólafur supplies the AM 557 4to variant in his apparatus) have consistently preferred the latter reading; yet this is in conflict with the text of the only manuscript to present a non-contracted reading at this point, and thus constitutes an editorial emendation. While the *Skálholtsbók* text, taken in isolation (never mind in contrast to *Hauksbók*'s) is clearly orthographically corrupt in many places, and the narrative context gives good reason to assume it must be Þorbjörg who is speaking here—viz. that the statement comes in the middle of (what has been up until this point) a conversation, albeit a short one, between Guðríðr and Þorbjörg; and that towards the end of the chapter it is related that 'var. sennt eptir. þorbirni þui at hann uilldi eigi heima vera medan slik heidni var framan' ('Þorbjörn absented himself while this heathenism was taking place'), which would seem to present a narrative inconsistency if it were Þorbjörn rather than Þorbjörg who was addressing Guðríðr earlier in the account. Yet strictly speaking, the *heidni*—which we may reasonably take to refer to the ritual proper, since Þorbjörg has up until this stage not engaged in any distinctly heathen activity, in fact she has been altogether quite passive—has yet to get underway at the precise point in the narrative the earlier statement is made (whoever the speaker may be).

Thus it is not entirely out of the question that—as *Skálholtsbók* explicitly indicates, in contrast to *Hauksbók*'s orthographic ambiguity—it is in fact Þorbjörn who is here encouraging his daughter to participate in the *seiðr* ritual. This would then constitute an act of Christian altruism. While the wording of the later statement regarding Þorbjörn is largely identical in both manuscripts, the *Hauksbók* text

notably uses the term *hindrvitni* in place of *heiðni*. Johan Fritzner glosses *hindrvitni* 'Overtro, vrang Tro; overtroisk Handling, Trolddom' ('superstition, idolatry; act of superstition, magic'). As used in Hauksbók, I take this phrase to mean more specifically 'testimony from the beyond', i.e. of that which lies beyond what is visible or knowable in one's immediate physical (as opposed to metaphysical) surroundings, an experiential hinterland, and would thus refer to that to which a *vísendakona*, *spákona* or *völva* such as Þorbjörg lítilvölva would have access by means of, and as here at the conclusion of, a performance of magic.

Skálholtsbók's reading, ⟨þo2bio2n⟩, could of course represent an erroneous expansion on the part of its scribe from an abbreviated form in his exemplar (since a misreading of a contracted ⟨þo2bio2g⟩, viz. misreading an ⟨n⟩ as a ⟨g⟩, would seem less plausible for all the sloppiness he is guilty of in other places). Yet the verdict of the most thoroughgoing palaeographic investigations of Hauksbók, viz. that Haukr Erlendsson tended to adapt those texts which he included in his compilation (Jansson 1944:260, 290; Gunnar Harðarson & Stefán Karlsson 1993:271), makes the editorial decision to emend the expanded Skálholtsbók reading to the probable form behind the unexpanded Hauksbók reading appear a less methodologically justifiable one, for even if it is in fact ⟨þo2bio2g⟩ which has been contracted in the Hauksbók version—which would constitute tidy narratorial practice on the basis that Þorbjörn has yet to be introduced in this scene (although he has of course already been mentioned earlier in the saga, as one of its prime movers)—this would be to favour Haukr's assumed amendment of the text of his exemplar over the younger witness which, crucially, is thought to have had an exemplar older than Hauksbók's, to which it moreover appears to have remained more faithful (*ibid.*).

6. ⟨gekk þat ok litt í tauma. í. hun.⟩ Another probable instance of scribal error. The Hauksbók text reads: ⟨gekk þat ok lit í tauma er hvn fagð⟩. I have here followed the Hauksbók text in my translation.

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## Indices

The indices follow a composite English, Sámi and Scandinavian alphabetical sequence, thus:

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Icelanders and non-Icelanders alike are listed by their first name rather than surname/patronymic. In some cases, e.g. in those of the informants who supplied Just Qvigstad with the popular narratives in his collection, the collector has only recorded the first name of the informant; in other cases the texts introduce and refer to the person only by their first name, sometimes accompanied by a nickname or title; some, e.g. gods and the protagonists in popular narratives, are likewise known only by one name.

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