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Editor's Note

RMN Newsletter appeared in response to the need for a medium of contact and communication for members of the Retrospective Methods Network (RMN). One year has passed since its pilot issue. The test of the interest in and viability of this publication resulted in a remarkable and unexpected response from scholars around the world – from places as diverse as India, Australia, North America and South Africa. This revealed that the publication not only filled an immediate need for the RMN, but that it simultaneously met a much broader international interest. *RMN Newsletter* is presently realizing its goal of becoming an emergent discourse space in which individual scholars present reports and announcements of their own current activities, and where information about events, projects and institutions is made available. It has also become a venue for discussion and for engaging in vital cross-disciplinary dialogue as scholars contribute responses to pieces published in previous issues. This can be seen in several contributions to the present volume.

The RMN is an open network which can include anyone who wishes to share in its focus. It is united by an interest in the problems, approaches, strategies and limitations related to considering some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period. Such comparisons range from investigating historical relationships to the utility of analogical parallels, and from comparisons across centuries to developing working models for the more immediate traditions behind limited sources. Although comparative discussion was devalued in the latter half of the 20th century, its value is implicit in the degree to which examples from modern cultures are naturally used in research practice, pedagogy and raising social awareness when illustrating points and propositions concerning cultures past and present. Comparison and analogy appear to be essential tools for generating understandings.

The international electronic medium of *RMN Newsletter* has allowed it to become a nexus of contact and communication through which the broader membership in the RMN has increased exponentially, inciting a surprising amount of interest, inquiries and responses. As a consequence, *RMN Newsletter* has taken on a life of its own, and both the newsletter and the network are being defined through participation. That participation has provided *RMN Newsletter* with both breadth and quality, for which we are indebted to the contributors. This has been realized in the present issue; it will again be materialized in the forthcoming special issue *Approaching Methodology* (*RMN Newsletter* № 4, May 2012) and we hope to see this continue into the future.

Our present discussions have been shaped by and respond to the history of discourse in our fields. The latter half of the 20th century allowed our disciplines to make tremendous progress through separatization and inward concentration. However, this was not without consequences. The process of disciplines turning away from one another led them to become closed to one another. As they developed internally, the lack of cross-disciplinary dialogue made it difficult for different disciplines to understand each other – particularly among scholars of younger generations who frequently lack foundational knowledge outside of their own fields. Significantly, these same processes led research disciplines to become increasingly isolated from and inaccessible to society more generally. Although this is most true of hard sciences, the hard sciences are validated through practical relevance to business and industry. Culture is more essential to any society than technology, but the humanities are now threatened because they are closed off or inaccessible from outside individual disciplines and also lack authoritative outside affirmations. Reopening discourse and discussion across disciplines is the first step in making our fields accessible to wider audiences. This is the first step in raising general awareness of the value and significance of the humanities – and of culture itself – to our daily lives and the societies in which we live today.

Frog
University of Helsinki

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Comments and Communications

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The Contemporary Evidence for Early Medieval Witchcraft-Beliefs
Alaric Hall, University of Leeds

I am excited about the emergence of *RMN Newsletter*. It is a small publication, but it stands for some big things. Our work demands long and slow gestation, rigorous research, fact-checking and referencing – not to mention subsequent editorial work. But we can also benefit from a more dynamic scholarly community, in which we can communicate and test ideas quicker – a community based more on discussing rough ideas and less on polishing gems. I am not abashed at drawing a comparison between the *Newsletter* and *Nature*: the journalistic dimension which John Maddox brought to *Nature* in the 1960s has long benefited the hard sciences. It is axiomatic for the Retrospective Methods Network, of course, that cultures change slowly, but it is still fair to say that humanists have been slow to learn from Maddox's example. At the same time, despite knowing perfectly well that our libraries can no longer afford the books which we ourselves write, we have been sluggish in embracing the opportunity which the internet provides for free-access publication. *RMN Newsletter* responds to both these issues.

This article has two main aims. One is to bring to a wider audience a small group of early medieval texts pertinent to the history of witchcraft, most of which were rather haphazardly gathered in my PhD thesis (2004: esp. 171–179), in the hope that they will receive more attention. The other is to make some methodological points about the historiography of European witchcraft and magic relevant to retrospective methods.

Readers of *RMN Newsletter* will probably at some point have shared the excitement with which I once read Carlo Ginzburg's *I Benandanti* (1983 [1966]), more familiar in English as *The Night Battles*: forty-odd years after its publication, this remains a startling, mind-opening insight into non-elite European culture. It also established – presumably more or less unintentionally – a paradigm which much subsequent work on witchcraft has followed. Ginzburg found a fascinating culture in Friuli, in northern Italy, of select individuals (the *benandanti* ['good walkers']) leaving their bodies by night, amongst other things to convene and fight *malandanti* ['evil walkers']. This discovery cried out for historicisation – in a sense, for retrospective methods: as well as wanting to use the *benandanti* as evidence for earlier beliefs, Ginzburg rightly also felt a need to give the *benandanti* themselves a past, to avoid the twin inquisitorial pitfalls of writing this subaltern group off as a mere aberration, or of eliding it with some handy but ill-fitting intellectual category, as the inquisitors did by integrating the *benandanti*'s stories into elite preconceptions of heresy. Accordingly, Ginzburg looked for synchronic evidence of a broad distribution of similar beliefs in space, finding them in Livonian beliefs about werewolves; and diachronic evidence of similar beliefs at earlier times, finding them in the celebrated *Canon episcopi*, a perhaps 9th century text which admonishes bishops to preach against the belief that women might ride out in the night on animals with the goddess Diana. From here, however,

Ginzburg leapt into prehistory, taking a key role in starting the craze for 'shamanism' which has pervaded scholarship on European magic and belief ever since (cf. Ginzburg 1992 [1989]).

We can, however, find much more about early modern witchcraft beliefs in our early medieval texts than occasional statements of ecclesiastical disapproval – if we know how to look for them. For those who still want to dive back into prehistory, better understood early medieval texts would at least offer a firmer anchor-point than the 16th century. But a better understanding of early medieval evidence would also open up what we might, in the context of the Retrospective Methods Network, call *prospective methods*, helping us to look forward to the early modern witchcraft trials, providing the beliefs which they reveal with a historical depth and breadth which studies of the intellectual roots of heresy and demonology only begin to provide. Looking forward from a better understood early medieval period would help us to develop a reliable history of changing mentalities in Europe. The *Canon episcopi* is an important text, not least because it continued to be read and heeded for centuries. But we too seldom look beyond it. The four sources listed below are just a few of the many waiting to be analysed in this connection, but they will serve to make my methodological point.

1. Burchard of Worms's *Corrector sive medicus* is, like the *Canon episcopi*, well known in studies of witchcraft. It is a penitential and the nineteenth book of Burchard's *Decretum*, published between 1012 and 1023. It asks, amongst other things of interest to historians of witchcraft (Hansen 1901: 40):

credidisti quod quaedam mulieres credere solent, ut tu cum aliis diaboli membris item in quietae noctis silentio clausis ianuis in aëram usque ad nubes subleveris, et ibi cum aliis pugnes, et ut vulneres alias, et tu vulnera ab eis accipias?

have you believed what certain women are accustomed to believe, that you, along, moreover, with other associates of the Devil, are raised up in the silence of the peaceful night, through closed doors, right to the clouds, and that there you fight with others, and that you wound them, and that you receive wounds from them?

2. The Old English charm *Wið færstice* ['against a stabbing pain'] is attested only in British Library, Harley 585, a manuscript of medical texts roughly contemporary with Burchard's *Decretum*. It presents a first-person narrator in battle against *mihtigan wif* ['powerful women'] who have ridden across the land and inflicted illness on the patient by means of *garas* ['spears']. The text has formulaic similarities to Eddaic verse, indicating its coherence with vernacular poetic tradition, and the infliction of illness through spears is echoed elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon texts (Hall 2007: 1–3, 110–112).

3. The *Vita Sancti Swithuni*, composed by Lantfred of Fleury in Winchester in the 970s, describes how, in 971, an inhabitant of Winchester encounters three super-natural women in the countryside, two black and terrifying and one shining white. They all attack him, and the one in white just manages to strike the fleeing man with the breeze of her sleeve, paralysing him until, a few days later, he is miraculously restored to health by St Swithun (Lapidge 2003: 274–77). This source has an obvious relevance to the study of the dream-women of *Gísla saga* and the *dísir* of *Þiðranda þáttr*, not to mention the attack by a black supernatural woman on a twelfth-century Norwegian cleric recently brought to scholars' attention by Haki Antonsson, Crumplin and Conti (2007); but it also deserves to be compared with the texts listed above.

4. Chapters 26–27 of the *Vita I Sancti Samsonis*, from between the early 7th century and the early 9th, probably from

Brittany but set in south-west Britain, explain how Samson and one of his deacons are attacked by a screaming

> theomacham hyrsutam canutamque, iam uetulam anum suis uestimentis birrhatam trisulcatamque uenalem in manu tenentem, ac siluas uastas ueloci cursu uolucritantem fugientemque recta linea insequentem (Flobert 1997: 184)

which probably means:

> an unkempt grey-haired sorceress, already an old woman, with her garments ragged and holding in her hand a bloody three-pronged [weapon], and in a swift course traversing the vast woods and rushing past, following after [the deacon] in a straight line.

(The term *venalis*, of course, conventionally means 'for sale', but we presumably have here a meaning influenced by a false etymological connection with *vena* ['vein'], hence my translation 'bloody'.) This *Vita* is odd in many ways, but whether or not we should take this story seriously as evidence for belief, it is clear evidence for a discourse about fast-moving, armed and harmful females – and it has close analogues in later Welsh literature and more distant ones in Antique Gaul (see Hall 2004: 176 n.224).

It is possible that the writers of some of these texts knew the work of some of the others, but they are surely too dispersed in space and genre, and in the range of their own respective analogues, simply to represent textual borrowing. Nor are any of the episodes merely a stock feature of genre: we are surely seeing traditional discourses peeping here into the textual record. Thus it seems fairly clear that across northwest Europe, certainly around 1000 and perhaps several centuries earlier, there was a discourse in which women traversed the land, inflicting harm on others. Activities of this kind are attested in not only a penitential but, to judge from its context, a perfectly serious medical text; as well as a

near-contemporary and nearly first-hand account. Even this small body of evidence transforms the reliability, but also the variability and complexity, of the cultural nexus suggested by the *Canon episcopi*. I will not analyse these texts here in more detail, even though my brief comments neglect many problems and possibilities. Suffice to say that they indicate that a more critical analysis, backed up by a fuller search of our early medieval texts, would be worthwhile – and that I do not see myself as likely to undertake it!

Instead, I focus now on what the omission, particularly of text number two above (*Wið færstice*), from historiography on European witchcraft tells us about our methods, and how we could work better. Some of these texts are perhaps simply too little known: indeed, I only found out about Lantfred's because I was pointed to it by Katy Cubitt, who had herself probably seen it primarily because of Lapidge's recent edition and translation (for her own discussion of the importance of Anglo-Latin hagiography as a source for folklore, see Cubitt 2006). But this can hardly explain all the omissions: in particular, *Wið færstice* has often been translated, discussed and even anthologised. Linguistic expertise and the structuring of syllabuses will have something to do with it: members of history departments get used to dealing with Latin texts, members of language departments to dealing with vernacular ones. And *Wið færstice* specifically has long been pigeon-holed as being about 'elf-shot', putatively arrows fired by mischievous, invisible sprites (cf. Hall 2007: 6–7, 96–118), to the detriment of its more prominent 'mighty women'. It seems unlikely, however, that these factors could explain the ignoring of *Wið færstice* entirely.

Rather, the key problem, I suggest, is what Stuart Clark (1997: 4) has identified as

> an overriding, though largely unspoken, commitment to the realist model of knowledge. In this model, language is seen as a straightforward reflection of a reality

outside itself and utterances are judged to be true or false according to how accurately they describe objective things. This kind of neutral reference to the external world is held to be the only reliable source of meaning and, indeed, the most important property of language.

In this kind of analysis, a word can either denote something which is objectively real, or something which is not. A historian might seek evidence of fantasies about mythical, supernatural beings (who are not actually real), or of 'real' witches (flesh and blood women who might be identified in the objectively observable world) – but evidence for one cannot be evidence for the other. Burchard's Latin presents the historian with the image of a flesh-and-blood woman confessing to delusions about riding out at night and harming people, and the idea of the confession itself does not strain our expectations of physical possibility. *Wið færstice* and the *Vita Swithuni*, by contrast, confront us directly with groups of women inflicting harm by supernatural means, which does stretch the imagination – and this is perhaps why historians have neglected them. However, Burchard's proscriptions surely presuppose texts and stories similar to *Wið færstice*, in which people fight one another outside the usual physical parameters of existence, and in which women traverse the land inflicting supernatural harm. Indeed, the mighty women of *Wið færstice* need not have been envisaged simply to have come out of the blue: the possibility is raised by Burchard's text that they were women who should have been, as Burchard puts it in an entry adjacent to the one I quoted, lying in bed with their husbands on their bosoms.

If the present article is preaching to the choir, one of the choir's foremost singers is of course Stephen Mitchell, whose work on Nordic sources has provided one of our best and most rounded case studies of European witchcraft beliefs before the early moden witchcraft trials (2011; for a free-access study particularly pertinent to this article, see Mitchell 1997). Even so, Mitchell (2011: 20–21) still writes that

> perhaps our best and most direct indication of prevailing, popular views of witchcraft and magic in the immediate post-Conversion era is to be found [...] among the early laws of Scandinavia.

And law codes and elite intellectual texts also form the centre of gravity for Valerie Flint's *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (1991) or, say, Catherine Rider's fine *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages* (2006) – impressive though these are in their scope. Maybe our sources are such that this really is the only option, but I suggest that with different starting assumptions, we could shift the weighting elsewhere. Narratives from hagiography or vernacular medicine which do not immediately strike modern readers as being pertinent to witchcraft might actually take us closer to the cultural crucible in which witchcraft beliefs are formed. And despite Mitchell's important work on Scandinavia, possibilities for the study of Europe more generally still await exploration.

The bifurcation of the real and the supernatural has been exacerbated by the fact that it has permeated not only scholars' interpretations of texts, but their interpretations even of the words of which the texts are comprised. One example is the word *hægtesse*, which occurs in *Wið færstice*. Bosworth and Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* entry sensibly translated this as "a witch, hag, fury" (1898; cf. Hall 2007: 85–87), but the derived *Thesaurus of Old English* lists *hægtesse* under "a witch, sorceress", but not under "a fury" or "the Fates" (Roberts & Kay with Grundy 2000 I: §§16.01.04, 16.01.06.02, 05.04.01). Somewhere, a kind of cultural blindness has come between the dictionary entry and the thesaurus-maker, who has felt the need to categorise *hægtessan* as either witches or furies, but not both. (That this is not an accident is suggested by other recategorisations: Hall 2007: 9–11.) Meaney's response to the same impulse (1989: 17–18) was to argue that *hægtesse* (along with

wælcyrige and *burgrune*, words which gloss a similar range of Latin lemmata) originally denoted "minor goddesses", but that

> the coming of Christianity would have affected these words [...] The *burgrune* and the *hægtesse* would have been interpreted as basically bad, and their protective characteristics forgotten. All three words would have declined in use, and the meanings partly forgotten, so that they could be applied to mortal women, at first metaphorically, then exclusively.

This reading is viable, though this decline would have been far from sudden (as the *Oxford English Dictionary* shows s.v. *hag*, *hægtesse*'s reflexes continued to be used of the Furies into the 17th century). But it assumes unquestioningly that if Anglo-Saxons did not use different words for the mortals and immortals of Classical tradition, it must be because of confusion or degradation in their belief-systems. We might infer more economically that *hægtesse*'s semantics did not make the distinction between the supernaturally powerful woman next door, whom one might bring to trial, and the supernaturally powerful woman from elsewhere, whom one might not. Research on Old Norse has been afflicted with a similar desire to distinguish mythological women from legendary ones, or supernatural ones from real ones (cf. Hall 2007: 22–23; 2004: 174–175).

I am not, of course, arguing that we should throw all our early medieval, supernaturally powerful females (or, for that matter, males) into one capacious category: fine distinctions between different accounts and the semantics of different words are essential. But scholarship at the moment is, through some too seldom challenged assumptions, missing a pool of evidence for the understanding of supernatural power and harm in early medieval Europe. This includes Latin texts, which folklore scholars tend to miss because of their (understandable) enthusiasm for vernacular material; and it includes texts from regions which do not produce many witchcraft trials, but which can nonetheless give us rich insights into a wider understanding of the roles of traditional supernatural agents in health and harm in early medieval Europe, such as the Celtic-speaking world.

Perhaps part of the value of research uncovering this evidence would be to provide a platform from which to peer back into an earlier time; perhaps it would help us to take a rigorous stance on the proliferation of 'shamans' wherever in European history our texts do not shed light. But I suspect that its greatest value would be prospective: to help us look forward through the *longue durée* of European history.

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of view! If Freyr (and of course Freyja) were born in Ásgarðr[5] after Njǫrðr had already come there as a hostage as a consequence of the reconciliation between the Æsir and the Vanir, he thus belongs to the Æsir as a god born in Ásgarðr – having, of course, a character typical of the Vanir inherited from his father. Having such features, Freyr also had duties of the Æsir and fulfilled them on Vigriðr field, fighting and dying there. Thus Freyr was one of the Æsir in the same way that the football player Zlatan Ibrahimovic is a Swede: as a person born in Sweden, he is Swedish yet still retains his Bosnian roots. Freyr was correspondingly 'Æsirish', having 'Vanirish' roots and a 'Vanirish' character!

In fact, the myth about the reconciliation between the Æsir and the Vanir and their exchange of hostages not only explains the situation of Njǫrðr, but – almost in mirror-image – also that of Hœnir, who was a hostage of the Æsir among Vanir. Hœnir also does not appear on Vigriðr field and – what is still more significant – according to *Vǫluspá* 63, he has to appear after *ragnarǫk* in the new, re-born world, having some *hlautviðr* at his disposal, whatever that might be.[6] It seems that Njǫrðr escaped home to Vanaheimr before *ragnarǫk* in order to avoid the last battle, whereas Hœnir decided to remain there a bit longer, waiting until the battle was over. In this way, both these gods survive!

However, this would mean that *ragnarǫk* is not the end of the world of the Vanir! Correspondingly, I would also like to propose that *ragnarǫk* is only the end of the world of the Æsir, and of the world of beings created by the Æsir (men and dwarves), and of the world of objects created and ruled by the Æsir (such as the stars and Sun). The other worlds may survive. Thanks to *Vafþrúðnismál* 39, we know that this is indeed the case of the world of the Vanir (Vanaheimr). The same can be assumed about Hel. According to *Vǫluspá* 62, it seems that Baldr and Hǫðr will return to the world from Hel, reborn after the destruction – and this implicitly means that Hel will still exist. Regarding the destiny of the world (or

worlds) of the Giants we know nothing, yet we know that Giants will fight on the side of the victors – so their world does not seem to be in danger. The same should be assumed about Muspell, the world of victorious *Muspellssynir* ['sons of Muspell'] (although we know very little about who they were). However, of what happens to the Disir we simply know little more than nothing!

Nevertheless, it seems to me that *ragnarǫk* was imagined first and foremost as a great defeat affecting some great tribe from the time of the Migration Period, with its most important champions killed, settlements burned and women captured (let me here presume such a destiny for the Disir!). It is also not simply the pagan equivalent of the Doomsday of the Christian tradition. Obviously, something from such a Christian vision must have reached the Old Norse myths from the south, and even if it arrived there many times – very probably firstly in Wulfilas's time in late Roman Period, lastly is visible in the writings of our good Christian Snorri in 13th century AD, and between the times of these two sources other influences can be observed (compare, for example, the analogy between ON *Muspell* and OHG *Muspilli*). Another, more traditional image of the end of the world, which, as in India, is neither the first nor the last but belongs to the frame of cyclically appearing and disappearing worlds, is also readily visible in the sources as demonstrated by Jens Peter Schjødt some years ago using the example of *Vǫluspá* (Schjødt 1981; 1992).

Bearing in mind the statement from *Vafþrúðnismál* 39 about what Njǫrðr will do at 'the doom of the age', and remembering Hœnir, who according to *Vǫluspá* 63 will survive the *ragnarǫk*, I would like to conclude by repeating that one may assume that the world of Vanir (which may quite naturally be called Vanaheimr) will be a safe shelter during the end of the world. Yet the fact that the world of the Vanir is not affected by *ragnarǫk* – precisely like Hel, Jǫtunheimr and Muspell (as assumed above) – tells us

something about the Vanir, placing them and their home in the otherworld or in a sphere of similar significance, which can confirm the hypothesis about their rather chthonic, perhaps 'elvish', or even partly demonic character.

Notes

1. For the shortest overview and most important literature, see Simek 1995: 330–332.
2. A good example that there is still something more to discover is Bo Gräslund's paper on *fimbulvetr* (2007), which he connects to the well-attested event of the darkened Sun that, according to late-ancient sources, occurred in 536: Barnish 1992: 179; Procopius of Cesarea, De bello Vandalico, IV, 14, 5: Procopius 1961: 329; cf. Axboe 2001; Arjava 2006.
3. Contrary to Rudolf Simek (2006: 379; 2010), who doubts the existence of Vanir, I continue to believe in the Vanir as a "mythological people" existing in Old Norse beliefs. The efforts to connect Vanir with Elves in some way seems quite convincing to me, see Schjødt 1991; cf. Gunnell 2006; 2007; Hall 2007; Tolley 2011.
4. I proposed such an interpretation some years ago in my handbook on Old Norse Mythology in Polish (see Słupecki 2003: 64).
5. As some, but not all, versions of his myth tell us (see Słupecki 2003: 173).
6. For divagations and suppositions concerning what *hlautviðr* may have been, see Słupecki 1998: 113.

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The Ship in the Field

Joseph S. Hopkins, University of Georgia, and Haukur Þorgeirsson, University of Iceland

The Vanir have been a topic addressed in previous issues of *RMN Newsletter.* The present article will carry this discussion into the field of archaeology, asking whether there is a connection between the Vanir and the stone ships and boat burials that dot the landscape of the pre-Christian North Germanic cultural sphere.

Literature and Archaeology

When we use retrospective methods, we are making use of evidence from one period to throw light on an earlier period. One area in which the use of such methods has a long history is when literary evidence preserved in 13th and 14th century Icelandic manuscripts is used to throw light on Scandinavian archaeological data from the pagan period.

Sometimes the success of this method is hard to argue with. Pictures of eight-legged horses on image stones in Gotland find a parallel in the *Prose Edda*'s account of Óðinn's horse Sleipnir. Pictures of figures in a boat near a serpent are readily explained by the account of Þórr's fishing expedition in *Hymiskviða* and the *Prose Edda* – even down to the detail, present in some of the images, that Þórr *spyrndi við svá fast at hann hljóp báðum fótum gǫgnum skipit* ['braced himself with such force that he pushed both feet through the boat'] (Faulkes 2005: 44–45).[1]

Boats and Burials

One very widespread phenomenon in the archaeological record of the Northern Germanic peoples is the ship motif. There are numerous ship images on rune stones, ornamental stones and coins, but most intriguing is the connection of boats with burials. Not only are there hundreds of burials with real boats deposited in graves, but also many stone ships: burial sites with lines of stones erected in the shape of a boat.

Naturally enough, scholars have sought to throw light on the ship burial custom by refering to Icelandic literary records of Norse paganism. It is tempting to think of the buried boats as vehicles for the voyage of dead warriors to the afterlife in Valhǫll with Óðinn. However, the mythological record does not contain any tales of the dead travelling to Valhǫll by boat.[2] Nor is Óðinn strongly associated with boats or the sea.[3]

Boats and the Vanir

Another, perhaps more promising, idea is to connect the ship motif with the Vanir gods, who certainly do have associations with seafaring. The *Prose Edda* tells us that the god Njǫrðr lives in Nóatún ['Enclosure of Ships'],[4] and that he *ræðr fyrir gǫngu vinds ok stillir sjá ok eld. Á hann skal heita til sæfara ok til veiða* ['rules over the course of the wind and calms sea and fire. He is to be called upon for seafaring and fishing'] (Faulkes 2005: 23). This association carries on to his children; Freyja bears the name *Mardǫll* (the first element of which is 'sea'), and Freyr owns Skíðblaðnir – *beztr skipa* ['the best of ships'] (Faulkes 2005:36).

The identification of ship burials with a Vanir cult has enjoyed some prominence in contemporary research. Archaeologist Ole Crumlin-Pedersen writes that "in recent discussions the association between a boat in a grave and Freyr's ship icon has not been challenged" (Crumlin-Pedersen 2010: 157). While there is certainly a case to be made for associating the Vanir with boat graves (see Crumlin-Pedersen 2010: 145–163), the connection with Skíðblaðnir in particular seems somewhat tenuous. It is worth quoting the *Prose Edda*'s description of Skíðblaðnir:

> Dvergar nokkvorir, synir Ívalda, gerðu Skíðblaðni ok gáfu Frey skipit. Hann er svá mikill at allir Æsir megu skipa hann með vápnum ok herbúnaði, ok hefir hann byr þegar er segl er dregit, hvert er fara skal. En þá er eigi skal fara með hann á sæ þá er hann gǫrr af svá mǫrgum hlutum ok með svá

mikilli list at hann má vefja saman sem dúk ok hafa í pung sínum. (Faulkes 2005: 68)

Certain dwarves, the sons of Ívaldi, made Skíðblaðnir and gave the ship to Freyr. It is so large that all the Æsir can man it with weapons and war gear and it has a favorable wind to sail wherever it should go as soon as the sail is hoisted. But when it is not to be taken to sea it is made of so many parts and with such great art that it can be wrapped up like a cloth and kept in one's pouch.

This is a fairly extensive description, but it notably lacks any connection to death, burial or the afterlife. The only Vanir god who is described in the written record as having a relation with death and the afterlife is Freyja. The *Prose Edda* tells us, citing *Grímnismál* 14:

En Freyja er ágætust af Ásynjum. Hon á þann bœ á himni er Fólkvangar heita, ok hvar sem hon ríðr til vígs þá á hon hálfan val, en hálfan Óðinn, svá sem hér segir:

Fólkvangr heitir,
en þar Freyja ræðr
sessa kostum í sal.
Hálfan val
hon kýss á hverjan dag,
en hálfan Óðinn á.

Salr hennar Sessrúmnir, hann er mikill ok fagr. (Faulkes 2005: 24–25)

And Freyja is the most excellent of the Ásynjur, she has that homestead in heaven which is called Fólkvangar, and wherever she rides to battle she has half of the slain, but the other half belongs to Óðinn, as is said here:

Fólkvangr is called where Freyja decides the seat choices in the hall. Every day she chooses half the slain but half belongs to Óðinn.

Her hall Sessrúmnir is large and beautiful.

It would seem, then, that Freyja gathers dead warriors to her hall Sessrúmnir, located in Fólkvangr. In Old Norse, the word *vangr* ['field'] is mostly used in place names, poetry and compounds. Especially noteworthy is the compound *himinvangar* ['the fields of heaven/the sky'], which occurs in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* 8.6, 15.6 (cited according to Neckel & Kuhn 1962). It has an exact parallel in *hebanwang* ['Heaven'], which occurs in the *Heliand* 3925 (cited according to Sievers 1878). Also worth noting are the Old English *neorxnawang* and Gothic *waggs*, both meaning 'paradise'.[5] From this comparative data, it seems plausible that the Norse word *vangr* had some sacral connotations or connection to the afterlife at an early stage, carried forward in the idea of Fólkvangr.

The description of Fólkvangr and Sessrúmnir is certainly valid evidence connecting the Vanir with death and the afterlife but unfortunately, for our purposes here, it lacks any mention of boats. However, this thread of inquiry should not be abandoned right away. There is another source that mentions Sessrúmnir and that is worth considering on its own.

Sessrúmnir in the *Þulur*

The *Þulur* (plural of *þula*) or *Nafnaþulur* ['*Þulur* of Names'] are a collection of versified lists of names and synonyms for various creatures and objects, mythological and mundane. The *Þulur* are preserved in five of the seven principal manuscripts of the *Prose Edda*. It is not impossible that they were a part of Snorri's original composition, but it seems more likely that they were added to the work shortly afterwards. The *Þulur* are conventionally dated to the 12th century, though some strophes might originate in the 11th century or even earlier. On the other hand, some might be as young as the 13th century. (For discussion see e.g. Faulkes 1998: xv–xviii; Finnur Jónsson 1923: 174–184). It is possible that some of the *Þulur* are so young that they postdate the *Prose Edda* and thus might even be based on *Skáldskaparmál* and so have no independent value as a source. There is, however, no reason to assume this of any particular part of the collection. The general opinion has been that the bulk of the *Þulur* is most likely to be

earlier than Snorri's work, so we would expect any given strophe to be a valid, independent source of information.

As an example of the curious way in which the *Þulur* can serve as sources, take the occurrence of the names *Harðgreipr ok Vagnhǫfði* ['Harðgreipr and Vagnhǫfði'] in a list of *jǫtnar*. No other Icelandic source mentions either of these figures. However, the *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus contains an extensive story involving the giantess Harthgrepa, daughter of Wagnhoftus (see Dumézil 1973 for an analysis). The occurrence of these two names in the *Þulur* makes us inclined to think that some similar legend existed in Iceland. This instance serves to show that the *Þulur* contain potentially interesting information that is clearly not derived from *Skáldskaparmál*.

We now turn to a strophe from the *Þulur* containing the name *Sessrúmnir*. The strophe is in a group of three strophes containing names for ships and nautical objects.

Nú mun ek skýra
of skipa heiti:
Ǫrk, árakló
askr, Sessrúmnir,
skeið, skúta, skip,
ok Skíðblaðnir,
nór, Naglfari,
nǫkkvi, snekkja.
(Finnur Jónsson 1931: 208)

Now I will set forth the names of ships: Ark, oar-claw, bark, Sessrúmnir, longship, cutter, ship and Skíðblaðnir, vessel, Naglfari, rowboat, smack.

As demonstrated by Elizabeth Jackson (1998), Old Norse and Old English verse lists can be analyzed as using certain typical devices or recurring features. In Jackson's terminology, the first two verses of our stanza – 'Now I will set forth / the names of ships' – constitute a *list signal*, indicating that a list is about to begin, and an *organizing principle*, telling the audience what the list consists of. The next six verses can be divided into three *list sections*, each section consisting of two verses and containing four items (see Jackson

1998: 343). Each of these sections contains the name of a mythological ship, in each case a trisyllabic compound noun. These distinctive names can be said to punctuate the stanza, as already observed by William Sayers:

> While names of legendary ships seem to punctuate the stanza, the initial *ǫrk* may be a purposefully Christian term, the Ark, here intended to take precedence over the heathen ships *Sessrúmnir*, *Skidblaðnir* and *Naglfari*. (Sayers 1998:53.)

Sayers is clearly right here, and perhaps a bit overly cautious. The word *Ǫrk* is never used in Old Norse texts to refer to ships other than the Ark.[6] That the great ship of the Bible is mentioned before the great ships of pagan mythology demonstrates that this is a carefully crafted strophe and not a product of happenstance. As a result, the inclusion of Sessrúmnir is particularly notable.

Can the Sources Be Reconciled?
What are we to make of the difference between the sources? One obvious possibility is that one of the interpretations arose by a misunderstanding. Perhaps Sessrúmnir is originally a hall but someone who heard the name without sufficient context assumed it referred to a ship. Or perhaps the opposite is true, and the 'hall' understanding arose by a misinterpretation. Neither of those possibilities can be dismissed and we can see no strong reasons to prefer the *Gylfaginning* testimony over that of the *Þulur* strophe or vice versa.

There is, however, a further possibility. Perhaps each source has preserved a part of the same truth and *Sessrúmnir* was conceived of as both a ship and an afterlife location in Fólkvangr. 'A ship in a field' is a somewhat unexpected idea, but it is strongly reminiscent of the stone ships in Scandinavian burial sites. 'A ship in the field' in the mythical realm may have been conceived as a reflection of actual burial customs and vice versa. It is possible that the symbolic ship was thought of as providing some sort of beneficial property

to the land, such as the good seasons and peace brought on by Freyr's mound burial in *Ynglinga saga*.

Evidence involving ships from the pre-Christian period and from folklore may be similarly re-examined with this potential in mind. For example, if Freyja is taken as possessor of a ship, then this ship iconography may lend support to positions arguing for a connection between a Vanir goddess and the "Isis" of the Suebi, who is associated with ship symbolism in Tacitus's *Germania*.

Afterlife beliefs involving strong nautical elements and, separately, afterlife fields, have been identified in numerous Indo-European cultures (Mallory 1997: 153). Comparative research may contribute to a better understanding of the Vanir and their potential relation to the afterlife beliefs of other Indo-European peoples.[7]

Notes

1. For a recent treatment of the verbal and iconographic representations of this myth, see Frog 2011.
2. The incident with Sinfjǫtli in *Vǫlsunga saga* is the closest candidate but it is too vague to be convincing.
3. An alternative interpretation, suggested to us by Frog, is that the ships could be buried in anticipation of a great flood at *Ragnarǫk*. See further Frog 2010: 175–176.
4. Njǫrðr's association with seafaring appears evident in sources both much later and much earlier than the Old Norse period; Tacitus's 1st century description of Nerthus (from Germanic **Nerthuz*, precursor to Old Norse *Njǫrðr*) in *Germania* strongly connects her with bodies of water, and folklore collected in the early 20th century records what appears to be a family tradition of thanking *Njor* for a bountiful catch of fish in Odda, Norway (Dumézil 1973: 220).
5. *Neorxnawang* and *Fólkvangr* may have a relation besides cognate second elements. While the root of *Njǫrðr* and the apparent first root of *Neorxnawang* are both elusive subjects, it has been theorized that the two may be one and the same, perhaps rendering *Neorxnawang* as an Old English 'Njǫrðr's field' or as the field of a deity sharing this root (de

Vries 1957: 410–411). This approach has difficulties, but if the roots are connected, a father-daughter relation may be demonstrated between the afterlife fields of Njǫrðr and Freyja.
6. The late medieval *rímur* sometimes use *ǫrk* as a generic synonym for 'ship' in their kennings (Finnur Jónsson 1926–1928: 419; Björn Karel Þórólfsson 1934: 152). The *rímur* poets relied heavily on the *Prose Edda* and may well have got the idea of using the word in this way from the *Þulur* strophe we are discussing.
7. Perhaps to be included within this Indo-European framework are the so-called Tarim Mummies from the Tarim Basin. Strikingly, recent analysis has identified cow-skin covered ship burials among a "forest" of "phallic" poles at the once-riverside "Small River Cemetery No. 5", which reportedly features around 200 of the oldest graves yet discovered in the Tarim Basin. These ship burials have led Victor Mair to compare them to Norse ship burials and other elements of Bronze Age Northern European society (Wade 2010). The employment of phallic poles and ships may parallel the death, seafaring, and fertility aspects of the Vanir cult.

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Re: Distinguishing Continuities: The Case of Discontinuities in Conceptual Schemas

Jill Bradley, Radboud University, Nijmegen

The question of continuities – and their implied discontinuities – is something we have all addressed at one time or another, but frankly tend to forget in the details of specific research. However, the question of the continuity of "*textual entities*, *extra-textual entities*, and *conceptual schemas*" (Frog 2011) can have a great deal of impact on any research, especially if we dip our toes into the deep and murky waters of interpretation. I am not talking about personal interpretation – when every person has a slightly different understanding of any text, performance, or depiction, based not only on their cultural background, but also on their unique and personal experience – but about the cultural consensus of the significance of any 'textual entity', a common attribution of meaning without which communication and social interaction is impossible. Because any symbol, any entity has to be understood and an individual in a culture must "appropriately interpret and apply" (Frog 2011: 12) such symbols, the cultural competence required to correctly interpret a sign is often overlooked: the appropriate interpretation is often automatic, and the ability, even facility, to make the correct reading is taken for granted.

Context of Interpretation

However, symbols – and here I include words, iconographic and textual themes and elements – are often poly-interpretable and dependent on the context. To take a very simple and basic case – two lines crossing each other at right angles can have a multiplicity of meanings within one culture. Such a shape can 'mark the spot' – the buried treasure or my hotel room; on a map it denotes a (Christian) religious building, clustered together with a cemetery, in a line, a border or frontier. It can stand for Christianity in general, and all which that implies; after someone's name, it tells the reader that that person has died. We put it on the sides of ambulances, and designate a pharmacy by its use. Turn it on its side and it is the 'unknown' – or a kiss at the bottom of a letter. These are just a few of the meanings given in modern western culture to a cross. Nevertheless we navigate all these meanings effortlessly, even though many are related and overlap to some extent. We do so because we have the cultural knowledge to understand what applies in which context, and once past childhood never really stop to think about it.

The question then arises as to what happens when this is not our own cultural context, or the context changes. While I am primarily concerned with the visual and the visual as a means of communication, I do not intend here to go into what is meant by visual semiotics or even if such is possible (for discussions on these matters see for example Greimas, Collins & Perron 1989 and/or Hasenmueller's "Panofsky, Iconography, and Semiotics" [1978]). Valuable though their insights can be, such discussions pay lip service to the idea of differing cultural contexts but really fail to take them into

Figure 1. Museu d'Historia de la Ciutat, Barcelona

account. Even Panofsky's famous illustration of 'natural' interpretation of a man raising his hat as a sign of greeting can hardly be regarded as obvious today in a society in which few men wear hats and the raising of them in greeting is a rarity. Signs and symbols can change and become (almost) unrecognizable within a few decades. We can say that there is a shift: the conceptual entity[1] of a greeting remains in the raised hand, but the form is (partially) lost. Losing the cultural knowledge and background to interpret and apply is common. A curator of medieval sculpture lamented to me the fact that it was difficult to give information in the brief space allowed by exhibits because no one recognizes saints by their attributes anymore. While we, as a society and a culture, lose the knowledge of the cultural consensus of meaning to be attributed to many formal textual entities of the past, we are constantly creating new consensi, and problems can arise if these have formal likenesses to those of another time.

Formal Likeness

This is particularly the case for those of us who deal not just with past decades but many centuries past. The automatic 'reading' of a sign, symbol or textual entity can disguise another meaning, that which was intended at the time. The sign is recognizable, but we can be in danger of giving a false reading. Take, for example, a portion of a 4th century C.E. Catalan mosaic floor (figure 1). To anyone looking at it now, the crosses (and swastika) are unmistakable. While we are unlikely to associate the swastika-type figure with Nazism, or even Buddhism or Hinduism in this context, we almost inevitably ask ourselves if the floor may have come from a Christian household. For many visitors seeing this mosaic, the connection between the crosses and Christianity is self-evident. Professional caution and – an admittedly scanty – knowledge of the area and period dictates, for me at least, an agreement with the museum that these are 'geometric motifs'.

This is only one way in which our cultural baggage can influence how we apply and

interpret our cultural knowledge when confronted with a formal likeness. In fact, the danger is of projecting a later conceptual scheme onto something that signals something different within the context of its own time.

How do we then regard continuity if there seems to be continuity of the sign, but the intention of the sender and the interpretation of the receiver change? Again I am not talking about adaptation to a new context, such as Frog's example of the fishing trip, the Arcadian/Good Shepherd (see van Dael 1989), or the midwinter festival. Most calendric celebrations show a great deal of continuity, even if many people would deny this. A spring festival is still a celebration of renewal and rebirth, whether it is a Christian Easter, Dionysian or any other rite. Generally speaking, the form shifts slightly to adapt to those extra-textual elements: the concept remains the same, the form, or textual element is (slightly) adapted, and on the interpretive level our cultural consensus clothes the concept in the appropriate accessories of the time and context. However, what happens if the concept changes while the form appears the same? To take another very simple and modern example, we can consider the word 'gay'. When I was a child, long ago when the world was young – but in the course of history, very recently – *gay* meant 'happy, carefree, light hearted': *The child that is born on the Sabbath day, is bonny and blithe and good and gay*. We simply do not use the word in that sense anymore. A good number of people are probably perfectly aware of this former use of the term, but hesitate to use it since the culturally common attribution of meaning is now 'homosexual'. The consensus has shifted from one concept to another, and I suspect the majority of people now no longer know, or at least no longer consider, the older meaning. Furthermore, a greater degree of discontinuity can be postulated because it is very uncertain how many people using 'gay' in its new sense know that it is in fact an acronym for 'good as you'. The origins are

forgotten: 'gay' simply 'means' homophile. We have here continuity of signifier – the word – but discontinuity of concept, not just interpretation, not just adaptation, but a case in which sender and receiver both have a totally different meaning in mind for a word which they agree on as a sign, which in this case has a formal likeness to an older sign, but which it has now superseded.

This is the one of the problems that we have to deal with when considering the distant past. If there could be such a radical alteration in the meaning of a word within a few decades, how can we tell whether such alterations have taken place with other signs, with other textual entities? Whether we are dealing with words, depictions, abstract signs, narrative elements or any combination of these, we are dealing with them from a different cultural background. Our cultural background has been shaped by the past, but much of what we deal with is a 'dead language'. There are things that we recognize, both formally and conceptually, and being aware of our own cultural baggage is some safeguard against imposing a hodiecentric reading. But, it is all too easy to assume that if there is formal continuity there is also conceptual continuity. This is even more difficult when we wish to interpret the products of a society in which the primary means of both expression and communication were visual and performative. History and historians have tended to rely on written texts, on the written word – and these are easier both to see within a particular context and to check whether a particular textual entity still expresses, even with modification and adaption, what the makers of that text intended. The oral and the visual expressions are less amenable to this sort of cross-checking, and what survives is possibly changed beyond recognition, as attested by the versions children make of rhymes, songs and stories, as attested to by Iona and Peter Opie's (1960) old, but still relevant work. A child's delight in altering and making fun of the words and actions of adults, with his or

her own creativity and making something on their own, shows how easily things can change, not just in a formal sense, but also in turning around the meaning.

The Visual Text and the Conceptual Schema

Much of my work has dealt with the changes in concepts, usually defined or at least indicated by visual metaphors. As a rule, it can be said that if a metaphor changes then it needs investigation: either the concept has changed or the metaphor no longer fulfills its function within a changed context. The problem arises when the metaphor continues but ceases to be a metaphor for one thing and becomes a metaphor for another. Everyone who has lived or worked in a culture other than the one in which they grew up has experienced, even in 'psychically near' cultures, misreading something – an event, expression, word, situation – because there was a formal similarity to something familiar, and they applied their own cultural interpretation to what was something different. We learn quickly from such mistakes, either because someone points them out to us or because the reactions to them make us revise our first reading of the situation. As a result, we learn new cultural competences that allow us to identify correctly and to adapt the signs to their – for us – new context. When we are dealing with the distant past there is no such means of auto-correction and we are forced to ask ourselves if our reading is correct. Does our reading fit, not with what we automatically see as the common interpretation for a sign as determined by our own cultural knowledge and competence, but rather with other expressions and with what we know of the context of the time in which our formal element, our textual element was made? Letting go of aesthetic considerations, looking at the function within the context of its being made, can confront us with puzzles, because judging something to be beautiful, artistic, literary, even 'traditional', is imposing other norms on the object of study. This is not to say that, in their own area, such judgments are not legitimate, but it must be recognized that these are not the standards by which it was intended to be judged, nor the function for which it was intended. Unless we recognize this, we are held fast in a mindset that not only denies other views, but that is a dead-end as far as scholarship and understanding are concerned.

To return briefly to the idea of visual semiotics, it can be said that if a visual element refers to something other than itself, it can be regarded as a means of communication (I prefer to use communication rather than language, since the latter often carries a sense of the verbal), and as such it is subject to analysis in that way, in other words it is regarded as a *textual element.* Iconography has often been seen on this level, both as the unit and a whole text. Iconology, in the sense given by Panofsky, is the interpretive level: while Panofsky linked the understanding of iconographic features to written texts, what I am discussing goes far beyond this. Particularly in societies that are not primarily literate, this link can be sought outside what is written and can give insights into a more basic and diverse culture. Another point is that iconography has its own conventions, its own language, built up over time and recognizable to those who did not have access to written texts, or refers to that which is not expressed in written texts. In the Middle Ages, if theological writings mentioned Joseph at all, it was as a faithful and honorable servant of God. The iconography of the high and late Middle Ages gives a very different view – that of a foolish old man, often doing 'women's work', in fact, as a man who accepts the child of another. Actually, these depictions refer to something outside themselves, outside the usual message of the nativity scenes, in this case to gender and age stereotypes and roles, and in addition to a view of the cuckold held at the time. These attitudes have changed (somewhat) and Joseph was later given more dignity. In this case, a whole textual entity (the nativity and

all its implications) was also the vehicle for a unit of text that had little to do with the primary message.[2] This example shows that, while an entity might show continuity, elements can come and go, and these elements in fact have an independent significance.

Trying to analyze a conceptual scheme on the basis of a visual textual element can be a hazardous business unless we are aware of the differing units, variations, and levels that go into making up that textual element. We must also consider what we mean by a conceptual schema. Frog (2011: 11) gives the example of the similarity between mythic beings in ancient burial mounds and drunken drivers as beings that can bring disaster to a community and how such beings can be rendered harmless. As he says, there is no essential difference, only the adaptation to a particular circumstance and context dresses the idea in different terms. In the same way there is no essential difference between heroes slaying dragons or monsters, whether this is Theseus, Sigurd, Michael or Christ: they all show the power of the supernatural being over another supernatural being. They can be seen as good (in the sense of my god, my tribe, my belief) triumphing over evil (someone else's god, tribe, belief) because the victor is stronger and more powerful. Is it the same conceptual scheme if that triumph is not based on strength? Is it based, not on the idea that the mighty triumph, but that those in the right, in the judicial sense, triumph? Can we say that Christ as the Fisherman's bait in *Hortus Deliciarum* fits the same scheme? The representations of the devil at the Crucifixion and Joseph as the Mousetrap take the legal argument of breach of agreement in order to account for Christ's triumph. We can say that the concept of good's victory over evil remains the same, but how that victory is conceived has changed, and with it notions of the godhead. In the same way, we can say there is continuity in the concept of death, as an abstract idea, but how people *conceived* it, what they thought it to be, changed, going from an eschatological concept as something inimical to God (giants, serpents, dragons bound in hell), to a natural process (a female personification), to not only physical, but something to be avoided, inimical to man (the skeleton or transi with sword, spear or scythe). The change in the way in which the Crucifixion was depicted between the 9th and the 13th centuries shows a transformation in the way in which the relationship between man and God was regarded, and not only that, but a change in man's place in the scheme of things, what he was to be and do. Such things are more than shifts of interpretation, adjustments to differing contexts: they are fundamentally differing attitudes, even if they use the same, or an only slightly modified, textual or extra-textual entity. Are there conceptual discontinuities in these examples? It is hard to say, but it is as well to remember that the recognizable and continuous textual entity might disguise deep and far-reaching change and discontinuity, the more so because such changes are rarely sudden, but happen almost imperceptibly over time.

To return to the case of Joseph as a foolish and deceived old man, this belongs to the same conceptual scheme as Aristotle and Phyllis, while the nativity can be grouped with those legends of gods' dealings with mortals in order to produce a super-hero to put things to rights. If we can distinguish the various schema, we can see that the treatment of Joseph in the nativity scenes is not integral to that conceptual scheme, but is another in its own right. The one can be read without the other, as is shown by the different treatment of Joseph (although he usually remains old) in later works. To a large extent the interpretation of an iconographic element is dependent not only on the extra-textual factors but on the other elements of a depiction, a whole rather than it units, but we must be aware that often there is more than one conceptual scheme that may or may not influence the reading of another. The case of Joseph cited above, for example, can be seen as independent of the nativity narrative and all that it implies: it in no way alters the scheme

of divine–human relationships. However, it does impinge on the interpretive level, shifting the emphasis slightly by minimizing Joseph's role, and thereby increasing the element of divinity, and incidentally the importance of Mary. In this, we can also note the importance of extra-textual factors that are involved; these depictions were current in a time of great Marian devotion, and can be seen an expression of this, perhaps an unconscious emphasis on Mary's role. Putting the conceptual scheme based on the representation of Joseph into the framework of the basic Biblical narrative means that there is a danger of one being seen as integral to the other, and part of the message might be either lost or regarded as essential to the other scheme. By distinguishing various conceptual schema and textual entities, we can hope to disentangle the various messages and come to a better understanding of both sign and the intention behind it.

Notes

1. I use the term 'conceptual entity' to denote a single unit, in this case a greeting. These entities can be combined into a complex scheme in which the component parts make up a particular concept or attitude. For example, in the case of Joseph mentioned below (p.21), the entities of age and gender are combined with those of social attitudes to sexual chastity and patrilineal descent. The same entities can be used in different combinations to express different concepts or ideas so that age and

gender can be used together with ideas of wisdom, health, greed, courage and so forth to give an idea of old/young/men/women and how these are perceived – or rather how their images are conceived – by the society of the time. However since this is a complex, and often subtle, process of amalgamation, I will henceforth use the term 'conceptual scheme', both to make the connection with Frog's article in *RMN Newsletter* 2 (2011), and since I will not be attempting to unravel examples fully here.

2. The nativity, as a visual expression in all its variations, can be regarded, in itself, as a textual entity, but with regard to the image of Joseph, and thereby to that of age and gender roles and to the social judgments of the time, the nativity can be seen as extra-textual. Strictly speaking, the two entities are both separate and simultaneous but not intrinsically embedded one in the other: the particular connections take place in the mind of the viewer, based on congruity.

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Ethnocultural Substratum: Its Potential as a Tool for Lateral Approaches to Tradition History

Frog, University of Helsinki

Lauri Harvilahti (2003: 90–115) has used the term *ethnocultural substrate* or *ethnocultural substratum* to refer to "archaic features long preserved in a tradition" (2003: 91). These features include poetic diction, prosody, melody and music, modes of performance, images, motifs, traditional meanings,

concepts, patterns of social practice, and so forth. These form

> a concise whole, used in different genres and actualized on different occasions, and in some cases revitalized in favourable cultural situations. The ethnocultural substrates serve as dynamic mental models for forming a

network of fundamental elements of the ethnocultural characteristics of particular traditions. (Harvilahti 2003: 91.)

The value of Harvilahti's term lies in its breadth, which is inclusive of diverse registers (cf. Foley 1995). For example, alliteration belongs to the ethnocultural substratum of Finnic traditions as an essential element of diverse vernacular genres and modes of expression, as do mythic images such as the dog of the otherworld, conceptions such as the magical quality of iron, typologies of mythic being, mythic figures, and even narratives which provide essential points of cultural reference. Reflexes of these elements may vary widely in form, function or significance across conventional uses in different genres and cultural practices, and not all of them will necessarily be realized in every genre or mode of expression.

The breadth of the term ethnocultural substratum is conducive to generalization which can then provide a frame for approaching different registers and modes of expression. In diachronic research, the substratum model allows the consideration of long-term continuities in significance without necessarily resolving that significance according to meaning, function or genre. Moreover, the substratum model implicitly situates elements and features as functioning in a synchronic system, and implies that this synchronic present is essential to meaning and understanding in historical social realities (cf. Bradley, this volume).

The present paper approaches the model of the ethnocultual substratum as a potential tool in the diachronic study of traditions. It will focus particularly on the development of lateral approaches to tradition history, and on the value and limitations of ethnocultural substratum as a descriptive tool and frame of reference which emphasizes a synchronic totality of earlier eras within a culture along a broad continuum. This will be discussed in relation to two central examples, one concentrating on a shift in institution of ritual specialist in North Finnic cultures, and the

other on impacts of iron-working technologies on mythic models in the Circum-Baltic area.

A Continuum Model of Fuzzy Categories
Traditions, whether inherited or borrowed, always emerge in a present filtered through the semiotics and cognitive models of the contemporary culture. This ongoing historical process functions on the level of small-group communities and networks of such communities in interaction. The fundamental elements filtered through this process are internalized to form the "dynamic mental models" (Harvilahti 2003: 91) that provide the foundations for shared meanings. They may be described as the elements constitutive of cultural competence.

On a synchronic plane, the term 'ethnocultural substratum' constructs a general frame of reference for a cohesive (if diversified) network of meaningful elements and features of a broad linguistic-cultural group, collection of such groups, or particular small sub-group, depending on how the subject under discussion has been defined. Use of the term and concept minimizes variation in highlighting continuity. This occurs proportionate to the number and range of communities and groups to which 'ethnocultural substratum' is applied. At the same time, it qualitatively emphasizes the vital core areas and communities at the expense of peripheral ones, where continuities may have been deemphasized or may not have been maintained at all. Ethnocultural substratum therefore identifies a fuzzy category: ethnic or geographical inclusion becomes defined in relation to a qualitatively developed semantic core rather than quantitatively according to a statistical survey of a predefined population.

As an essential feature of every cultural environment, an ethnocultural substratum can be postulated for every preceding cultural period. The term 'substratum' employs a metaphor of 'layers'. Each layer is constituted of the inherited "network of fundamental elements" (Harvilahti 2003: 91) filtered

through the semiotics and cognitive models of the contemporary culture that together form the dynamic mental models constitutive of cultural competence. The term 'ethnocultural substratum' is preferable to 'layer' because it emphasizes a synchronic totality into which preceding substrata of earlier periods have been assimilated and filtered (giving rise to continuities) rather than isolating elements associated with each period and ascribing these to different 'layers'.

In diachronic approaches, principles of generalization with the minimization of synchronic variation apply. Historical ethnocultural substrata become differentiated according to discernable historical change as a practical tool for the lateral indexing of potential relevant indicators of historical processes. As a practical tool, substrata become functionally differentiated and constructed as fuzzy categories around core features of a relevant change or changes, or more broadly defined categories into which these can be situated. The narrowness or breadth of these categories is dependent on points under discussion and how the categories are being used, as will become clear through the discussion of examples.

Strata and Stratification
Ethnocultural substrata are phenomena of a present which connect with the past. As a historical process, substrata are not simply a sequence of layers stacked up on top of one another: each ethnocultural substratum filters that which precedes it, hence it is always a present whole. Connections to the past within that present (whether perceived or presumed) may not reflect historical realities or even be consistent with those of the preceding substratum. Elements of the preceding substratum must find relevance in changing historical and environmental circumstances or they atrophy and disappear. Networks of elements develop internally within a substratum as a historical process and external elements are assimilated from outside it. Nevertheless, the sequential assimilation of earlier substrata allows continuities in which earlier periods (and even several simultaneously) may be reflected.

The reflections of earlier substrata in any present are, however, the outcome of the diachronic processes and filtered through any intermediate substrata. Continuities implicitly indicate discontinuities: even when the cultural element has remained unchanged, its significance and functions are shaped in relation to a present environment. Within these processes, the forms, contents and applications of elements exhibiting continuity may therefore have undergone radical adaptations and revaluations in the process of maintaining currency and relevance as a historical process.

An Institution-Based Substratum
Ethnocultural substrata function practically as lateral categories for indexing and cross-referencing relevant indicators of historical process, although many of these can only be approached hypothetically through comparative evidence. Relevant indicators mark differentiation from preceding or subsequent substrata along a continuum. The value of the substratum model is precisely in the flexibility of the categories in the process of mapping relevant indicators. The ethnocultural substratum associated with the origin or early history of the Finno-Karelian institution of ritual specialist called a *tietäjä* ['one who knows'] will provide an example for discussion. This institution's appearance can be approached as a relevant indicator at the core of an ethnocultural substratum. This substratum can therefore be characterized through discontinuities and changes from that which preceded it (i.e. the preceding substratum).

This institution has been extensively explored by Anna-Leena Siikala (2002a). She has described the *tietäjä* as "the heir to the role played by the shaman in ancient communities" who "preserved shamanic models of thought" (Siikala 2002a: 42). Siikala develops a long-term continuum

model in her analysis, both to offer perspectives on cultural history and to offer a deeper and more developed understanding of the traditions documented predominantly in the 19th and 20th centuries. She maintains a broad frame that considers the *tietäjä*-institution in relation both to a Finno-Ugric linguistic-cultural heritage and to 'classic' or Northern and Eurasian shamanism on the one hand, and to Indo-European traditions, traditions of Northern Europe and Christianity on the other. These are centrally maintained as points of reference for the consideration of particular elements or motifs rather than being developed into full substrata models. Siikala concentrates on the *tietäjä*-institution as a phenomenon that emerged during the Iron Age and took shape in relation to antecedent cultural practices, and also on its development and roles in subsequent periods associated with Christian environments.

The institution of the *tietäjä* appears to be a uniquely North Finnic development. Its emergence or establishment in the Iron Age was in conjunction with radical social and historical changes impacting virtually all areas of culture to varying degrees. The process was associated with the adoption of new technologies and the transition to increasingly agrarian settlements in a period when Germanic cultural influences were dominant. (See Siikala 2002a: esp. 335–349.) As a ritual specialist, the *tietäjä* relied centrally on incantations in the Kalevala-meter and associated rite techniques (although these are now rapidly disappearing). These incantations and rite techniques seem to have emerged through the synthesis of Germanic models into an existing cultural milieu and into vernacular poetic expression.

The existing cultural milieu maintained a vernacular reflex of Central and Northern Eurasian or 'classic' shamanism rooted in a Finno-Ugric heritage. Those elements and aspects of the vernacular shamanic culture which could find a place through these and subsequent processes of cultural change (potentially demanding multiple transformations) offer indications of this earlier institution and associated ethnocultural substratum. What can be said of the stratum associated with vernacular shamanism remains very limited and abstract. It relies heavily on comparative evidence, and is generally limited to identifying probable continuities and discontinuities.

The *tietäjä*-institution is marked by fundamental discontinuities from classic shamanism (however abstractly described). These include the dependence on incantations which allow the immediate actualization of, and interaction with, the unseen world and its inhabitants without the need for soul-journeys by the shaman or spirit-helpers imagined in physical spacial terms. These incantations also circulated as orally transmitted knowledge-objects, functionally equivalent to first-hand experience, obviating the need for initiatory orientation in the otherworld via soul-journeys. Most remarkably, the *tietäjä*-institution did not maintain conceptions of a separable soul (or spirit possession). It was therefore exclusive of one of the most fundamental conceptual models of classic shamanism (on which e.g. soul-journeys were dependent; cf. Vajda 1959).

The cultural model for the *tietäjä*-institution is the figure *Väinä* / *Väinö*, whose name is most commonly found in the metrically conditioned form *Väinä-möinen*. Väinämöinen cannot be the cultural model for the institution prior to its emergence. When this is situated on a long-term continuum, the cultural model of the vernacular shaman would presumably be the reflex of Finno-Ugric **Ilma* ['Sky'], the central sky-god in a dualist system. In contrast, **Väina*, meaning something like 'broad, slow-moving water' (the proto-element opposed to the sky at the time of creation), was the probable antithesis of **Ilma* – or more correctly of **Ilmari* in the Proto-Finnic period (when the *tietäjä*-institution emerged). **Väinä* is unlikely to have been a model for any institution of ritual specialist. *Väinä*'s dominant, central position in the mythology is a change. The

marginalized and subordinate position of Ilmari or Ilmarinen, the reflex of Finno-Ugric *Ilma*, also reflects a change. Ilmarinen's significance and centrality in earlier substrata can be detected, but the central sky-god of later belief is the thunder-god Ukko ['Old Man']. Ukko is the central supernatural supporter of the *tietäjä*, yet curiously absent from mythological narratives. His centrality in the mythology is a development attributable to Indo-European models (see Frog 2011a: 79–80). (Frog forthcoming.)

Kalevalaic mythology is *Väinö*-centric and oriented to the ideology and priorities of the *tietäjä*-institution. A continuum model reveals that, for example, 'new' narratives asserted Väinämöinen's authority over Ilmarinen (Frog 2010a: 119–127) and the sky-god has been deleted from the Finno-Ugric dualist creation myth (rather than replaced by Ukko), leaving the antithesis diver Väinämöinen as the dominant figure. Siikala (2002a: 321–322) emphasizes broader shifts in mythological narrative material reflecting earlier models: the significance of otherworld locations were deemphasized and focus was placed on 'words' (incantation knowledge-objects) acquired there by Väinämöinen. These became the *tietäjä*'s heritage of incantations. This system of mythological narratives and incantations does not simply exhibit continuity of content. The conservatism of kalevalaic poetry allowed these to be maintained as 'textual entities' (see Frog 2011b), with continuity in their representations of that content. In other words, there was a core repertoire of poems associated with the *tietäjä* institution.

Väinämöinen's shift to centrality as the cultural model for a ritual specialist is directly parallel to the shift in the Germanic god Óðinn – a chthonic figure and cultural model for a magical practitioner appearing, rather remarkably, as the dominant god, world-creator, and lord of the celestial realms of Valhǫll and Ásgarðr. This parallel appears related to the Germanic models underlying the incantation tradition central to the *tietäjä*-institution. It suggests that Germanic models extended from the genre of verbal magic, motifs and images, to concepts related to the cultural model for the ritual specialist. Correlating evidence according to an ethnocultural substratum gradually appears to reveal a complex system including: *a*) structural incantation models and techniques; *b*) mythic images, motifs and figures; *c*) conceptions of incantations as verbal knowledge-objects; *d*) conceptions of the body/soul underlying ritual activity (e.g. illness diagnostics, healing); *e*) conceptions of the accessibility of the otherworld (e.g. direct verbal actualization); *f*) the ritual specialist associated with incantations; *g*) the cultural model for that ritual specialist; *h*) narratives about the cultural model reflecting that role and aetiologies relevant to the associated ideology; *i*) the position of the thunder-god and his relationship to the ritual specialist; *j*) the marginalized role of the vernacular sky-god (presumably the cultural model and central supporter of the vernacular shaman-institution); and *k*) the (eventual) disappearance of the vernacular shaman-institution.

Rather than independent developments or a gradual sequence, these features suggest that the introduction of the *tietäjä*-institution involved a complex package of material. This package extended from incantations and rite techniques to ideologies on which those incantations were dependent and mythological models related to the institution and cultural practice. It was synthesized into a vernacular system, involving adaptations of established mythic figures. The historical scope between most source-evidence and the Proto-Finno-Ugric linguistic-cultrural era spans thousands of years during which this process could have occurred. However, this simplified summary shows that these diverse indicators intersect in a more narrowly concentrated probable transition in which a vernacular institution of shamanism was displaced by the emergence of the *tietäjä*-institution as exclusive categories. Siikala's

detailed investigation of comparative evidence, the semiotics of the institution's practices and correlations with linguistic and archaeological evidence situate this concentrated substratum in the Iron Age, possibly in the centuries prior to the Viking Age although with roots that may extend much earlier (Siikala 2002a: esp. 335–349).

Approaching this model according to an ethnocultural substratum does not demand 'reconstructing' the substratum with the unequivocal identification of all narratives, motifs, images, etc. that were necessarily at the core of the proposed systemic package. The substratum model proposes that this broad package has a history of continuity. It suggests that some (perhaps many) of the textual entities, images, motifs and associations in the documented corpus have a continuity from the period in which the *tietäjä*-institution emerged or spread, or that at least their essential features and/or functions were shaped in that process. More generally, however, the substratum model is concerned with the essential conditions, models and environment from which later evidence exhibits continuity – at an abstract level – rather than with reconstruction.

This model acknowledges that the continued relevance implicit in long-term continuity permits flexibility and development. It allows for developments in later periods which are difficult or impossible to distinguish from those which are earlier. It also allows for developments such as extended and contracted usage or fields of activity. In order to maintain perspective within the working-model, the following equation is proposed: the proportion of material in the tradition ecology of the source materials that is *not* identifiable with the earlier ethnocultural substratum of focus or those substrata that preceded it (i.e. implicitly current in the relevant period) should not be considered less than what has *not* survived from the earlier tradition ecology. According to this adage, if, for example, evidence suggests that perhaps 4% of the tradition

ecology exhibits continuity from the relevant period or earlier, then it is reasonable to postulate that evidence is lacking for not less than 96% of the social resources contemporary in the ethnocultural substratum being approached. This emphasizes that substratum models deal in probabilities and abstractions as a hypothetical frame rather than certainties and concrete reconstructions.

Ideology and Indicating Elements
In the preceding discussion, the *tietäjä*-institution emerges as an ideal category at the core of an ethnocultural substratum. This is not unlike employing Church authority as a point of reference in discussing local forms of medieval Christianity. The substratum is constructed around this institution's ideology and mythology, differentiating it from that which characterized the preceding era. The *tietäjä*-institution may also be distinguished from later strata associated with the medieval transition to Christianity.

The conversion process brought revolutionary changes to the network of fundamental elements characterizing the emerging cultural milieu. The *tietäjä*-institution persisted in this emergent environment. The new traditions and ideology carried mythic figures, locations, images, motifs, vocabulary, concepts, narrative material, etc. As a consequence, the ethnocultural substratum changed in spite of its clear continuities – the antecedent substratum filtered into the emergent milieu, each shaping the other, presenting a substratum characterized by syncretism. The process of the conversion to Christianity was extremely protracted: in more remote regions, it was ongoing into the present era.

Within the broad substratum of the Christian era, it is possible to distinguish substrata of the pre- and post-Reformation in the west, and impacts of the Reforms of Patriarch Nikon in the east. The Reformation of Catholic Finland had a comprehensively disruptive impact on vernacular ritual, belief and performance traditions. The reforms in

the Orthodox Church had more complex and ambiguous impacts in different regions of Karelia, (Siikala 2002b.) (Although Karelia seems 'close' from a European perspective, but was a remote wilderness from the perspective of Russia, comparable to Siberia). The Christian ideology imported a network of fundamental elements. These present relevant indicators of the broad ethnocultural substratum. However, pre- and post-reform milieus share a common essential network, with few distinctive semiotic, stylistic and conceptual elements characterizing the post-reform environment (although cf. Timonen, "The Virgin Mary", this volume). This problematizes the identification of reinterpretations and revaluations of inherited elements: the relevant indicators are too few to clearly map distinct substrata.

Interpretations and conventional functions change faster than motifs. Stratification therefore progressively obscures earlier ideologies, values and functions of elements, all of which can be flexibly adapted as social resources. Poetic features of ethnocultural substrata maintain broad indices to cultural practices rather than representing or being interpreted through specific concepts and conceptions. This allows them to be the most salient and persistent elements of cultural expression through shifts and changes in ideologies. For example, conversion processes appear to regularly result in applying authoritative modes of vernacular expression to the myths and epics of the new ideology, such as the Old Saxon *Heliand*, kalevalaic epics on Christian themes or Shor epics of Siberia on Christian subjects. In contrast, units of meaning are sites where adaptation and renewal are more likely to occur. It may therefore be hypothesized that in cultural expression, elements of representations (words, images, motifs) and their constellations provide the most essential relevant indicators for earlier ethnocultural substrata, while the meanings or applications of these elements or units may change in the process of maintaining currency in later

cultural contexts. A value of the substratum model is that it allows the consideration of long-term continuities in significance without necessarily resolving that significance (which may have changed as a historical process).

This highlights the importance of comparative data in the exploration of earlier ethnocultural substrata – observing that, for example, Judas and the River Jordan only become indicators of a Christian ethnocultural substratum in the light of comparative evidence that identify them with a Christian heritage but not with an earlier vernacular heritage. Comparative evidence allows certain generalizations about particular meaningful elements, their relationships to one another and also aspects of a historical substratum's network of essential elements – even if the dynamic mental models to which these gave rise are irrecoverable.

The 'deeper' a phenomenon is and the more cultural changes it has been filtered through, the more abstractly and generally it becomes discerned. Earlier continuum models for kalevalaic poetry and mythology, such as Matti Kuusi's (1963; 1994a) remarkably dynamic (if not unproblematic) five-stratum model or Siikala's (2002a) more successful model for the *tietäjä* institution, situate a core period in the Iron Age antecedent to the conversion process, with a broad earlier layer that preceded it, and several distinguishable (Christian) layers that followed it. Detailing an Iron Age ethnocultural substratum largely on the basis of 19th and 20th century materials is enabled by the persistence of the *tietäjä*-institution, which maintained a relevant essential ideology, cultural practices and repertoire of traditions. Its extensive documentation offers perspectives on variation and interactions with Christianity on local and regional bases. The Christian substratum was initially interpreted through the antecedent substratum and also engaged it in the process of making the transition to a different ideology, characterized by syncretism alongside the vernacular *tietäjä*-institution. Christian cultural practices

themselves became historically stratified and characterized by synchretism of traditions rooted in the Christianity of different eras. The *tietäjä*-institution was also interpreted through the antecedent substratum, assimilating and engaging its elements. Although the earlier shamanic institution did not survive per se, elements of it became established and were maintained where they found relevance – for example references to Ilmarinen forging the vault of heaven as his essential power-attribute, or his identification as the source of thunder and lightning in function-specific contexts of riddles and *The Origin of Fire*. However, traditions of that earlier substratum do not seem to survive outside of their synthesis into later systems. They are therefore much more remote – i.e. units of meaning which have become suspended or maintained in their new contexts and applications within a different ideology and semiotic system. Limitations of the data and frame of reference therefore problematize outlining a continuum of earlier substrata.

Riddles of Stratification:
The Case of Iron-Working Technologies

New technologies that sufficiently impact diverse areas of cultural practice may also function as cores around which ethnocultural substrata may be distinguished. Iron-working technologies had revolutionizing impacts on cultural practices and mythological thinking in the Circum-Baltic area. These range from the fundamental conception of iron as a magically powerful substance and the mythic 'origin of iron' to images of gods and whole mythological narratives. Transmission of an ideology is unsurprising or even inevitable in conjunction with the new technology where adopting that technology is indistinguishable from assimilating cultural practices. Randi Haaland (2004: 11) stresses that although the technology and symbolism of iron-working can be separated in analysis, these should be recognized as "different aspects of the same empirical phenomena."

The majority of impacts and developments associated with iron blur into the semantic environments of the broader Iron Age (cf. the problem of distinguishing pre- and post-reform strata of Christianity). However, the *longue durée* of mythological figures and material associated with them present a context in which relevant indicators of earlier cultural change become suspended. The impacts of iron-working technologies on North Finnic mythologies in particular have received concentrated discussion (esp. Hakamies 1999; Salo 2006).

The identification of this technology with Ilmari involved e.g. reconceptualising the Proto-Finnic sky-god **Ilmari* as the smith of heaven, the vault of heaven as created through this technology, and thunder and lightning as produced by **Ilmari*'s iron-working at the top of the vault of heaven or world pillar. Attribution of the world-creation event contrasts with Ilmari's absence from the earlier dualist world-creation, from which he was eclipsed by Väinämöinen. Attribution of thunder contrasts with Ilmari's displacement from centrality by the thunder-god Ukko in the *tietäjä*-mythology.

The attribution of lightning and thunder to the smith of heaven is found in (South Finnic) Livonian and (Baltic) Latvian, where it is associated with the thunder-god; evidence suggests that it had been known in Lithuanian; there is not clear evince of it in Estonian, between the North Finnic and the Livonian and Baltic traditions.[1] This conception was suspended in riddle traditions, according to which thunder was produced by hammering and lightning was the sparks this produced. This riddle appears to have provided a nexus of persistence: it opened a mythological narrative in North Finnic traditions and was a mythic narrative component in Latvian *daina* poetry. South Finnic and Baltic riddle traditions specify that the spark (lightning) fell into a mythic body of water or the sea. This location is elaborated in the North Finnic mythological narrative traditions but not mentioned in the riddle.

This suggests a common narrative model underlying Finnic and Baltic traditions.

Saxo Grammaticus appears to refer to a Germanic tradition of the smith of heaven as master of thunder. He mentions remarkably heavy hammers of Þórr described as cult objects used to imitate thunder (Olrik & Ræder 1931: 350) comparable to the medieval Lithuanian cult hammer identified with the liberation of the captured sun (Vėlius 1996: 591; cf. Perkins 2001: 80). (N.B. – the fact that Þórr's lightning-weapon is precisely a hammer could be explained by an earlier centrality of the smith of heaven.) Sámi and Germanic cultures exhibit evidence of a nail mounted in a world pillar image or head of a thunder-god idol used in fire-striking to incite lightning (alternating with a flint, presumably connected to the piece of whetstone – a stone which is itself an iron-working technology – that, according to myth, became lodged in Þórr's head). The image of the nail in the world pillar is attested throughout Finnic and also in Sámi traditions, where the North Star is the 'bottom nail' (cf. Old Norse *veraldar nagli* ['nail of the world']), on which the vault of heaven turns. This image presumably belongs to conceptions of a creation of the world associated with iron-working technologies.[2]

Like the traditions of the *tietäjä*, together these are suggestive of a package of elements that became attached to thunder-gods in Indo-European (and Sámi) cultures but to Ilmarinen in Finnic. This suggests Proto-Finnic **Ilmari* was still the central celestial figure to whom attribution of the creation of the sky and origin of thunder were appropriate at that time, as they would be to reflexes of **Ilma* in other Finno-Ugric cultures. This would be consistent with **Ilmari* assimilating the identity of the smith of heaven nearer the introduction of iron-working technologies and prior to the revolutionary restructuring of the mythological system accompanying the *tietäjä*-institution and incantations.

Taken together, the smith of heaven and nail-star appear as nexuses of variously intersecting images, conceptual schemas and minimal narrative motifs, with culture-specific conventional realizations identified with a particular mythic figure. These appear to be heavily stratified adaptations of a common, historically underlying tradition that defies any concrete reconstruction. Interestingly, the creation accomplished by the smith of heaven, his liberation of the stolen sun and placement of the sun / celestial bodies appear to have been secondary nexuses, perhaps owing to a greater dependence on narration, and therefore on contexts appropriate to narration.[3]

Cross-cultural comparisons potentially complement this ethnocultural substratum with additional minimal narrative cores or motifs connected with the relevant mythic figures. For example, Ilmarinen forges a wife of gold and a smith forges living hair of gold for Þórr's wife; both forging events involve the production of a series of three objects characterized by deformity or undesirability (cf. Krohn 1903–1910: 247–279; Faulkes 1998: 41–42). In the Þórr-myth, the forging event incorporates the motif of the smith's adversary taking the form of a flying and biting or stinging insect which causes imperfections in the smith's works. In the Finno-Karelian *Origin of Iron*, a flying, stinging insect (the 'devil's bird') corrupts the smith's work in the creation of iron itself, making it capable of doing harm (cf. Krohn 1924: 86–90). Although the narrative core may be minimal, these each present a constellation of iron-working technology, a figure associatable with the smith of heaven tradition, and features that appear to characterize a particular *mythological* narrative in each culture (i.e. the narrative material does not appear to be freely occurring in other myths nor characteristic of non-mythological folktales). The constellation with restricted use particular to a specific mythological narrarrative entity in each culture (Frog 2011b) offers the possibility that the parallels reflect some form of continuity.

In some cases, the connection to iron-working may have been lost as a historical process. For example, in Finno-Karelian traditions the spark struck by Ilmarinen in heaven is swallowed by a fish, the catching of which involves the invention of the seine-net and group fishing (cf. Krohn 1924: 115ff.). This parallels the event of catching Loki in the form of a salmon – in a markedly different context: in a constellation with the invention of the seine net, a community fishing event, fire (which initially burns the net) and Þórr as the central figure who catches the fish (although Þórr's relationship to the broader narrative is questionable) (cf. Krohn 1924: 138–140; Frog 2010a: 333–334). Hypothetically, a devaluation of images of Þórr as a smith in heaven producing the spark (although retaining the hammer?) could be related to the adaptation of the mythic seine-fishing adventure to a new context and application (cf. Frog 2011a). In other cases, the narrative material may have simply lost association with the smith of heaven figure and been ascribed elsewhere. For example, the forging of both the Finno-Karelian *sampo* and the fetter of the wolf Fenrir are associated with the motif of forging from materials characterized by 'lack', and the created objects have cosmological centrality in which their essential role is to be destroyed in an event of eschatological proportions (cf. Faulkes 1982: 27–28; Tarkka 2005: 160–175; Frog forthcoming). Taken independently, the correlation of only a few core elements may appear as little more than coincidence and curiosity. However, these become cumulative when indexed according to a substratum model and they are connected to a remarkably large proportion of the mythic iron-working events in each culture. The minimal cores are not conducive to reconstructing narratives and some of these may be later developments. They are nonetheless sufficient to suggest that a system of mythological narrative material developed and circulated cross-culturally as some sort of a package associated with iron-working technologies, and established essential conditions for later exchange or otherwise typological parallels to develop. It is an area worthy of further investigation.

This system or network of material may in many cases reflect developments of earlier material with an already long and stratified history. For example, Nijolė Laurinkienė (2008) argues that the narrative cycle about mythic smith included (among other things) a myth of liberating the sun. The example is interesting precisely because the incredibly widespread 'myth of the hidden sun' (see Witzel 2005) was attached to the mythic smith in these cultures. Similarly, Pentti Aalto (1987 [1975]: 89–96) observes that the myth of the smith's spark from heaven being lost in water is paralleled in Indo-Iranian traditions (Agni ['Fire'] hiding in water after being born), where it could also be connected to an aetiology of fishing as practice. A historical relationship is not inherently unreasonable. Aalto situates this parallel in relation to the other mythological parallels as a complement to evidence of a rich stratum of Indo-Iranian influences on the Finnic lexicon, advancing toward a dynamic substratum model. Nevertheless, the origin of the net and connection to iron-working would be developments from this earlier stratum. Earlier bronze-working technologies may underlie other narratives and images – for example, when forging is described simply in terms of placing objects into a forge and removing them (consistent with casting) rather than hammering. This does not diminish their potential relevance to an iron-working ethnocultural substratum, but it emphasizes the degree to which earlier strata may have been assimilated and concealed.

The Problem of Biased Cores
A synchronic ethnocultural substratum characterized the fundamental network of elements underlying broad cultural competence. The examples outlined above have highlighted a core system of presumably interconnected elements that differentiated the stratum from that which preceded it, and

which was assimilated, rejected or revised by those that followed it. In each case, the focus was narrowed and biased rather than comprehensive according to cultural era.

Social institutions function through cultural practices and thus traditions are essential to the functioning of social institutions, whether healer, priest or politician. A single community or network of small-group communities easily maintains several institutions of ritual specialists with different fields of authority and social functions. For example, the *tietäjä*, Christian priest and ritual lamenter may all be found in the same community. These may be parallel, primarily intersecting in the cultural competence of individuals, and particularly of individuals competent in multiple such social roles (cf. Stepanova forthcoming). They may be complementary, even interfacing as counter-roles in complex ritual contexts (cf. Pentikäinen 1978: 182–204, 221–227). They may even have been competing where fields of activity and authority were overlapping, as with the *tietäjä* and shaman (Frog 2010a: 138–139) or when ideologies were more aggressively contested as sometimes occurred between Christian priests and vernacular specialists (cf. Haavio 1949 [1959]).

Such institutions tend to be correlated with particular oral genres. The institution (often) maintains the specialists in those genres central to its cultural practices. As such, it presents a conduit of authority for the transmission of those genres, with implications for how those genres develop as a historical process. (Frog 2010a: 135–139.) Genres present conventionalized constellations of features – ranging from form and aesthetics to specific contents and ideologies – with refined or potentially highly specialized semiotics. A specialist of such an institution internalizes and constructs ideologies and understandings of the world through genres and cultural practices to the degree of exposure and interaction with them – hence those genres essential to his or her institution's cultural practices may be most

central. These need not be reconciled with the ideologies and functioning of semiotics in genres outside the sphere of the institution. (Frog 2010b.) Consequently, genres associated with different institutions can reflect very different modelling systems, ranging from poetic features to representations of the otherworld. Thus the central genres for the *tietäjä*, ritual lamenter and Christian priest may all even maintain markedly different mythologies.

Interfaces across co-existing traditions and parallel ideologies appear to be a natural and essential part of the historical process of the evolution of traditions. Highlighting the resulting variation at the level of the individual can suggest flexibility to the point of a tradition seeming almost chaotic. However, the majority of this variation seems to be resisted in the diachronic processes of social negotiation. (Cf. Converse 1964; Frog 2010a: 225–229; Stepanova forthcoming.) These interface processes may play a significant role in the development and maintenance of genres, their aesthetics, semiotics and stylistics, as well as in the maintenance of associated institutions. Their mere presence in a community environment where their significance is acknowledged allows diverse systems to complement one another through assimilations, contrast with one another through oppositions, or to reshape meanings and interpretations through the alternatives offered by another system.

Selecting one social institution as a core for an ethnocultural substratum presents a biased picture. It is not inherently problematic that the construction of a lateral category is biased and narrowed according to focus: this is a function of developing ethnocultural substrata as a lateral indexing tool. However, the bias must be recognized and acknowledged. Such substratum models with parallel foci, intersecting and overlapping cores, can then be correlated and consolidated.

The discussions above emphasize the significance of correlation across cultures: in each case, the radical changes at the core of

the substratum are directly identifiable with cultural contacts. Ethnocultural substrata have the possibility to deepen insights into areal, cross-cultural parallels according to genres in terms of formal and semiotic features as well as in terms of specific contents (cf. Siikala 2002a; Frog 2010a; Stepanova 2011).

Relative Chronologies – Historical Processes

As observed above, traditions always emerge in a present filtered through the semiotics and cognitive models of the contemporary culture. This is an ongoing historical process functioning on the level of small-group communities and interacting networks of such communities. The process is therefore not uniform over a broad cultural area, nor is it necessarily simultaneous over such an area. It may arise from a gradual process of social negotiation within and across communities, or such negotiations may involve a more aggressive, drastic and rapid progression across language and dialect communities. In either case, the process is never instantaneous and always occurs within the context of an existing tradition ecology. The conversion to Christianity may be considered 'drastic', as may (presumably) the earlier process of conversion to the *tietäjä*-ideology (Frog 2010a: 127–141). However, the evidence only presents the outcome of diachronic processes rather than a depiction of the processes themselves. Construction of the substratum concentrates on a core for a broad, abstract and ideal model that minimizes variation. Consequently, transitional processes between substrata remain only loosely defined – i.e. fuzzy categories. Syncretism and interfaces of multiple institutions nevertheless appear essential to these historical process, and there may have been long periods of interface between, for example, the *tietäjä*-institution and the vernacular shaman-institution.

The history of the *tietäjä*-institution's spread over the whole of the North Finnic linguistic-cultural area (as well as its relevance to the linguistic and cultural assimilation of Sámi populations in Karelia)

remains obscure. This could have taken a hundred years or a thousand; it may have initially fermented for centuries in coastal communities and only much later been rapidly assimilated by communities to the east and north. The tremendous differences in the ideology and traditions of the *tietäjä* and vernacular shamanism makes it reasonable to distinguish these groups ethnically and ideologically: even where these belonged to a common linguistic group, social identities tend to be developed around social and cultural practices with their associated ideologies (cf. Orthodox and Lutheran identities in the linguistically diverse region of Ingria). The ethnocultural substratum identifiable with the spread of the *tietäjä*-institution can be described as progressing historically in geographical scope rather than having a unified chronology over the entire linguistic-cultural area. This is also true for iron-working technologies and Christianity. All of these socio-historical processes occurred at the level of small-group communities. The development of processes on a relative chronology at different rates in different regions – or *along* a chronology – suggests that the characteristics of an ethnocultural substratum may have been different at the time when transition processes began in different regions.

The Problem of Transmitted Substrata

It was pointed out above that the *tietäjä*-institution was characterized by an extensive core system of textual entities – i.e. incantations, mythological narratives, and whatever else the ritual specialist might require. This was possible in part owing to the degree of verbal conservatism of the Kalevala-meter. It raises two major issues.

First, it is reasonable to consider that the network of fundamental elements characterizing the ethnocultural substratum may have extended to other aspects of poetics. In other words, the ritual specialist's authority in the community associated with Kalevala-meter could have resulted in broad

shifts in general poetic ideals. A local form of the meter and poetics spreading with this institution could thereby become a dominant model over a large linguistic-cultural area. Matti Kuusi (1994b) has in fact hypothesized such a process as the most reasonable explanation for differences between North Finnic and South Finnic forms of the common Finnic alliterative tetrameter.

Second, strata on the continuum model reflected purely through later strata could potentially have been spread as part of a later stratum. For example, traditions related to the smith of heaven may not have been universal across the North Finnic linguistic-cultural area at the time when the *tietäjä*-institution spread. Evidence of the smith of heaven is centrally maintained in the incantation tradition of the *tietäjä*-institution. It is therefore probable that the smith of heaven tradition was established or competing at the time when the *tietäjä*-institution took shape or during which it began to spread. However, evidence of the smith of heaven may have been suspended as elements and references in the core system of textual entities carried with the institution. It can be observed, for example, that in southwest regions where Ilmarinen's significance is foregrounded, this occurs within the core system of *Väinö*-centric poetic narratives which is (more or less) common across all regions where the mythic narratives were preserved. This core repertoire of the *tietäjä*-institution appears to have completely assimilated or superseded the corresponding songs of the shaman-institution, and it is not clear that local mythologies became established in variations of this repertoire. This process could occur irrespective of whether different forms may have been established in other areas: local forms may simply have been assimilated or wholly superseded by those embedded in the spreading tradition. Local conceptions of **Ilmari* and **Väinö* were presumably displaced or assimilated by those accompanying the *tietäjä*-institution, and even if **Ilmari* was widely identified with the

smith of heaven, the form of that identity which persisted may have been particular to the spreading *tietäjä*-institution. Therefore, earlier ethnocultural substrata reflected through the *tietäjä*-institution's repertoire may not necessarily shed light on traditions of the same or earlier substrata that were current in *other* regions. This problem is amplified according to the number and magnitude of substrata considered (e.g. motifs associated with bronze-working, potentially carried cross-culturally in the package of material associated with iron-working technologies).

Perspectives

Ethnocultural substratum provides a valuable tool in constructing modelling systems as frames of reference in both synchronic and diachronic study. In diachronic study, this tool offers a strategy for the lateral indexing of potential relevant indicators of historical processes. Situating ethnocultural substrata along a continuum model has the potential to offer insight into the breadth and magnitude of historical cultural processes of earlier eras. The biases implicit in selecting a core for developing an ethnocultural substratum are mitigated by the flexibility of these categories as frames of reference for research, and for future research in particular. Although initial studies may incline to biases according to theme, genre or social institution, these models become complementary: their correlation and comparison offer possibilities for generating new knowledge and deeper understandings. Within a culture, multiple models can complement one another synchronically or in the construction of diachronic continuum models. They may complement one another across disciplines, as in the correlation of folklore, linguistics and archaeology as Siikala (2002a) has done in her research on the *tietäjä*-institution, or in cross-cultural studies, as in the case of iron-working technologies outlined above. As a tool, ethnocultural substratum has great potential for offering new and promising directions for future research.

Notes

1. For a brief summary of data on North Finnic traditions, see Sarmela 1994: 128–129; on the relationship to iron-working, see further Salo 2006: 16–22; on Livonian traditions, see Loorits 1926: 51–52; in Latvian, see Biezais 1972: 105–106, 125–128. Proto-Finnic **Ilmari* did not survive in Estonian. According to Arvo Krickmann's comparative index of Estonian riddles (in preparation), Estonian examples of the smith of heaven riddle (see below) are not attested. However, there is evidence of mythic iron-working activity identifiable with the smith of heaven, for example providing an aetiology of the Northern Lights rather than of thunder and lightning (cf. Loorits 1949–1953 II: 286–287, 385). This tradition may underlie the traditional Lithuanian riddle *Kubilius danguj šaukia = perkūnas / Perkūnas* (http://www.aruodai.lt/paieska2/fiksacijos.php?OId=4304&FId=6757&back=home) ['The (barrel)-hooper shouts in the sky = thunder / Perkūnas']. (N.B. – the common noun 'thunder' and name of the god are identical.). If so, this variation in a Lithuanian form would be consistent with Lithuanian variation at the periphery of other Circum-Baltic thunder-god traditions, in this case replacing 'smithing' with the god's voice as a more recognizable aetiology (cf. Frog 2011a: 84–85).

2. See e.g. Drobin & Keinänen 2001: 145–147; Tolley 2009 I: 272–291. The term 'nail-star' is also found independently in a remote group of cultures as one among several terms for the North Star (cf. Harva 1922: 10–12, 18, 23; Hultkrantz 1996). This is most probably an independent development of the world pillar image and does not appear associated with any motifs which form the complex here.

3. The fabrication of the vault of heaven survived in North Finnic only in references to the mythic event; the theft of the sun almost completely disappeared except in Ingria, where it assumed a moralistic element appropriate to Christian ideologies and to tensions in social realities (see Frog forthcoming and works there cited). Traces of a Germanic fabrication of the celestial realm remain ambiguous and suggestive of stratification (cf. *Vǫluspá* 7; Meyer 1891: 21–22, 99–100) and evidence of the theft of the sun is problematized by its relation to the Masterbuilder Tale. The fabrication and liberation of the sun persisted in tale traditions in Baltic cultures. However, the smith is identified as *Teljavel'* (Телявель) in evidence from medieval Lithuania, and performs for (?) the thunder-god Perkūnas who is not himself identified with the smith of heaven. (See Laurinkienė 2008: 5–8.) *Teljavel'* is most probably cognate with Old Norse *Þjálfi*, servant of Þórr (Toporov 1970; for an overview of proposed etymologies, see Vėlius 1996: 257–258); this figure's relationship to Perkūnas raises questions of the stratification in this tradition and of potential variation in the significance of Þjálfi / Þjelvar (cf. http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/409249; Frog 2011a: 79).

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Conference Report: The Viking Age in Finland Seminars

28th–29th, April, 2011 and 11th–12th November, 2011, Helsinki, Finland
Sirpa Aalto, University of Oulu

The collaborative interdisciplinary project Viikinkiaika Suomessa – Viking Age in Finland was introduced in the last *RMN Newsletter* (May 2011). This project has organized two seminars in 2011, which were hosted by Folklore Studies (Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies, University of Helsinki), and that were made possible thanks to support from the Finnish Cultural Foundation. The seminars were held 28th–29th April and 11th–12th November 2011, respectively. The purpose of the seminars was to open discourse across disciplines, with an emphasis on raising questions and opening discussion. The orientation toward cross-disciplinary discourse was emphasized by allowing approximately 30–40 minutes discussion following each presentation. Representatives of different disciplines were brought together to present the Viking Age as it is perceived and regarded within their particular fields, and what can or cannot be said about the conditions and cultures in Finland and associated areas in that period. Each speaker was allowed approximately twenty minutes for presentation (in either Finnish or English) and made a conscious effort to introduce and discuss his or her field and topic in a way that made it accessible from other fields. These fields ranged from folklore and history to genetics and meteorology. The orientation of presentations to broad cross-disciplinary discussion frequently led papers to run as long as 25–30 minutes. This was nevertheless appreciated by all when that time was devoted to making discussions and research accessible to members of such a diverse audience. Discussion was always lively and not only did questions and debate following each paper ran for more than half an hour, it was also regularly continued over coffee and lunch, and also facilitated discussion of relationships between papers, fields and disciplines.

VIKING AGE IN FINLAND

The first seminar was The Viking Age in Finland Defined in the Light of the Approaches of Different Disciplines, and the purpose was to find out what the status quo is concerning the Viking Age in Finland. This kind of interdisciplinary discussion was very welcome, because the latest results in different fields may not be known by all scholars. The seminar was opened by Lassi Heininen (University of Lapland), the leader of the project. He reminded the audience that we tend to forget that cultural and other impacts in the Viking Age were not just moving from Central and Western parts of

Europe to the North, but that actually the North first came south, as it were.

Ville Laakso (University of Turku) commented that the term 'Viking Age' was easily accepted by Finnish archaeologists in the beginning of the 20th century. Interestingly, the term was not associated with Vikings but it was rather used solely to make periodization clearer. The Viking Age in Finland (ca. 800–1050 AD) appears as a distinct period having some of the following characteristics – e.g. women's jewelry has Scandinavian features but is still unique and the weapons are mainly imported from elsewhere. At the same time, the settlements seem to expand. Nevertheless, archaeology faces many challenging questions concerning how to interpret the finds, whether they can be associated with certain ethnicities, what kind of peripheral settlement there was, and so forth. The settlement question has been central in Finnish archaeology. Matti Leiviskä (University of Oulu) has studied how the settlements spread to Northern Ostrobothnia in the late Viking Age and the Early Middle Ages. He showed that it is possible to demonstrate, on the basis of toponymic evidence, that some of the inhabitants came from Ylä-Satakunta (in central Southwestern Finland) around the year 1000 AD. Northern Ostrobothnia was hardly a core area, but there must have been some kind of draw that brought people north.

Coin finds in particular have been important when looking at the Viking Age in Finland because they show how the Finno-Karelians were connected to the outer world. Tuukka Talvio (National Board of Antiquities) presented the results of his research, which show that the area of present-day Finland was not the core area of Viking Age trade. For instance, Estonia seems to have been more important to Viking trade because over 10,000 coins have been found there – more than have been found in Finland. Nonetheless, conclusions cannot be drawn straightforwardly from this information, as trade in the Viking Age was not conducted solely with minted money.

Research presented was certainly not restricted to disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Heikki Tuomenvirta (Finnish Meteorological Institute) discussed how to reconstruct the climate in the past and the problems involved in this kind of research. As is generally known, the climate in Northern Europe seems to have been relatively warm in the Viking Age. Tuomenvirta concluded that in Finland the summers were probably warmer than in the preceding and subsequent centuries, and the average rainfall in the spring was low, as well as the snowfall in the winter. Teija Alenius (University of Helsinki) presented on how the Viking Age appears from a paleobotanical perspective. Alenius has conducted pollen analyses from lake sediments, which can reveal whether there was cultivation in certain areas and what was cultivated. Slash and burn cultivation, for instance, appears clearly in paleobotanical data. However, this kind of research can reveal only limited information about the cultivated land in the Viking Age, particularly when sampling has been unevenly distributed across different regions.

Elina Salmela (University of Helsinki) researches the Finnish genome. Her research addresses the question of how the modern Finns are genetically related to their neighbours. Salmela emphasized that genetic research cannot resolve, for example, when certain peoples moved from one area to another. In the light of genetic research, it seems that there are, however, significant differences between modern eastern and western Finns. Western Finns are genetically closer to Swedes from Norrland and Svealand than to their eastern Finnish compatriots.

Sirpa Aalto (University of Eastern Finland) gave a presentation on how the Viking Age is perceivable in Finnish historiography. Aalto stressed that in her opinion the word 'Viking Age' was long associated only with the Scandinavian past by Finnish historians. The reasons for this lie mainly in the ideas of

National Romanticism and nationalism. In the Finnish historiography from the 19th century, it was important to create a past for the Finnish people and thus to legitimize their existence as a nation. Therefore, the historians preferred to stress Finnish or Finno-Karelian culture, which, in their opinion, was perceivable in the poems of *Kalevala*. The historians preferred to call the Viking Age the 'heathen past', the 'Iron Age' or the 'Age of the Tribes'. However, today the Viking Age is no longer considered to be an exclusively Scandinavian phenomenon and it is accepted that it also has some kind of relevance to the Finnish past.

Joonas Ahola (University of Helsinki) and Frog (University of Helsinki) represented the folkloristic research done in Finland – research which naturally concentrated initially on the *Kalevala*. Ahola pointed out that the so-called *Saarelaisepiikka* ['Islander-Epic'], a cycle of oral poems in the Kalevala-meter that has been dated by Matti Kuusi to originate in the Viking Age, is questionable as a source on the Viking Age. The poems have connections to the Viking Age, but they were collected and written down in the 19th and 20th centuries. One of the most challenging questions concerns what possibility there is to date the poems. Frog reminded us that little new diachronic research has been done in the past fifty years. The traditional poems in the Kalevala-meter – especially the above mentioned *Saarelaisepiikka* – could be revaluated from different, updated perspectives.

In his presentation, Clive Tolley (University of Turku) addressed loan words in the Finnish language which seem to indicate that the connections in the Viking Age seem to have been one-sided. Nonetheless, the loan words alone do not describe cultural contacts or the intensity of these contacts. It has been assumed that language and cultural contacts go hand in hand, which is not necessarily the case. In the same way, archaeologists tend to explain that changes in culture are due to a change of ethnos. In his own presentation,

Petri Kallio (University of Helsinki) discussed the historical development of Finnic languages into distinct forms as a historical process by reminding us that linguists are unable to date language if there are no contemporary sources. Therefore it is difficult to say anything definite about the Finnish language that was spoken in the Viking Age. Janne Saarikivi (University of Helsinki) presented how toponyms can be used in the study of language areas. They often represent the earliest language that was spoken in the area and they do not spread from one place to another. For example, there are several place names in Southern and Central Finland that indicate that they were named by speakers of a Sámi language. The question of where Finnic languages were spoken in the Viking Age remains open, but according to Saarikivi, the core area of this language seems to have been outside present-day Finland. For example, Finnic languages were spoken in vast areas of Northern Russia.

The first seminar sustained lively discussion, which continued in the second seminar concentrated on Cross-Cultural Contacts and Their Significance in Finland in the Viking Age, in the area of present day Finland and Karelia. The second seminar had more than twice the attendance of the first, drawing scholars from other institutions around Finland to participate in the exciting discussions surrounding each presentation.

On first day of the seminar, Jukka Korpela (University of Eastern Finland) spoke about how to understand mobility and space in the Viking Age. He emphasized that we should not exaggerate, for example, how fast innovations spread and also stressed that trade had other functions than just the exchange of products. Joonas Ahola (University of Helsinki) then discussed what kind of folklore connections the Scandinavian traditions may or could have had with the Finnic tradition of the hero Kaukomieli and Russian *bylina*-epic traditions related to Viking Age contacts. Ahola's outline of potential relationships was thought to be plausible from an

archaeological point of view because some kind of warrior ideal appears to have already existed in Finnic communities in the Bronze Age. In her presentation from just such an archaeological perspective, Anna Wessman (University of Helsinki) pointed out that the Viking Age in Finland cannot be understood properly without looking at the preceding periods, and that there may have been great cultural diversity across the areas under discussion. Mervi Koskela Vasaru (University of Oulu) has done an extensive study on medieval sources concerning Bjarmaland, and spoke about the possibility that the Bjarmians could have been a people who spoke a Finnic language but who possibly assimilated with the Karelians later in the Middle Ages, and thus disappeared.

Mikko Heikkilä (University of Tampere) addressed the etymological background of the name *Kaleva*, which refers to a mythic being or giant in Finnic cultures. Heikkilä argued that the origin of the name could be traced to the same origin as the name *Hlér* in Old Norse, with the implication that the people in the south-western part of Finland adopted the name perhaps as early as 300–575 A.D., resulting in excited discussion. Frog (University of Helsinki) spoke about myths and cultural contacts. He concluded that these processes occurred at the level of small communities, both across language groups and within language and dialect groups, and he challenged us to reconsider 'cultural contacts' to include contacts between communities within a language group when addressing the spread of new beliefs and technologies over a large cultural area.

The lack of vernacular written documents from the period makes it problematic to address the language or languages in Finland during the Viking Age. In her presentation, Kaisa Häkkinen (University of Turku) observed that this is the main reason why there is not much research conducted focusing on that time frame, elucidating her more general discussion through addressing terms for different plants as evidence of cultural contacts. Johan Schalin (University of Helsinki) also presented evidence from linguistic research concentrating on place names, showing how some Finnish place names have been borrowed into Swedish and then back into Finnish, as well as elucidating the problems of approaching this evidence and identifying specific loans more generally, offering a remarkably rich array of examples.

The seminar concluded with two papers on archaeological evidence from Northern Finland. Jari-Matti Kuusela (University of Oulu) discussed problems involved with the archaeological data collected from the areas of Northern Ostrobothnia, Koillismaa and Kainuu, showing that the finds from the Viking Age in these areas are concentrated inland as opposed to finds from earlier periods which were concentrated in coastal areas. Tiina Äikäs (University of Oulu), who recently defended her PhD thesis on Sámi sacrificial sites (*seita*) in Northern Finland, presented on *seita* and pointed out that it seems that, according her data, there was a gradual change in ritual activity of the Sámi in the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages.

The open discussion at the conclusion of the seminar highlighted the degree to which participants from every discipline were dependent on other disciplines in order to successfully frame their research on the Viking Age. This emphasized the significance of holding interdisciplinary seminars of this sort in the future, and The Viking Age in Finland project is preparing to respond to that need by organizing a more developed, thematically prescribed seminar series in the future.

Papers presented at the two seminars of the pilot year of the project are being developed into a peer-reviewed essay collection in English under the working title *Defining and Contextualizing the Viking Age in Finland*, edited by Frog (University of Helsinki) and Joonas Ahola (University of Helsinki). The volume produced by the project is organized as a coordinated and cooperative effort with participants from both seminars. The

coordination of participants and their articles seeks to better synthesize the diverse contributions from wide-ranging disciplines. This promises to lead to the fruitful production of a more coherent and unified whole. It is hoped that the volume will be be available at the end of 2012 or during 2013.

Conference Announcement: Register: Intersections of Language, Context and Communication
23rd–25th May 2012, Helsinki, Finland
Kaarina Koski, University of Helsinki

'Register' originated as a term in linguistics for contextual variation in language, or language as it is used in a particular communicative situation. This term and concept has become important across several intersecting disciplines, particularly in discussions of genre and approaches to language in written versus oral communication. As a consequence, 'register' has been used by folklorists, linguists and linguistic anthropologists with varying fields of inclusion and exclusion, ranging from the purely verbal level of communication to all features which have the capacity to signify (props, gestures, etc.). Uses of 'register' have become highly diversified within the scholarship of each field, and the different fields have not opened a discourse with one another on this topic. The international colloquium Register: Intersections of Language, Context and Communication is intended to bring together representatives of diverse perspectives in order to open cross-disciplinary discussion of the term and concept 'register'.

Keynote speakers at the colloquium will be: Asif Agha, Professor of Anthropology (University of Pennsylvania, USA), Ruth Finnegan, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology (Open University, UK), John Miles Foley, Professor of Classical Studies and English (University of Missouri, USA), Susanna Shore, Adjunct Professor of Finnish Language (University of Helsinki, Finland) and Jim Wilce, Professor of Anthropology (Northern Arizona University, USA). In addition, participant presentations on register and variation have been invited from all disciplines. Presentations have been requested to be accessible to participants from other fields and open to cross-disciplinary discussion.

The colloquium is organized by Folklore Studies of the University of Helsinki and the research project Oral and Literary Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region of the Finnish Literature Society. The event will be held in the Great Hall of the Finnish Literature Society (2nd floor, Hallituskatu 1, Helsinki).

If you would like to participate in the colloquium without presenting a paper, please inform us by the end of February by contacting Kaarina Koski (kaarina.koski[at] helsinki.fi). When informing us of your participation, please also let us know whether you would be interested in moderating a session.

For more information, please see also our webpage at http://www.helsinki.fi/ folkloristiikka.

Conference Report: Cultural Exchanges across the Baltic Sea in the Middle Ages Symposium and Workshop: First Meeting of the Austmarr Network

14th–15th April 2011, Tartu, Estonia.
Mart Kuldkepp, University of Tartu

The name *Austmarr* is a rare poetic Old Norse term for the Baltic Sea. The words by the 9th century skald Þjóðólfr hvinverski about king Ingvarr's death in Estonia are well known:

> ok Austmarr
> jǫfri sœnskum
> Gymis ljóð
> at gamni kveðr.
> (Finnur Jónsson 1912–1915: 11.)

> The East Sea sings her song of waves;
> King Yngvar's dirge is ocean's roar
> Resounding on the rock-ribbed shore.
> (Laing 1844: 247.)

On 14th–15th April 2011, the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Tartu, Estonia, became the first official meeting place of the Austmarr Network, a network uniting scholars interested in comparative and interdisciplinary work in the field of pre-modern history and culture of the peoples living around the Baltic Sea. This research network was initiated by Professor Daniel Sävborg of the University of Tartu as a sub-group in the wider scholarly movement interested in the re-actualization of retrospective methods in the fields of history and culture studies, aiming to further their use in this particular regional context.

These two days in Tartu brought together scholars from Finland, Sweden, Poland and Estonia, who had the opportunity to present ongoing research, discuss future plans for the network and – last but not least – to socialize and get to know each other better. The symposium was organized as a series of presentations lasting around twenty minutes each. The presentations covered a considerable breadth of topics and were, without exception, followed by a lively discussion.

Ülo Valk, Professor of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu, gave a talk titled "Migratory Legends in Estonian Folklore", mostly focusing on folk legends and different classification systems. He discussed both different ways of distinguishing genres and types of tales in folklore. Frog, from the Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies at the University of Helsinki, held a presentation on "Questions of Ethnocultural Substrata in the Finno-Karelian Song of Creation and the Sampo-Cycle", investigating the possibility that some forms of exchange from Germanic to Finno-Karelian culture could have taken place in the context of a larger mythological narrative tradition circulating in the Baltic Sea region.

After the coffee break, the first day of the symposium continued with Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson from the Museum of National Antiquities in Sweden, who presented her research project on identity, self-image and cultural expression in Viking Age Sweden called Birka, Rus´ and Nordic Gentes. The project focuses on the inhabitants of Birka and was presented in Tartu under the title "Searching for Identities in Funerary Practices and Material Culture". Professor Janne Saarikivi, from the Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Helsinki, gave some "Remarks on the Denominations of the Pre-Christian Deities in Finnic Languages", examining the problem of deity names and other pre-Christian religious terminology among the Finnic-speaking peoples.

The first day was completed with two presentations focusing on more recent eras: Professor Leszek Słupecki, from the University of Rzeszów, gave an overview of the history and the present-day status of Old Norse Studies in Poland, and PhD student Mart Kuldkepp, from the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Tartu,

discussed the reception of Old Norse Literature in Estonia.

Even though the symposium programme was formally over for the first day, the evening continued with a longer guest lecture in Swedish for the students and academic staff of the Department of Scandinavian Studies by Maths Bertell, from the Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies at Stockholm University. The lecture was concerned with the question of similarities and differences between Scandinavian Þórr and the Estonian thunder god, especially in the context of the myth of the stolen thunder-weapon. The lecture was greatly appreciated by both the students and staff of the Department of Scandinavian Studies and the participants of the symposium.

The second day began with a presentation by Tõnno Jonuks, Senior Researcher at the Estonian Literary Museum, on the image of Estonia in Old Norse literature, which was found to be two sided: Viking Age Estonia was apparently well-known to Scandinavians as a part of the same Baltic Sea region, but later came to be associated with monsters and magic. The day continued with Maths Bertell giving a talk on Þórr, Fjǫrgyn and their connection to Lithuanian Perkūnas.

Daniel Sävborg gave a short presentation of his future research plans on Estonian folk traditions related to Viking and pre-Viking Scandinavia. Most of these traditions are certainly based on late, written sources of a learned tradition, but the development of such traditions is nevertheless interesting, and there could potentially also be folk traditions about medieval Scandinavia with actual medieval roots.

This was followed by another coffee break, during which the participants of the symposium could read the fine poster presentation of the phenomenon of changelings in Estonian and Swedish folklore by PhD student Siiri Tomingas-Joandi of the Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Tartu. The second day concluded with a roundtable discussion of future plans for the Austmarr Network.

It was decided that the next meeting will be on the theme Transcultural Contacts in the Circum-Baltic Area Symposium and Workshop and take place in Helsinki, Finland, organized by Frog and Janne Saarikivi at the University of Helsinki. The meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place on 1st –2nd of June 2011, coordinated with the Sixth Nordic-Celtic-Baltic Folklore Symposium, Supernatural Places, to be held in Tartu, Estonia, June 4th–7th, 2012. The Austmarr meeting is planned to allow one day of travel from Helsinki to Tartu in order to facilitate the participants' attendance at both meetings. The precise dates of the network meeting will be fixed in February when the schedule of the symposium in Tartu is finalized. With the second meeting of the Austmarr Network, we hope to engage other scholars from the countries around the Baltic Sea, so that Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, Denmark and so forth will also be represented in future meetings. Amongst other things, this might open up the exciting possibility of hearing and comparing alternative perspectives on processes which affected the whole region, such as the crusades or the functioning of the Hanseatic League.

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People

Research Reports

The Question of Borders in Vepsian Folk Belief

Madis Arukask, University of Tartu

The meaning of being a human (*ristit*) seems to be more important in traditional Vepsian folk belief than relatedness to Orthodox Christianity (as the high religion). The relationship to other(ness) and to the anomalous is central here. Self-determination, both on the collective and personal level, takes place through cultural delimitation, which is expressed via different speech acts, folklore genres and practices. The traditionality of Vepsian culture in everyday life appears in characteristic personal expressions, which help to define the personal self and terminate communicative situations.

Among folklore practices, the magic procedures connected to herding are under closer observation in the paper. These practices and customs are still well known or remembered among my informants in the present day. In rituals, the imaginary border between the forest and community is safeguarded, and the customs contain a lot of symbolic diplomacy. Central here is the herdsman's role and the taboos in his daily work. In the paper, the customs connected to herding magic on the broader North-Russian areal background are under consideration.

The original material analysed in the paper was collected on expeditions conducted in Vepsian villages in 2007–2010.

The Choice of Faith in East European Folklore

Olga Belova, Institute for Slavic Studies (Moscow), Russian Academy of Science

The paper presents a short survey of folk legends about the choice of faith by different nations fixed from the middle of the 19th century until the present in Slavic Christian and East European Jewish traditions. The folk versions of the plot about the choice of faith are not widespread in oral tradition, remaining instead a facet of literary texts. All the more interesting is to analyze folk narratives dealing with the problem of 'one's own' and 'the other' religion and the folk attitude to the faith of ethnic neighbours. The paper is based

on the folklore evidence from the 19th century up to the present day from different regions of the Slavic world. The modern material was gathered during our field research at the cultural and confessional borderline – in regions such as Ukrainian and Belorussian Polesie and Western Ukraine (Galicia and Bukovina). The texts about the choice of faith reflect the ideas and opinions of the Orthodox and Roman Catholics (as in Polesie), Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Greek-Catholics (as in Galicia), the Christians and the Jews (as in Bukovina), and the Christians and the Muslims (as in the Balkan regions).

The topic of the choice of faith is presented in different kinds of folk legends – from cosmogonic (God himself gives the religion, sacral texts and religious festivals to Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Russians, etc.) to eschatological ones (the legends about the nations' fate at the Last Judgement, depending on their religious identification).

The following points were under consideration:

1. How different religions appeared.
2. The founders of religions and the acquisition of faith.
3. The nationalization of sacral persons.
4. Changing/choosing the faith (the motif of folklore texts).
5. The choice of faith and oral history.
6. The choice of faith and folk eschatology.

As the folklore evidence shows, the choice of faith, being a literary motif in its origin, found its place in oral tradition and became an integral part of the folk worldview and of national folklore.

Conceptualizing Chaos and Conflict in the Assertion of Order: Finno-Karelian Magic, Ritual and Reality in Long-Term Perspective
Frog, University of Helsinki

Paper presented at Peace, War, Folklore: The 123rd Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society, 12th–15th October, 2011, Bloomington, Indiana, USA.

Magic and ritual practices are strategies for interacting with reality. These strategies are reflexes and reflections of how individuals conceptualize realities in their societies. This paper approaches evidence of Finno-Karelian magical and ritual practices, and particularly those employed by the vernacular ritual specialist called a *tietäjä*. It addresses *a)* battle imagery in conceptualizations of the healing event, *b)* the ritual use of a mythological battle to stabilize seasonal change, and *c)* situates these in long-term perspectives of the synthesis and adaptation of conceptual models in changing cultural circumstances.

As a Finno-Ugric culture, Finno-Karelian traditions inherited a form of 'classic' or Central and Northern Eurasian shamanism. However, the concepts of the soul-journey of the healer is absent, as is soul-loss from illness diagnostics. Finno-Karelian conceptions of illness were based on the penetrable body but did not include a separable soul. Illnesses were conceived of as dangerous forces that penetrated or attached themselves to a victim. These were regularly attributed to a hostile and active agent, but active agents never penetrated the body themselves (i.e. there was no 'spirit-possession'). These conceptual models of body and spirit were incompatible with classic shamanism. Rather than a healing-rite developed on the narrative paradigm of a dangerous (shamanic) journey to a remote mythic location to negotiate the recovery of the patient, a *tietäjä* employed incantations in which he summoned armour, weapons and support (including men slain in battle) over the patient in order to forcefully compel his adversaries with no reciprocal negotiation –

confronting and banishing an adversary that had penetrated the community within that immediate context. This conceptually identified the healing act with a battle over the immediate body of the patient. However, the semiotics of battle appear largely or purely as power-attributes: weapons are never used; armour is never assailed; 'battle' is never realized.

The most well-known myth of Finno-Karelian epic traditions is the cycle of narratives surrounding the mysterious object called a *sampo*, which the heroes steal from the 'North' on a sea-raid, climaxing in a battle with the monstrous mistress of the otherworld (who has transformed herself, her ship and entire crew into a giant bird). This myth was performed in sowing rituals in order to secure crops against the return of frost. The use of the myth mapped the threat of frost over the 'North'; through the verbal actualization of the battle in which she was originally defeated, her defeat was re-actualized and prevented the return of frost in the new year.

The long-term perspectives focus on a revolution in technologies and cultural practices used as a primary means of interaction with the otherworld during the Iron Age. The shift from a form of 'shamanism' to the institution of the *tietäjä* associate it with a period of radical social and cultural change during the Iron Age. This transition had complex and pervasive impacts on the vernacular semiotic system, and carried a reservoir of images and motifs from that milieu that exhibit a long-term historical continuity. This process seems to have had revolutionary impacts on conceptualizations of relationships and interactions with forces in the unseen world. This new mode was incompatible with the inherited form of shamanism on the one hand. On the other, it found continued relevance in changing cultural practices, adapting even into the modern age: these same, essential incantation strategies were applied in contexts ranging from securing oneself from bullets in warfare to staging oneself for victory in a dissertation defence.

Traditional Epic as Genre: Definition as a Foundation for Comparative Research
Frog, University of Helsinki

The understanding of epic genres has been shaped by Western scholarship, dominated by Classical models. This has conditioned definitions of epic to include formal characteristics of those models although these are questionable in cross-cultural contexts. This is even found in Lauri Honko's (1998: 28) now widely quoted definition:

Epics are great narratives about exemplars, originally performed by specialised singers as superstories which excel in length, power of expression and significance of content over other narratives and function as a source of identity representations in the traditional community or group receiving the epic.

This definition is notably concerned with individual 'epics', not genre. The present paper deconstructs this definition reducing it to a foundation of 'epic' in social and semiotic functions, and stressing that these functions are socially negotiated.

Rather than individual or unique texts, this paper is concerned with recognizing a vernacular genre as 'epic'. Genre is approached in terms of a constellation of prescriptive conventions related to form,

content and applications within a vernacular genre system. The specific conventions are all culture-dependent. This problematizes asserting formal features (e.g. length) as universals (although they may be common in large isoglosses). A Saussurian model of the sign is employed for identifying 'epic' as a generic product according to vernacular conventions of form and content within that discourse. In other words, just as the relationship of signifier and signified constitute a sign, a relationship of form (refined system of signification) and content (that which is represented through signification) constitute an epic according to generic classification (figure 1).

Signifier + signified = sign
Form + content = epic

Figure 1. Description of 'epic', following the Saussurean model of a sign, as a product according to a combination of form as represent-ation and content as that which is represented.

Form is approached as conventional prescriptive strategies of representation that correspondingly function as a refined (æsthetically marked) system of signification. It remains conventional to discuss content without form (e.g. a summary) as 'epic'. However, accepting the generic typology, this would not be a generic producs; it would only be an 'epic' *metonymically*: any epic status conferred on it depends on conventional association with generic presentation (i.e. epic form). Conventions of content in an epic genre may initially be loosely described in terms of appropriate as opposed to inappropriate. Appropriate content stands in a reciprocal relationship with form. Where content is established within a community, form affirms the epic authority of that content, and content reciprocally affirms the ability of form to affirm and also to confer authority. In circumstances where otherwise acceptable content is not established or wholly unfamiliar, form functions in the capacity of an iconic sign which identifies that content *as* 'epic'. Content that is conventionally not appropriate contrasts with

the authority imported by the form. If the signifying system of form is used to represent inappropriate content, the product is only an epic *metaphorically* (figure 2).

Content – form = *metonymically* epic
Form – content = *metaphorically* epic

Figure 2. Description of only one element of the signifier–signified relationship of a Saussurian-based genre model.

Conventions of application are essential to the maintenance of the epic form's capacity to confer the authority of epic on new or unfamiliar content (i.e. the ability to assume an epic's social and semiotic capacities). This leads to the following working definition of the epic genre:

> a mode of expression characterized as a constellation of prescriptive conventions concerning form, content and applications, and that affirms the social centrality and validity of the mythic status of the narrative that becomes its object of representation.

This abstract definition is intended to provide a frame of reference for identifying and approaching vernacular epic traditions and their social and semiotic functions in cultural practices. This definition is not intended to be prescriptive. It seeks to provide a cross-cultural basis for comparisons of genres according to social, semiotic and discourse functions and theri maintainence within a vernacular genre system – comparison according to genre equivalence rather than identity (cf. Saussure 1916: 158–162). The abstract cross-cultural definition provides a point of reference for approaching distinct cultural characteristics or uses of epic. It also has value for discussing historical processes through which genres may be advanced to or displaced from epic functions.

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The Runo Song of Killing a Snake: Origin and Transformations

Matej Goršič, University of Ljubljana

The paper presents a new interpretation of a line cluster type, called 'The Runo Song of Killing a Snake' by the author. The interpretation of the song presented in the forthcoming article is the final result of several years' worth of research, and differs fundamentally from the interpretation of the song originally proposed at the conference.

The article begins by introducing the two types of the song, its variants, and its structure. The introduction is followed by a presentation of the history of research of the song. In the central part of the article, images of the song types are examined both intra-culturally (typological and linguistic analysis of the song's lines within runosong poetry) and inter-culturally (the closest parallels are found in the Rig Vedic and Slavonic material). On the basis of this examination, conclusions on the origin and transformations of the song's images are drawn. Key words of the article are: runosong poetry, Indo-European thunderstorm myths, *Rig Veda*, comparative mythology, typological and linguistic analysis, origin and transformations.

A fundamentally revised version of this paper will be published in the proceedings of the conference, edited by Mari Sarv, to appear in *Studia Mythologica Slavica* 15 (2012).

St Brun of Querfurt and His Relation from a Mission to the Pechenegs

Karol Kollinger, University of Rzeszów

The mission of St Bruno to the Pechenegs in 1008 is special because the expedition is related in a text written by Bruno himself. It is a part of *The Letter to King Henry II* (Karwasińska 1972: 97–106), written at the end of 1008, in the court of Boleslaw the Valiant. In this paper I analysed Bruno's text, because my main question was what we can conclude from reading this source.

As a starting point, I investigated three problems:

- Where did Bruno start his mission to the Pechenegs?
- Who was the political backer of Bruno's mission?
- Why did Bruno organise a mission to the Pechenegs?

By way of conclusion, I suggested that the first important leg of this mission was Kiev, where Bruno had to persuade Vladimir the Great to accept his ideas. Vladimir indeed accepted Bruno's plans and assumed his new role – as a political backer of the Christianising mission. Bruno organised this mission because he felt it possible that he could Christianize the land of the Pechenegs.

In the second part of the paper, I tried to analyse some key problems concerning the progress of Bruno's mission and its results. For example:

- Why did the Pechenegs decide to convoke the assembly of all nomads?
- Was Bruno's mission a success, if he gained only thirty souls for a new religion?

- Why did Bruno write that the Pechenegs 'were the worst and cruellest people of all the pagans on earth', if, in the text as a whole, we can also see another picture of the Pechenegs?

At the end of the paper, I considered some additional problems. Firstly, I addressed the issue of the consecration of a bishop for the Pechenegs by Bruno. Secondly, I considered whether Bruno's mission was an experiment for him, in the midst of which he wanted to come to grips with Islam? We have some interesting fragments in the *Book of Highways and of Kingdoms*, written by Al-Bakri, about the conversion of the Pechenegs to Islam. But in Bruno's case, we can only say that we do not know whether Bruno had some contact with Islam or not.

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Conversion of Royal Ideology: Christian Background of Reign of Cnut the Great in England

Jakub Morawiec, Silesian University

In 1017, Cnut the Great became king of England. It was the result of a two year conquest, mainly marked by the series of military encounters with Edmund Ironside. As a usurper, Cnut had no right to the throne. Moreover, there were rightful heirs still alive. Thus it was of high importance for the new regime to find ways to legitimise its royal power in England. It was the English Church that very quickly appeared as the natural, obvious and best ally of new king.

Although Cnut was undisputedly Christian at the time of his acquisition of the English throne, his Christian background remains rather obscure. Most likely, the scope of the religious element in royal ideology in Anglo-Saxon England was new for him. Nevertheless, Cnut very quickly adapted to his new conditions and circumstances. Thus we can talk about a conversion of royal ideology of new English king.

In general terms, it meant a shift from the typical Viking leader, a skillful, brave and generous warrior, to a Christian king, promoter of peace and protector of his subjects and land. This shift, based entirely on Christian doctrine, is also seen in skaldic poetry composed at Cnut's court. Although most poets praise the king for his military achievements, including those against the English (see Sigvat Þorðarson's and Óttar svarti's *Knútsdrápur* and anonymous *Liðsmannaflokkr*), Hallvarðr Háreksblesi in his *Knútsdrápa* adds a new dimension to presentation of the king. This skald praises Knut as the protector of the kingdom and compares him to God, who equally protects Heaven (the splendid hall of the mountains).

This shift has its most visible representation in Cnut's relations with the English Church. One of the most prominent Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics of that time, Wulfstan Archbishop of York, was an author of law codes, promulgated in 1018 in Oxford and in 1020/1021 in Winchester, respectively. Both legislations bear the heavy mark of Christian doctrine, most likely influenced by Wulfstan's own views. There are references to the defence of one Christian faith and the Church, promotion of ecclesiastic reform and elimination of pagan rituals and practices.

Cnut's patronage of ecclesiastic institutions developed greatly across his entire reign. The king appeared to be a generous

donator of land and of both judicial and financial privileges to numerous abbeys and minsters. It also included distribution of precious gifts, especially relics of saints. Royal crowns occupy a special place. There are stories about the king giving away his crowns to communities in Winchester and Canterbury. Although rather late and spurious regarding facts, these stories may have arisen from authentic gestures by Cnut, influenced by his visit to Rome in 1027.

Many English bishops attested Cnut's diplomas, and the witness lists let us estimate the group of churchmen that supported the king. It is clear that Wulfstan and Ælfric Puttoc of York and Ælfstan and Æthelnoth of Canterbury played the most prominent roles. However, there were also others, like Lyfing Bishop of Cornwall and Credition, Ælfsige of Winchester and Byrthwold of Ramsbury, who were trusted by the king. In several cases, Cnut took care to place his own candidate in the vacant seat. Some of them had already been attached to the king as members of his royal chapel. Such was the case with Æthelnoth of Canterbury, Ælfwine of Winchester, Lyfing of Credition-Cornwall and Duduc of Wells. The case of Brihtwine of Wells seems to be especially intriguing. He replaced a former bishop, who had been expelled by Cnut around 1023 just to take part as one of the three concelebrants of the translation of relics of St Ælfheah in the same year.

Cnut, with extensive support from the English Church, promoted and patronized the cult of Anglo-Saxon saints. The king took particular interest in the cults of St. Edmund of East Anglia, St. Edward the Martyr and St. Ælfheah. The translation of relics of this last saint was one of the biggest religious occasions during Cnut's reign, and it manifested a strong alliance of the royal court and the archbishopric of Canterbury.

Cnut also patronized the memory of Edmund Ironside, whom he called his brother. One may list two main events connected with it: the foundation of the minster in Ashingdon in 1020, and the king's visit to Glastonbury in 1032 where Edmund was buried.

Turning Wine into Water: Unfermented Liquids in the Corpus of Kennings Referring to Poetry
Debbie Potts, Cambridge University

The corpus of kennings referring to poetry is awash with bodies of water associated with the natural world. The most common liquid force of nature functioning as a base concept in poetry kennings is the sea, in its various mutations, but we are also confronted by fjords, waterfalls, rivers and rain. The concept of a natural body of water clearly inspired a great deal of imaginative vibrancy in the self-reflexive language of skalds; almost half of the verse contexts in which these kennings appear elaborate on the poetry-sea metaphor in some way. Such elaboration may also be internal to the kenning figure, a phenomenon which appears in a distinctive group of *reknar kenningar* ['extended kennings'] where poetry is visualised in terms of a liquid in a (mind) container. Given that the dominant metaphor which permeates the poetry-kenning tradition conceptualises the referent as an intoxicating drink, it is striking to note that only two skalds felt compelled to extend this metaphor within the larger verse context, developing an evocative image of poetic mead, consumed by the ear-mouths of the audience. This is found in Egill Skallagrímsson's *Arinbjarnarkviða* 6 and Haukr Valdísarson's *Íslendingadrápa* 1.

Indeed, the mutual adoption of the construction *hlustar munnar* ['mouths of hearing'] in both these sources may suggest the intertextual influence of one on the other.

The occurrence of a natural body of water as a base concept in this corpus has been accounted for with the assumption that this kind of liquid signifies mead metonymically. In this paper, I considered some other potential motivations that may underlie the salient presence of a natural body of water: the extension of terms for drink into the sphere of *heiti* (specialised poetic terms) for natural bodies of water through a form of *ofljóst* (word play); the embedded metaphorical relationship between the sea and intoxicating beverages evinced in the traditions of kennings referring to drink; the extension of a structural metaphor that conceptualises the human body in terms of the natural world. The two former possibilities would suggest that the presence of a natural body of water is somehow cognitively reliant on its linguistic and conceptual relationship with drink, whereas the latter places it within the context of a pervasive metaphor that provides the cognitive motivation for a number of other kenning types in the skaldic corpus.

The Virgin Mary in Karelian Folk Poetry and in the *Kalevala*

Senni Timonen, Finnish Literature Society

The Christian themes in the Finno-Karelian Kalevala-metre songs and charms have their origin in the Middle Ages, in the time when Christianity reached Finland (from the Roman Catholic West), and Karelia (from the Russian Orthodox East). The Virgin Mary in particular was so popular among Finns and Karelians that not even the Reformation destroyed the memory of her in folk culture. In the charms and prayers of Lutheran Finland and Orthodox Karelia, she was still the figure most often called on for help in the 19th century.

In Orthodox Karelia, the Virgin Mary also appears in the epic song cycle depicting the life of Christ (*The Song of the Creator*). In some areas, it was she who in fact became the heroine, and there the cycle was given the title *The Song of Mary*. Told from her point of view, this version, mostly sung by women, concentrates on the feelings and actions of the Mother, not on those of the Son.

The Song of Mary contains the following themes:

1. How Mary miraculously became pregnant,
2. How she sought a place to give birth to her son and was driven to a stable on a hill,
3. How she lost her son and searched for him,
4. How she found her son in a grave and how he was released,
5. How he (or she) went to the smithy of Hiisi (i.e. to Hell) and shackled the smith (= the Devil) forever.

In this paper, I will concentrate on theme 3, the search of the child, and address some of its continuation into theme 4.

The search song has a wide European background. The Virgin in search of her son (Maria Wanderung) is one of the most beloved Marian themes in popular religious songs from Scandinavia to Italy, and from Great Britain and Russia and Germany. The characteristic feature of this song type is the combination of the Nativity and the Passion.

In the structure of the Karelian *Song of Mary*, the search theme is central. Its position in the middle of the cycle is emphatic, its

variants are more numerous and more elaborated than those of any other theme of the cycle, and it has correspondences in many other women's songs in Karelia. Elias Lönnrot also understood the expressive power of the child-search theme. He used the song in the Kalevala twice, in connection with two extraordinary women and mothers: Lemminkäinen's mother and the Virgin Mary.

In this paper, I will discuss the following questions:

- Is the popularity of the child-search song based on a deep, almost archetypal female experience?

- How does the Karelian version of the search song differ from other European versions?
- How did Lönnrot use the Karelian song of Mary's search?
- Did Lönnrot appreciate Karelian women's experience and interpretation or did he use and change it to his own purposes?

Particularly in the case of Lemminkäinen's mother, Lönnrot created an image of ideal Finnish womanhood/motherhood/maternal love – an image which has had a profound impact on gender stereotypes in Finnish culture.

A Putative Sámi Charm on an Icelandic Spade: Runic Reception, Magic and Contacts

Kendra Willson, University of California, Los Angeles / University of Turku

Olsen and Bergsland (1943) proposed that a thitherto undeciphered sequence **boattiat** in a runic inscription (**boattiatmik ' inkialt͡r ' kærþi**) on a 12th century wooden spade found in a bog in Iceland was the Sámi word *boahtit* ['to come']. They interpreted this as a charm: 'may this object return to its owner if it is lost or stolen', and suggested that the word had been learned in northern Norway by the ancestors of Icelandic settlers. The rest of the inscription is Norse, 'me Ingjaldr made'.

Olsen and Bergsland's interpretation is problematic. The likelihood of a Sámi word being transmitted among Norse speakers with unassimilated alien phonology is low and there is little evidence for Sámi speakers in Iceland in the 12th century. Their analysis of the word is based on modern Sámi.

Marstrander (1945) instead reads the sequence as Norse, *Páll lét* ['Paul caused'], with inversion of ᛚ **l** to ᛏ **t**; this reading has

been accepted by all later runologists, although it also presents difficulties. Marstrander also suggests that the object was a ritual spade used at funerals by the priest Páll Sölvason (d. 1185), and that its deposition in the bog was a continuation of pagan bog sacrifice.

Despite the unambiguous rejection of Olsen and Bergsland's interpretation among runologists, it has become a factoid cited in popular presentations of Sámi history (e.g. Hætta 1996), as well as in some studies of Norse-Sámi contacts (Kusmenko 2002). The notion of a Sámi presence in writing this early and this far away appeals to Sámi pride.

However, the vehemence with which the runological community rejected Olsen and Bergsland's interpretation also reflect a tendency to downplay Sámi influence on Norse-Icelandic culture and to dismiss the
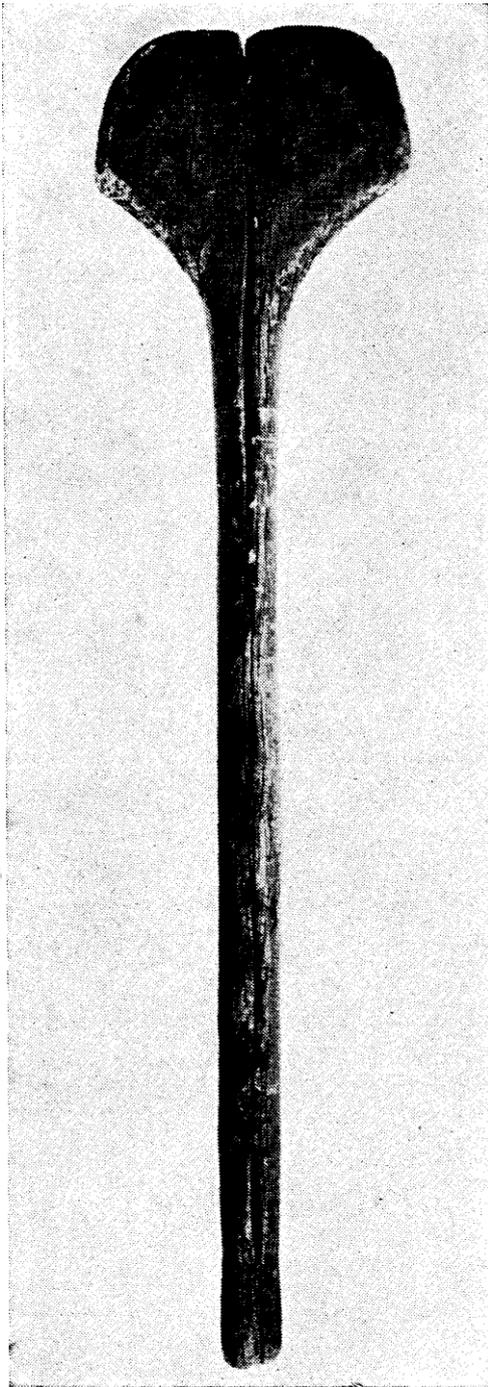
Figure 1. The spade from Indriðastaðir (from Kristján Eldjárn 1962: section 72. Reprinted with permission of the National Museum of Iceland).
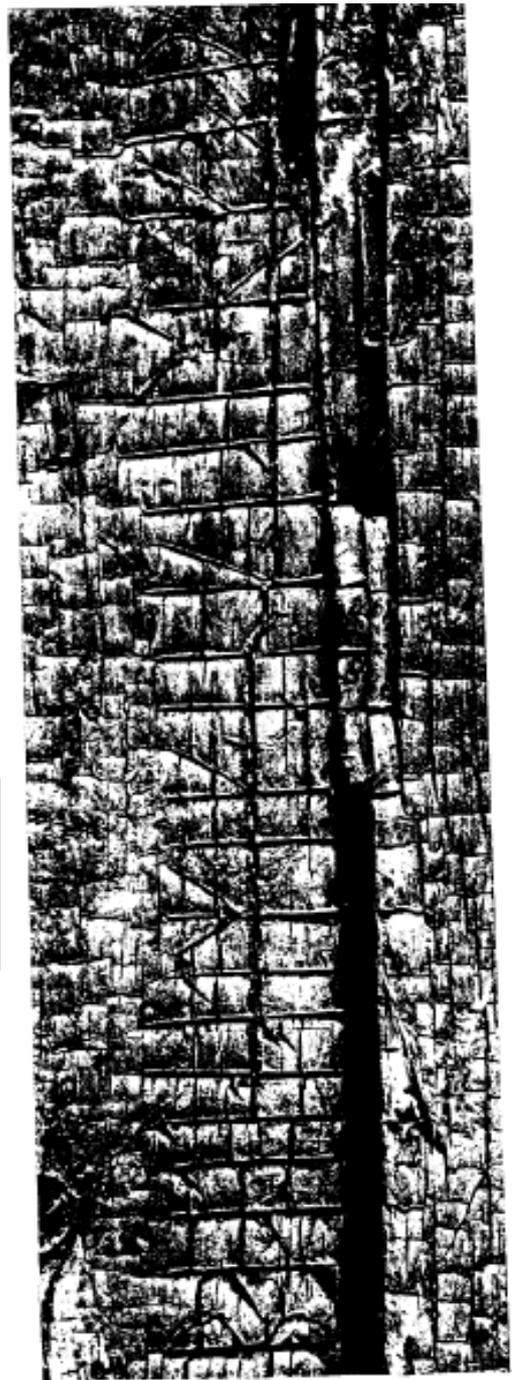
Figure 2. Detail of the inscription on the Indriðastaðir spade.

possibility of runes being used for other languages.

Garbled or incomprehensible sequences in runic inscriptions have frequently been interpreted as magical. The assumption that, if Sámi, the word must be a charm reflects the strong magical associations with both runes and Sámi in Old Icelandic literature and later Icelandic tradition.

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Articles

Snorri Sturluson *qua* Fulcrum: Perspectives on the Cultural Activity of Myth, Mythological Poetry and Narrative in Medieval Iceland

Frog, University of Helsinki

In the year 1220 or shortly after, Snorri Sturluson began writing a vernacular (Old Icelandic) treatise on traditional oral poetry and poetics. This is the work called *Edda* (more commonly the *Prose Edda* or *Younger Edda*). In the modern era, Edda is arguably our most important source for Old Norse mythology, for the vernacular poetic system, and for important poetic texts scattered as quotations through the work.

This paper reviews the impact of Snorri and his work *Edda* on its audiences across the next three centuries. It emphasizes that Snorri was not necessarily the 'first' in his many and diverse roles in the history of vernacular literature and the cultural activity of poetry and mythology. The paper argues that Snorri was a pivotal agent in the cultural activity of mythology and mythological narrative traditions in particular. Although the influence of *Edda* can only be assessed and interpreted in terms of probabilities, this paper reviews a range of specific examples in an attempt to develop a (by no means exhaustive!) overview of impacts and responses to the reception of Snorri's *ars poetica.*

Discussion opens with a brief review of probable relationships between *Edda* and uses of mythological references in skaldic verse on the one hand and in the documentation and use of mythological eddic poems on the other. It describes how these two types of evidence are complimentary.

Relatively unequivocal examples of *Edda*'s impact is shown in examples from later poetry through the example of the *rímur Lokrur,* composed directly from Snorri's account of Þórr's visit to Útgarða-Loki, followed by an example of the composition of new eddic stanzas from the late (and thus now largely unknown) stanzas added to *Baldrs draumar.* The kenning *arnar leir* ['mud of the eagle'] is discussed as evidence of the

immediate reception of Snorri's myths by contemporaries. This is accompanied by an argument that, as an aetiology of 'bad poetry', Snorri's account of Óðinn wetting himself in his escape with the mead of poetry: *a)* contradicts the basic conceptual metaphor of poetry as liquid which passes orally and is consumed (cf. Potts, this volume); and *b)* the humiliating expression of fear contradicts Óðinn's role as a cultural model for a poet, making it unlikely that poets would characterize Óðinn (and thereby poets generally) as cowardly in the very myth which establishes Óðinn as the cultural model with the origin of poetry itself.

A discussion of *Lokasenna* outlines the complimentary intersection of relationships between *a)* *Edda* and the prose texts attached to this poem, *b)* the unique use of *ragna røkkr* as opposed to *ragna røk,* and *c)* the series of insults levelled against Þórr which culminate in references to Þórr's visit to Útgarða-Loki. This discussion includes arguments that *ragna røkkr* was never conventional outside of (or at least prior to) Snorri's *Edda* and that Þórr's visit to Útgarða-Loki is a parodic reworking of mythological material that constructs a parable about understanding poetic language.

Þrymskviða is briefly addressed as a burlesque of mythological material that potentially responds to Snorri's handling of vernacular mythological material (rather than his myths) in ways that made it interesting and relevant in a contemporary Christian cultural milieu. The later *Bósa saga,* which makes direct reference to *Edda,* is presented as a parallel example to show that Snorri's work could be received and responded to in this way.

Probable sites where Snorri manipulated traditions in his mythography are emphasized because references to these sites in other texts can be most reasonably associated with direct influence. Although none of these examples are beyond equivocation, the overview is not dependent on every detail of every argument being resolved. Even if not all of these examples can be attributed to Snorri's influence, the broader pattern that is revealed in this survey may nevertheless be maintained as a frame of reference for further discussion.

Obscene Kalevalaic Songs (Kalevalaiset hävyttömät laulut)
Senni Timonen, Finnish Literature Society

This article considers the question of what the word *obscene* actually means in the context of kalevalaic songs and runo-poems. Who perceives a certain phenomenon as *obscene*? What is *obscene*? Is it *obscene* from the perspective of the singers and sorcerers themselves, or from the perspective of the learned world collecting the poetry? Or has the concept itself been constructed by modern society?

In the kalevalaic singing culture, the word *obscene* cannot be directly and unambiguously connected with the subject of sex. Sexual topics form a wide and diverse sphere in this culture, and they are not always related to obscenity or pornography. In a nutshell, it is possible to outline the subject of sex in runosongs broadly as follows:

- Sexuality particularly connected to a woman's body was understood in the runosongs as a mythic and magical power associated with both evil and holiness. The power of a woman's genitalia could both cure or protect and cause disease or ruin. These features are vividly revealed, for example, in the

- incantation *Vitun vihat* ['Cunt's Wrath'], and they can be traced in secular sexual runosongs, especially in their misogynistic sections.
- Sexuality was a highly esteemed basis for marriage and a symbol of conjugal life. Sexuality was welcomed, and sexual health and wellbeing were later tended to with incantations and magic rites.
- Sexuality was an inexhaustible source of inspiration. This is evident, for example, in sexual fantasies, where genitalia act as independent creatures wandering the world.
- Sexuality was also presented in the manner of basic and real activity, regarding which the poetry could verbalize everything. Sexual runosongs describe that activity in detail.

- At the same time, sexuality has always been a problem. In men's sexual songs, this was treated in comic handlings of sexual and anal subjects, as well as denigrating a woman's body. There is only sporadic evidence of corresponding women's folklore, but it must surely have existed.
- The sexual activity of local people intrigued fellow villagers and those who created songs. This interest appears in gossip-type runosongs and mocking runosongs. These compositions could cruelly stigmatize the character of their object in the community, but they also contained generally accepted humor and comic features. The investigation of those runosongs, the process of their creation and their contexts of performance reveal interesting micro-historical glimpses of life in the past and of the runosinging culture.

Essay Collections

Versatility in Versification: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Metrics
Tonya Kim Dewey, University of Bergen, and Frog, University of Helsinki

Versification stands at the nexus of a diverse array of disciplines, and it is both imperative and worthwhile for these many disciplines and their dynamic range of approaches to be brought into discourse with one another. Versification is the act or art of putting something into 'verse', in other words, into a socially or culturally recognized form of verbal expression, and more specifically into verbal expression that places priority on generating patterned arrangements of sound in time, often through the use of meter. It can be approached as a rule-governed system within a language. Versification systems are dynamic, generating a relationship between the formulation of new expressions and the

established conventions of the tradition from which they evolve.

Versatility arises in versification through the mastery of the language within those constraints of tradition. This volume addresses the 'versatility' of versification in a number of ways. Some of the authors treat verse as a 'versatile' component of language, i.e. something that stretches the limits of what the language allows, and thereby extend our understanding of the structure of language. Other authors treat the 'versatility' of verse itself, looking at how systems of versification change and adapt over time.

This volume brings together the work of a wide range of scholars who embark on a discourse across disciplines, addressing aspects of poetry and poetics, particularly within the Germanic language family. This discourse has effected the development of the individual chapters, which variously treat meters, their relationships to language, and poetics in application. The subjects range from runic metrical inscriptions to the literature and poetics of the modern day, and the approaches range from linguistics and folklore to cognitive theory. These diverse subjects and approaches form remarkable constellations of complementary relationships and continue to engage in a discourse to the great benefit of the reader.

Diachronic Approaches

The chapters in this section are united by their treatment of versification from a historical perspective. The authors in this section encourage us to rethink the role of metrics in describing and accounting for linguistic change, as well as how the way we think about metrics has changed over the centuries.

The opening chapter addresses the earliest potential examples of Germanic poetry found in runic inscriptions, which it is only possible to interpret as 'verse' through comparison with poetic systems preserved in much later manuscript traditions. In "Early Runic 'Metrical' Inscriptions: How Metrical Are They?", Michael Schulte offers a critical review of inscriptions which have been considered 'metrical', pointing out that features such as alliteration are also present in diverse components of language, and do not provide a sufficient condition for identifying a text as verse.

In "Metrical Learning and the *First Grammatical Treatise*", Guðrún Nordal provides a lucid introduction to the development of the medieval Icelandic vernacular poetry tradition in the evolving genres of *grammatica*, *ars poetica* and written histories, addressing one of the most important transitional periods in the history of poetry and poetics in Scandinavia.

In "On Kuhn's Laws and Craigie's Law in Old Icelandic Poetry", Kristján Árnason discusses three well-known laws applicable to early Icelandic verse and their application across meters (both eddic and skaldic). This approach not only sheds light on the relationships between the various meters, but also on the interaction between phonological structure and morphosyntax in the early Icelandic language as a whole.

In "The Syntax of the Verb in Old Icelandic: Evidence from Poetry", Thórhallur Eythórsson focuses on the structure of the verb phrase, considering data from a variety of verse types, both eddic and skaldic. Eythórsson takes the view that the structure of early Icelandic verse makes it easier to recover features of the natural language which otherwise might not be fully understood.

In "The Effect of Prosody on the Linear Structure of Adpositional Phrases in Eddic Verse", Tonya Kim Dewey utilizes verse to recover features of early Icelandic that have otherwise not been preserved. She considers the distribution of prepositional and postpositional phrases in a single corpus encompassing both verse and prose (the Codex Regius), concluding that the data preserved in this manuscript reveal a syntactic change underway in 13th century Icelandic.

This section is rounded off with Ragnar Ingi Aðalsteinsson's "Alliteration and Grammatical Categories", which addresses

alliteration in Icelandic verse over more than eleven centuries. Aðalsteinsson suggests that changes in the use of alliteration reflect changes in the morpho-phonological structure of Icelandic, as well as changes in preferred metrical structures.

Generative Approaches

Since versification is a universal human activity, found in every culture around the world, it makes sense to examine the human cognitive faculty for versification. The chapters in this section reveal something to us about the cognition underlying versification.

The identification of lexical stress with metrical stress provided the foundation for Sievers' (1893) scansion of Germanic meters. Sievers' classifications have drawn increasing criticism in recent years. Several chapters of this volume illuminate issues with Sievers' system, illustrating that a single uniform typology is neither practical nor appropriate for the many manifestations of Germanic meters. In "Old English Feet", Chris Golston focuses on the subtleties of meter which occupied the *Beowulf* poet, but to which over a century of scholarship has remained deaf. Golston presents a statistical study that demonstrates that the poet actively avoids repeating the same pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in on-verses and off-verses, contextualizing these findings in uses of asymmetries in meters around the world.

The problem of patterning stressed and unstressed positions in Germanic meters is also addressed by Tomas Riad in "Accents Left and Right". Stressed syllables in Swedish have three levels of relative prominence dependent on their tonal contours. Riad shows that some meters may only regulate the more prominent classes of stressed syllables. He then looks at alignments of prominence within a verse foot in relation to the alignment of stress patterns in natural language, creating a foundation for approaching Germanic meters as having 'emergent' rhythms, regulating prominences

without imposing a designated position within each metrical foot.

Nigel Fabb focuses on a theory of meter which relies on the generation of a metrical grid. In "Formal Interactions in Poetic Meter", he assesses whether the six-syllable line or the twelve-syllable couplet (equating to a Germanic long line) is the more basic metrical unit of *dróttkvætt*. Fabb advances discussion to proposing cross-linguistic generalizations concerning cognitive limits of sustainable complexity in versification traditions.

In "How Germanic Features Can Appear in Italian Metrical Poetry", Stefano Versace employs the same theory. He addresses features of flexibility and variation that have been adapted and applied by Italian poets through influence from 'Germanic' poets (in the Italian sense), considering how innovations are attributable to contacts between versification systems and their poets.

Performative Æsthetics

Versification does not exist in a vacuum. We create metrical texts intending for them to be performed in some way, whether in oral recital, musical arrangement, or in the mental performance of silent reading. The chapters of this final section address the significance of performance and reception in understanding systems of versification, and their salience to the people who use them.

In "The Poem as a Site of Inherited Structures and Artistic Innovation", Sissel Furuseth addresses the 'division of labor' between linguistic and literary approaches to poetics, and the relationship between them. Dell Hymes (1986:59) has stressed that, "It is a truism, but one frequently ignored in research, that *how* something is said is part of *what* is said". Furuseth moves into the field of cognitive poetics, focusing on æsthetics and meaning generation through the activation of indexical and intertextual associations on reception.

In "Dipod Rules: Norwegian *stev*, Paired Accents and Accentual Poetry", Jacqueline

Pattison Ekgren draws together a tremendous amount of research and fieldwork on the performance tradition of Norwegian *stev* poetry, which may be directly descended from an early Germanic meter. Ekgren shows that understanding the performance tradition is essential for understanding this poetry's meter, demonstrating that although Norwegian *stev* could be performed with dance melodies and rhythms, it could not derive from a dance tradition.

In "Speech-Acts in Skaldic Verse: Genre, Compositional Strategies and Improvisation", Frog discusses the cultural activity of a versification system, its compositional strategies and meaning-potential. He focuses on metrical speech-acts that stand outside conventional generic categorizations, and addresses historical continuities in formulas and 'multiforms' as strategies essential for generating situational 'speech-acts' in verse.

In "No Royal Road: The Extremes of *dróttkvætt* Lines in Snorri's *Háttatal*", Helgi Skúli Kjartansson addresses the flexibility of the (six syllable) *dróttkvætt* line presented in Snorri Sturluson's *ars poetica*, and the degree to which this reflects tradition. Kjartansson considers Snorri's treatment of lines that historical language changes reduced to five syllables and lines of as many as nine syllables, suggesting that these explanations reflect Snorri's own innovative adaptations of tradition.

The reception of orally delivered verse in manuscript reading and its interaction with oral culture has been little explored. In "*Gnast* and *brast*: On Metrics, Enjambment and More in Two Ditties in *Gísla saga*, the Shorter Version", Bergljót Soffía Kristjánsdóttir approaches a pair of situational verses in *The Saga of Gísli*, discussing their potential to activate an intertextual referent in the aural reception of the written saga, and going on to propose that these verses reflect a genre of improvisational verse.

The closing chapter of the volume moves back into the modern era, shifting the focus to free verse, in which the interplay of language and rhythm is highly flexible. In "Towards a Theory of Aesthetic Rhythm", Eva Lilja addresses the role of rhythm in æsthetics and meaning generation, with attention to the relationship between verbal and visual rhythms, and to the semantic content of communication.

Versatility in Versification

Every chapter of this volume provides a useful and interesting contribution to the study of metrics and poetics, drawing on a diverse background of disciplines and traditions. Though at first glance these disciplines and traditions may seem widely divergent, each chapter augments those which preceded it. When all of these various chapters are brought together, the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts. The chapters engage one another in a dialogue, and indeed, as the closing section of this volume emphasizes, it is only in reception, perhaps in the silent performance of the reader, that this multidisciplinary dialogue comes to fruition.

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Monographs

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The Norns in Old Norse Mythology
Karen Bek-Pedersen, University of Aberdeen

The *nornir* or norns were a group of female supernatural beings closely related to ideas about fate in Old Norse tradition. Karen Bek-Pedersen provides a thorough understanding of the role played by norns and other beings like them in the relevant sources. Although they are well known, even to people who have only a superficial knowledge of Old Norse mythology, this is the first detailed discussion of the norns to be published amongst the literature dealing with Old Norse beliefs.

Surprisingly little has been written specifically about the norns. Although often mentioned in scholarship treating Old Norse culture, the norns are all too often dealt with in overly superficial ways. The research presented in this book goes much deeper in order to properly understand the nature and role of the norns in the Old Norse world view. The conclusions reached by the author overturn a number of stereotypical conceptions that have long dominated our understanding of these beings.

The book has a natural focus on Old Norse culture and is especially relevant to those interested in or studying Old Norse culture and tradition. However, comparative material from Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and Classical traditions is also employed and the book is therefore of interest also to those with a broader interest in European mythologies.
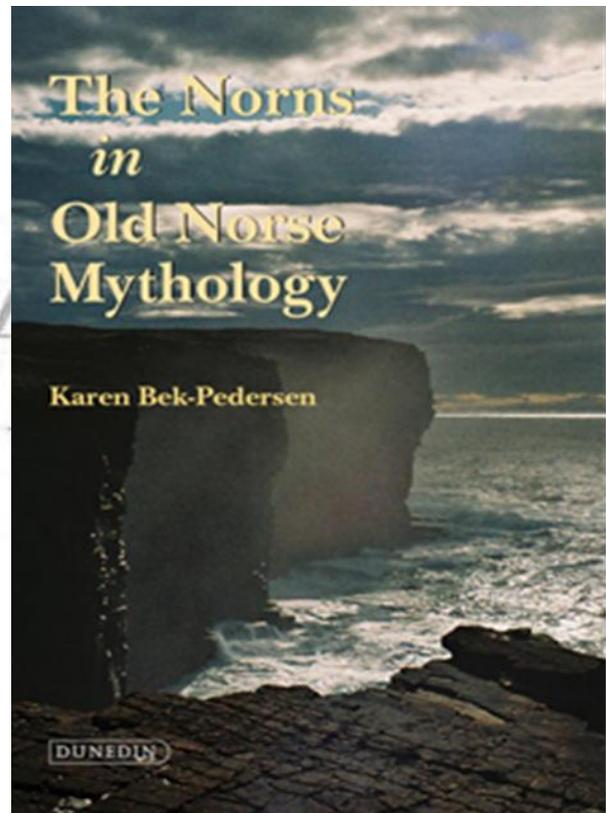
Systemic Reconstruction of Mari Ethnic Identity
(Sistemnaya rekonstruktsiya mariiskoi etnicheskoi identichnosti)

Vladimir Glukhov[†] and Natalia Glukhova, Mari State University

This work consists of an introduction, four chapters (parts), concluding remarks, a bibliography of the cited sources and a list of folklore collections.

The *introduction* contains a description of the main aim of the research, a hypothesis and an innovative investigation methodology applied to Mari folklore texts of different genres: songs (2,118 texts), proverbs and sayings (7,590), myths and legends (177 texts), and Mari proper names (9,348). It includes a description of the methodological basis of the systems theory which, in turn, involves a decision making theory and a theory of values, as well as factor and statistical analysis – a dichotomous method. The results are graphically represented in the form of tables, diagrams, histograms, cumulative curves and matrices.

The book examines the *core psychological components of Mari ethnic identity* reconstructed from authentic folklore texts of different genres. One difficulty in ethnic identity reconstruction lies in the absence of a standard by which one can assess and interpret ethnicity (cf. Phinney 1992). This book offers an approach that allows a solution for this problem. As a standard for the analysis, the work proposes to use a rank (a place in a scale) of images, symbols and values in a histogram depicting probability distributions of their mention in the genres analyzed. For any two probability histograms, a correlation coefficient, quantitatively showing coincidence of different nations' images, symbols and values, can be calculated. The authors have analyzed the concept of ethnic identity, which has the status of an analytical term and is often described as one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and one's identification with this group, as well as the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is attributable to ethnic group membership. In the monograph, the authors view ethnic identity as the authenticity of an ethnic culture to itself, considering culture as a triad system of images, symbols and values that reflect a nation's type of thinking and feeling.

The algorithm of the research includes the following steps:

1. The process of reading texts with the aim of discerning images, symbols or values (referred to with the unifying term 'factor') after applying methods of semantic investigation (componential and contextual types of text and lexeme analysis)
2. The compilation of the list of factors
3. The distribution of the texts according to the factors
4. The estimation of factor incidence and a calculation of the probability of factor usage (the preparation of tables)
5. The ranking of factors in descending order of probability
6. The singling out of dominant, complementary, auxiliary and insignificant factors by a dichotomous method, applying the principle of simple majority employed in mathematical statistics

One of the outcomes of the mathematical statistical method is deriving the histogram depicting probability distributions of the factors mentioned in the genres analyzed. The reliability of the results obtained has been assured by highly illustrative, plausible evidence embodying opinions on all phenomena of the nations' life and showing peoples' interests culled from thousands of folkloristic texts representing material filtered

through the Mari nations' memory over hundreds of years. As a starting point, the authors posit an almost self-evident idea: namely, that the more important a factor is for a Mari ethnos, the more often it will be mentioned in its texts, or that the whole meaning of the text will be devoted to this certain factor.

Chapter 1 discusses a subsystem of images in Mari culture based on the analysis of psychological time perception in lyrical songs as well as in proverbs and sayings. Time perception is analyzed with the help of five factors to which the authors refer:

1. Discreteness
2. Intensity
3. Emotional attitude
4. Cyclic recurrence
5. The possibility of prediction

Out of the five factors in the analyzed Mari songs, time is mainly perceived emotionally. Time images are connected mainly with the transition from youth to maturity. They are the 'blooming of flowers and trees' and 'trees with fruit'. Past youth is associated with 'withered flowers and plants'. Proverbs and sayings, together with their emotional attitude, stress the *intensity* of time which is evaluated negatively, thus showing more vividly the brevity of life. Another part of this chapter is dedicated to the reconstruction of Mari ethnic memory, which is carried out on the material of Mary myths and legends.

Chapter 2 deals with the results of the psychological space perception in songs and proverbs. Images of space are based on the landscape surrounding the Mari villages. One of the most important parameters in psychological space perception is its *volume*. The authors pioneer the use of several parameters in combination to show the volume of perceived space. The parameters used for its analysis are:

1. Topography (description of surface shape and other features)
2. Type of space (an area / location, place)
3. Space attainability
4. Explored possibilities of space
5. Space value
6. Arrangement of the physical qualities of space

The complex combination of volume parameters leads to the creation of different *space types*. The space types used in Mari proverbs and songs vary from 16 to 32, with the dominant group from three (in proverbs) to six (in songs), which create ethnic images of space. In proverbs and sayings, the most important space image is a narrow path in the forest leading to a distant place where life is better than in a native village. In old songs, the leading space images are meadows and forests, surrounding a native village which is situated not far from a river, stream or lake. In contemporary songs, some other types of spaces showing changes in the village infrastructure are added.

The subsystem of typical images deduced mainly from folksongs and proverbs shows close ties with the system of symbols. A symbol differs from an image by a greater degree of generalization and typicality. Their meanings are understood in texts. *Chapter 3* is dedicated to the description and analysis of the subsystem of symbols deduced form Mari proper names and lyrical songs. In Mari ethnic culture, emotions and feelings are expressed with the help of *five leading groups of symbols.* Statistical analysis, together with a dichotomous method, reveals the most widespread names of plants, numerals, colors, birds and animals,

organized into groups of dominant, auxiliary and additional symbols significant for the Mari.

Among trees, plants and flowers, the most important are:

- The birch tree
- The apple-tree in bloom
- The apple-tree with apples
- Ripening rye
- The bird cherry tree in bloom
- The oak
- Strawberries
- The poppy

Blooming trees are mainly associated with young girls, whereas a beloved young man may be associated with the poppy. Trees with fruit usually symbolize women with children. Ripening berries have several meanings, the leading among them is sexual pleasure. Trees and plants may symbolize people and their character features or qualities.

The second group of words with symbolic meanings is presented by numerals. The numerals *one* (symbolizing orphanhood, loneliness, the unique character of someone and of the native land) and *two* (which is used for symmetry, interdependence, and the formation of a balanced whole: a boy and a girl, eyes, gates, friends) form a group of dominant symbols.

In Mari culture, the most widespread color terms are *white* and *black.* In the analyzed material both words have several symbolic meanings. The prevalent meanings of white are purity, naivety and the absence of grief, whereas black is associated with sorrow and threat.

The dominant symbols in the next group are the names of such birds as the *nightingale*, *cuckoo*, *rooster* and *hen.* These birds can personify people (all four birds above), as well as loneliness (the cuckoo), melancholy and sorrow (the nightingale). Birds from a non-dominant group symbolize different types of people and can serve as symbols for

some abstract concepts (loneliness, beauty, wealth, poverty).

The least numerous group is the group of animal symbols. The most important symbol is the *steed* personifying a father, a husband, or an elder brother. Less important are the *gelding*, *cow*, *ram/sheep* and the *hare*. As in the previous groups, animals can be used as symbols of different types of people and their qualities.

The analysis and interpretation of Mari ethnic names (9,348) has revealed their specific semantic and pragmatic properties. Investigation into the semantic nature of the names brought to light the systems of ethnic symbols and values. A pragmatic approach has shown the characteristic features of the form of Mari proper names – their average length and distinct sound pattern. Among names, the following, are the nine most widespread groups of symbols:

1. A 'sprout', 'shoot' (symbolizes a new generation, offspring, children)
2. A 'home', 'roof', 'nest' (associated with the idea of a nuclear family as the only condition for the clan's survival)
3. An 'embryo', 'larva' (indicates a newborn child)
4. 'Iron', 'steel' (the symbol used in good-wishes for a child to be healthy and physically strong)
5. A 'bunch' (symbolizes family strength)
6. Names of totems (indicate the clan of relatives and include the names of animals and birds)
7. A 'root' (a symbol of the founder of the clan)
8. A 'man' (shows male dominance in the system of family relationship)
9. 'Fruit", a 'berry' (associated with a new born child)

A summary of the meanings of all of these reveals that Mari proper personal names were created in a patriarchal society in a tribal system during the Iron Age, under strong influence of neighboring tribes in a forest zone.

The focus of *Chapter 4* is the Mari value system. Any society or economy represents a certain life-style that has its own system of values. The term 'value' can be understood in different ways. Dictionaries define value as both *a*) abstract concepts of worth, standards of principle, or qualities considered worthwhile or desirable, and *b*) material objects (e.g., an apartment, a car, a precious ring, painting, etc.). In a word, value is what we think is good or important for us. The study of the values of individuals and social groups, not to mention an entire society, is difficult. A fundamental problem is finding proper indicators of a given value. In the present monograph, the Mari ethnic value system has been deduced from ancient Mari texts (proverbs and sayings) with the help of componential and contextual types of analysis. A people's 'popular' wisdom reflects the ethnic system of values in concentrated form as represented in proverbs and sayings. Factor and statistical analysis of the texts, namely 7,590 proverbs, permitted arranging basic traditional values into the following order of priorities:

1. Family (large, extended, and nuclear)
2. Ethics (strict hierarchy of moral qualities with a strong accent on respect towards elderly men)
3. Labor (physical agricultural work for the benefit of a large, extended family)
4. Knowledge (of nature and the climatic conditions useful to provide for the everyday life of an extended family)
5. Food
6. Speech, communication
7. Wealth
8. Health.

Semantic investigation of 9,348 Mari proper names has shown that they contain an inventory of 21 values. The main group includes five of them. The results allow the arrangement of Mari basic traditional values in the following order of priorities:

1. Family
2. Health

3. Ethics (consisting of a strict hierarchy in the clan)
4. Wealth
5. Clan

In the monograph, the Mari ethnic ethical system is also analyzed. The authors show the vices and moral flaws disapproved of by the Mari in their proverbs and sayings.

In the *Conclusion*, the authors summarize the results of their reconstruction. They hold that their research of Mari ethnic culture in its folklore genres has shown the main aspects of Mari collective consciousness. Three leading subsystems – a subsystem of images, a subsystem of symbols and a subsystem of values – show the character of a nation's thinking and feeling, demonstrating a harmonious correlation among sensory-pictorial, pictorial and rational types of reality evaluation. Psychological time perception is harmonious and emotional. Out of five factors singled out in the book, only cyclic recurrence is not well represented. Ethnic time images are associated with the blooming of flowers, trees and plants and their withering.

The evolution of ethnic space perception shows the change of three leading images of native land – starting with a narrow forest path (leading to a distant place where life is much better than in a native place), through the image of meadows and fields (surrounding a native village), and finishing with a village street with one's own house, garden and orchard.

The analysis and interpretation of the symbolic meanings of plants, numerals, colors, birds, and animals reveal the unique ethnic system of symbols reflecting an emotional evaluation of life phenomena. As the Mari culture is characterized by animistic beliefs and the worship of trees and forests, the investigated genres lack images and symbols typical of monotheistic religions. The essential idea expressed in the system of leading Mari symbols comes down to the reproduction of the clan in a nuclear, monogamous family within a large extended family.

The Mari ethnic system of values embraces a wide range of priorities, highlighting eight as the most important. The list of these priorities may seem trivial, but they show a wise economy of resources for clan survival under severe climatic circumstances, limiting the consumption of resources, as well as complicated interpersonal relationships within a large extended family. The reconstructed and analyzed subsystems of images, symbols and values constituting Mari ethnic identity have no counterparts in the described cultures of the world, and being authentic and unique, they organize the complete and exclusive triad-system of Mari culture.

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Doctoral Research Projects

Literary Perception and Cultural Identity: Exploring the Pan-Atlantic Identity 800–1300 [working title]

Rosalind Bonté, University of Cambridge

From the mid-8th century onwards, Scandinavian immigrants, primarily from Norway, left their homelands to found new colonies across the North Atlantic. This migration began with the earliest settlements in Orkney and the Faroes, continued via Iceland, and finally culminated in a last push across the Atlantic to Greenland (and even, briefly, to the east coast of the American continent). The result was a widespread diaspora of Norse speakers, a 'pan-Atlantic' community with a shared history and a shared culture.

This, at least, is the impression given in the 13th century Icelandic sagas, where skalds, fighters and traders could sail between different communities and still find their own cultural niche. But to what extent is this understanding of a pan-Atlantic identity true? Some 500 years after the first Norse-speakers began journeying to new lands, the North Atlantic was indeed pulled together into a political community, the *Norgesveldet* [the Norwegian realm and its dependencies] under the sway of the Norwegian king. What impact did Norwegian expansionism and concern about the present have upon the Icelandic depiction of the past? And is the idea of a pan-Atlantic identity anything more than a late literary construct?

In my thesis, I will address the concept of a pan-Atlantic identity through a close study of the Norse colonies of the North Atlantic. This analysis will be in two different parts. In the first section, I will attempt to explore the nature of the pan-Atlantic identity as

perceived by 13th century Icelanders by questioning how the North Atlantic diaspora was depicted in some of the most geographically wide-ranging of the Icelandic texts – namely the *konungasögur* or kings' sagas. In particular, given that texts such as *Morkinsinna*, *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* were written much later than the events they purport to describe, I aim to set the texts in their historical context and question whether events in 13th century Iceland and the encroaching threat of Norwegian power may have encouraged the Icelanders to look beyond their own island to their kindred communities across the North Atlantic.

In the second section of the thesis, I will continue this theme by focusing more closely on Iceland's neighbouring colonies in the North Atlantic: Orkney, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Using the Icelandic saga material that focuses particularly on these settlements, I aim to give a close analysis of the way in which the identity of each of these settlements is depicted in this 13th century source material, and question how these communities were portrayed within the texts and the way in which this fed into the construction of a pan-Atlantic identity. In particular, I want to explore why the Icelanders were interested in writing about their neighbours. Was it because they genuinely saw these colonies as kindred, or did they want to test their ideas about identity and independence by setting them in an environment that was at once similar and yet separate to Iceland?

I will then move away from this decidedly Icelandic viewpoint by discussing key points of the saga texts alongside other source material. In particular, I will draw on native contemporary material finds that may give us a very different impression of the North Atlantic of the later sagas texts, as well as making use of other historical source material such as annals, synoptic histories and ecclesiastical documents. In this way, I hope to be able to unpick the literary myth of a pan-Atlantic identity and instead replace it

with a more nuanced understanding of why the Icelanders chose to develop this myth.

The boundaries of this thesis may seem broad: perhaps it is more easily defined by stating what I do *not* intend to do. In particular, I do not intend to draw specific conclusions about identity in Orkney, the Faroes or Greenland: rather, it is my intention to use these settlements as case studies, snapshots of an Icelandic need and viewpoint during a specific period in history. Nor do I intend to use my thesis to come up with a new definition of social or cultural identity – instead, I intend to build on the ideas set out by Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Frederick Barth (1969), Kirsten Hastrup (1985) and Richard Jenkins (2008), and to apply their definitions to this specific cultural setting. By avoiding these two areas – each worthy of a thesis in its own right – I hope to offer a more focused discussion of my main interest: whether the Icelandic interest in their fellow North Atlantic colonies and their depiction of a pan-Atlantic identity in saga texts was the result of political expediency in the face of Norwegian expansionism, and their subsequent desire to explore what Icelandic identity involved.

A Royalist Approach
In line with this overview, I will therefore begin my thesis by exploring our medieval Icelandic literary sources, questioning in particular how the Icelanders depicted connections between Norway and the wider North Atlantic community and comparing the *konungasögur* to early foreign texts such as Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* and the Norwegian synoptic histories. Central to this issue is the representation of the Norwegian kings in Icelandic saga literature. In particular, I aim to question the literary notion of a 'pan-Atlantic identity' by exploring the literary presentation of four Norwegian kings and their activities in the west. From Haraldr *hárfagri*, who triggered the migration to the new North Atlantic settlements, to Óláfr Tryggvason, who Christianised them, and from Magnús

berfœttr, who died raiding in the west, to Hákon Hákonarson, who forced the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland to submit to Norwegian authority, these kings are typified in the Icelandic literature as unifiers and claimants to the greater Norse world in the Atlantic. I will suggest, however, that these literary presentations are connected, and that the kings were used by the Icelanders as a basis for the medieval notion of a unifying pan-Atlantic identity.

A clear example of the way in which the image of a Norwegian king may have been manipulated within the Icelandic saga material can be given with the case of Óláfr Tryggvason. A zealous missionary, Óláfr is depicted in the Icelandic texts as having Christianized both Norway and the Norse North Atlantic in five short years through a clever combination of fair speech and brute force. I argue, however, that this depiction of Óláfr developed over time in response to growing Icelandic concerns about Norwegian royal power. I therefore suggest that the Icelanders deliberately depicted the conversions of Orkney, the Faroes and Greenland as heavily Norwegian-influenced to act as a counterpoint to the more evidently self-determined Icelandic conversion, thus creating a *Freiheitsmythos* that justified Icelandic independence from Norway (Weber, 1987: 125–40). To this end, Óláfr Tryggvason was used as a tool by medieval authors to highlight certain cultural similarities across the Norse diaspora at the same time as revealing key differences between the colonies. In emphasising that Iceland accepted Christianity of its own volition and thus neutralising the role played by Óláfr Tryggvason, the 13th century saga authors were also making a statement about their contemporary independence in the face of encroaching Norwegian authority.

By exploring the literary depiction of Haraldr *hárfagri*, Óláfr Tryggvason and Magnús *berfœttr* and their role in the west, I aim to trace how myths about these kings may have built up over time, culminating in their presentation in the 13th century *konungasögur*. More particularly, I want to question the way such myths may have been used in the face of growing Norwegian expansionism. Finally, I hope to explore the impact that earlier texts such as *Heimskringla* may have had on the relatively contemporary *Hákons saga Hákonarsonar* – and whether Hákon may even have drawn inspiration for the creation of the *Norgesveldet* from his quasi-mythical ancestors.

North Atlantic Drift
My discussion of the *konungasögur* will be offset by my focus on the Icelandic depiction of Orkney, the Faroes and Greenland as I question why these settlements became the subject of sagas and what this may tell us about the society that gave rise to these texts. Using only those texts that focus specifically on these colonies – *Orkneyinga saga*, *Færeyinga saga*, the two Vínland sagas and *Einars þáttr Sokkasonar* (also known as *Grœnlendinga þáttr*) – I aim to provide a close analysis of the depiction of identity within these texts.

A specific example of my approach to these sagas can perhaps by given by my work on *Einars þáttr Sokkasonar* (ÍF 4: 271–92). This short text, although written in Iceland, is often considered unique in the saga corpus for its decidedly Greenlandic perspective. Central to the text, detailing a conflict between a recalcitrant bishop, his followers and several aggrieved Norwegian merchants, is the insistence of the Greenlanders that they act *eptir grœnlenzkum lǫgum* ['according to Greenlandic law'] – a symbolic move that I suggest is designed to establish an independent Greenlandic identity in the face of Norwegian threats (ÍF 4: 280). While this text conceivably reflects a significant Greenlandic tradition, nonetheless it was preserved in Icelandic tradition and Icelandic texts, and could therefore tell us something interesting about the Icelanders themselves. What, for example, can this text tell us about the connection between law and literary

identity? And why might the Icelanders have been interested in exploring Greenlandic resistance to an apparently Norwegian threat?

Hard Evidence

Following on from my literary analysis of the saga texts, I will then move on to a more interdisciplinary approach, drawing in particular on the results of archaeology, as well as on other fields such as onomastics, genetics and climatology. To enable a close frame of reference and a focused argumentation, I have selected two case studies for each North Atlantic colony that can be explored in relation to the ideas set out in the saga texts. Thus for Orkney I will look at the Brough of Birsay and the Brough of Deerness (the latter site being familiar to me as I took part in excavations there in June 2011). In the case of the Faroes, I will focus on the sites of Sandur and Niðri á Toft. Finally, in Greenland, I will explore Brattahlíð in the Eastern settlement and Sandur in the Western settlement.

Putting archaeological and literary sources into dialogue can often be an extremely fruitful approach, but in many ways it also raises more questions than we can perhaps hope to answer. A case in point is perhaps reflected at the site of the Brough of Deerness. This small, elite settlement, positioned at the top of a sea-stack off Orkney's main island, Mainland, is home to both a small chapel and around thirty associated buildings. The site has been excavated at various different times, with Christopher Morris focusing on the area around the still-partially standing stone chapel in the 1970s (Morris, 1986), and James Barrett more recently exploring the surrounding buildings in 2008, 2009 and 2011. While the site as a whole promises to be an extremely illuminating case-study, of particular interest at the moment is the chapel.

Saga tradition holds that the missionary king Óláfr Tryggvason, mentioned above, was responsible for the forcible conversion of Orkney to Christianity c. 995 as he returned to Norway to claim his position as king (*ÍF* 34: 25–7). But, if we set the saga narrative aside and instead look only at the material evidence from the Brough of Deerness, a different conclusion might be reached.

When the stone chapel was excavated, it was in fact discovered that there were two superimposed phases on the site. Beneath the stone construction, the remains of an earlier stone-clad timber chapel were found (Morris: 1986, 1996). Discovered between the two layers was a worn coin of the Anglo-Saxon king Eadgar (ruled 959–75), which, Barrett has suggested, arguably provides a *terminus post quem* for the stone construction and a *terminus ante quem* for the earlier timber building (Barrett, 2003: 215). As such, this might mean that there was a Christian building on a Norse site by around 975 – some twenty years before Óláfr Tryggvason was said to have converted Orkney. Inevitably, there are some difficulties with this theory Morris pointed out that the wooden remains could represent a pre-Norse population, although he ultimately concluded that the building was architecturally most consistent with a Norse milieu (Morris 1996: 192). Moreover, the coin could have been old at the time of deposition, pushing the period of construction later. Nonetheless, Barrett has argued for an early date that precedes Óláfr Tryggvason's alleged mission, raising an interesting discrepancy between archaeological and literary findings (Barrett 2003: 215–21).

While the findings at the Brough of Deerness remain open to debate, the site provides a clear example of how, by bringing archaeological and textual sources into dialogue we can – if not necessarily prove a contradiction – at least highlight the possibility that events may not have occurred in quite the way in which they are presented in the Icelandic saga literature. It is by highlighting such differences that I hope to draw some conclusions about how and why the Icelanders chose to depict their neighbours, and in doing so, to ask what this

might tell us about the identity of the Icelanders themselves. By drawing on different fields of research, it is possible to distance ourselves from the narrative of the main Icelandic source material, and in doing so, question what the very production of these texts can tell us.

Conclusions

The final chapter of my thesis will be used to draw my findings together. In particular, I will assess whether we really can speak of a pan-Atlantic identity and whether there really were degrees of kinship across the North Atlantic before the creation of the *Norgesveldet*. I will also question why the Icelanders might have been interested in exploring this idea given their own relationship with the kings of Norway. Ultimately, I hope that this thesis will give some insight into an extremely interesting period of textual productivity in Iceland, as well as offering some suggestions as to the ideas and interests that may have underlain sagas looking at the wider Norse Atlantic.

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Seto Singing Culture in Studies of Estonian Folklore: A Supplement to the History of Representation

Andreas Kalkun, Estonian Literary Museum

The aim of the dissertation *Seto Singing Culture in Studies of Estonian Folklore: A Supplement to the History of Representation* is to provide four insights or supplements to the history of Seto folklore collection and publication, as well as to the history of the representation of the Seto singing culture. The four chapters describe case studies that aim to reveal certain aspects of the relationship between Estonian folkloristics and Seto heritage. Though the subject of the dissertation is the disciplinary history of collecting traditional Seto poetry, as well as of the associated editing and publishing

practices, this thesis does not merely focus on 'things from the past', but also on the critical and reflexive analysis of representations. For this work, it has been considered necessary to study the theoretical and methodological framework presented by scholars writing about the Seto people and their cultural heritage. In addition, their ideological or political position, as well as the poetics and rhetoric that configure their writings have been examined. This history of representation discusses many notable individuals (Kreutzwald, Hurt, Krohn, Väisanen, Sommer, Loorits), institutions (Estonian Folklore Archives, the Association of the Border Regions), the largest archive containing Seto folklore (The Sommer Folklore Collection), and, the most significant publication of poetic texts in the field of Seto folklore collection and studies, *Setukeste laulud* ['Songs of the Seto']. However, this work is not a regular disciplinary history focusing on the institutional aspects or on individual scholars, as it endeavors to bring forth the 'voice' of the Seto alongside representations of them by folklorists. This representational history is presented from a *halfie* position which has determined my choice of a specific perspective, where my purpose was to highlight the Seto people and to create a history in which the Seto might be granted a particular subjectivity. This study reveals the complexity of the collection and representation of the Seto as the 'other' in Estonian folklore studies, and also stresses the ideological and politicized nature of folklore collecting, of publishing and of the process of representation.

This study has set out to uncover how the knowledge of Seto singing culture in Estonian folklore discourse has been created. The four case studies demonstrate the embeddedness of folklore collecting, studying or publishing in the particular historical settings, politics and academic trends of the time. Historically, the Seto heritage, and especially its singing culture, has been considered attractive and important due to its ancient traits, and therefore Seto songs were collected relatively actively in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Furthermore, the Seto heritage has been considered a valuable part of Estonian or, more broadly, Finno-Ugrian heritage, but such a context has inevitably resulted in 'erasing' the Seto heritage as an independent entity and neglecting some specific phenomena that are unique to the Seto themselves. The catalyst that triggered interest in this project and provided a background to its research was the problem of the so-called 'improvisational' songs (labelled thus by folklorists), which the Setos themselves have held in high esteem, although they appear to be scarce in folklore archives or publications, being neglected as a research topic.

The approach employed here shows how the knowledge of Seto folklore, as well as a selection of collected and published heritage, are imbued with politics and ideology. The study of meta-texts on Seto heritage reveals an obvious connection between Estonian folkloristics and the Estonian national identity project. Seto folklore has been unequivocally regarded as an integral part of Estonian folklore, or alternatively as an ancient microcosm of general Estonian culture. Including Seto culture in the framework of Estonian or Finno-Ugrian heritage has provided researchers with a particular ideological and theoretical grid, but this perception has also defined the methodologies used. For example, the lyric-epic poetry of the Seto singing culture – so highly estimated in scholarly circles – is in fact rare in Estonian folklore more generally, and yet it has, at the same time, enabled researchers to link Estonian traditional poetry with Karelian epic traditions. Seto folklore has become a part of the Estonian ideological and national project, which means, however, that specific Seto phenomena have remained disregarded in previous studies. The Seto perception of their singing culture has not been of much interest to researchers, and the context-related improvisations that the Seto consider to be the

most representative part of their singing culture have not been collected. Folklorists have neglected this repertoire because these songs have been composed explicitly for particular occasions and thus do not meet the criteria of memorization and age presumed of traditional heritage. The desire to 'rescue' the old songs of the Seto for posterity has resulted in imposing collection projects on folklorists as well as in initiating the somewhat perverse counting of verse lines performed with an aspect of competition.

The present investigation is guided by the theoretical frame of Hayden White's (1975; 1985) critical disciplinary history, which emphasizes the poetic and rhetorical side of history writing. In addition, it employs a maneuver known from the feminist theory of history writing to 'add' a 'missing part' to the current historiography in order to shift the perspective of the approach. This enables the introduction of new problems and thereby to question the representativity of the former historiography. This analysis of the representation of the Seto in the history of Estonian folkloristics encompasses a critical awareness of the poetics and rhetoric of the descriptions of cultures, histories and other texts I have studied. I have been interested in the 'meta-historical gestures' of writers, in tropes used in texts, and in the poetics of narratives. Being aware of the narrative and specific poetic nature of history writing has in turn made me more critical of my own text and inspired me to try out different ways of writing. This study comes from the perspective of a 'Seto' folklorist, and therefore it can be seen as a 'supplement' to other folkloristic writings. This specific perspective prevents the dissertation from merely continuing the existing disciplinary history, but, in keeping with Virginia Woolf's (1963) or Jacques Derrida's (1997) terminology, it takes the form of a marginal supplement or critical 'replacement' of that history. However, the aim of the dissertation is not to help the truth come to light, call to order or rehabilitate anyone from the past.

Instead, it takes interest in the specific historical features of writing about the Seto, i.e. the discourse about the Seto and how it constructed the truth it claimed.

The four chapters of the dissertation concern core topics in the studies of the Seto culture while offering a new perspective and thorough analysis of topics that have been previously neglected (the study of the Seto improvisations) or that have only received limited attention (due to the editing practices of *Setukeste laulud*, Samuel Sommer's folklore archive, its foundation and handing-over to the Estonian Folklore Archives, the field work by Väisanen). Although the four topics chosen for the case studies are essential in the historiography of the studies of Seto culture, the current work only provides an introduction to the complicated representational history of Seto folklore, which still needs further examination.

The history of collecting and studying Seto folklore has been inseparably linked to the general representation of the Seto and their position in this process. The position of the Seto in the disciplinary field in relation to the Estonians has been varied, and the attitude towards the Seto people has been ambivalent. The present research focuses mostly on the period of the 'discovery' and 'domestication', when the Seto served as 'ideal primeval Estonians' and were referred to as 'younger brothers', 'lost sons' and 'the drawing card of Estonian folkloristics'. All these patronizing comparisons have referred to the 'otherness' of the Seto, but they have also confirmed the image of a kindred folk that, due to several historical reasons, has altered or changed. These and other tropes in the meta-texts about Seto folklore are regarded critically in the present study, which highlights the repeating motifs and rhetorical devices used by folklorists by showing the intertextual relations or theoretical and ideological arguments of different approaches.

Since the story of Seto heritage has been on the periphery of the history of the discipline, incorporating the Seto into the

history of Estonian folkoristics has meant 'archeological' work: identifying, examining and illuminating the sources. In fact, an important part of this research has been the creation of sources – for example, looking for references related to improvisations in marginal writings or identifying the 'voice' of Seto women in the notebooks and recordings of A.O. Väisanen. Throughout this process, the intention of the researcher and interpreter has been crucial and overtly expressed, which is the reason why the Setos and their folklore are the focus of this research.

This dissertation consists of an introduction and four chapters, all of which focus on the problems related to the recording and interpretation of the Seto poetic heritage. All the chapters stress the selectiveness of folklore collection and the notion of the 'constructedness' of any type of representation. I have paid special attention to the rhetoric and repeating images used by former researchers. Each chapter offers a case study that complements a theoretical problem.

Introduction: How to Write a History of the Collection of Seto Folksongs introduces the problems discussed in the dissertation and describes the place of the Seto in the published disciplinary histories of Estonian folkoristics. It also presents the terminology and theoretical framework used, with an additional analysis of my own position as a researcher and author in order to explain the term 'supplement' and the special nature of my sources.

The first chapter, *Improvisations in Seto Singing Culture: Interpretations of Researchers and Singers*, traces the Seto improvisations in the history of Estonian folkoristics and investigates the research history of the phenomenon diachronically. The chapter focuses on the analyses of Seto improvisations in the meta-texts created by folklorists and reveals the intertextual relations and the dynamics of transformations and repetitions. The brief research history of improvisational songs concentrates primarily on the reasons for the neglect of this repertoire among folklorists. It describes the special status of improvisations in the Seto singing culture, and raises the question about the scarcity of studies on these improvisations and the frequent negative references to them in folkloristic research. These are complimented with an analysis of the differences between the popular and scientific classifications of songs. It presents the very earliest descriptions of Seto singing and Seto poetry in order to identify their ideological backgrounds. This is done by showing the kinship or intertextual relations between Schlegel's, Hupel's and Kreutzwald's writings on improvisations and those concerning singing in general, which obviously have had as much impact on folklore scholars as their field work experience. This research history also introduces the classifications of the Seto songs made by Jakob Hurt, A.O. Väisanen et al. and the place of improvisations in these classifications, followed by an overview of the change in paradigm that occurred in Estonian folkoristics in the 1930s. The chapter ends with a description of how folkloristic research treated Seto improvisations in Soviet Estonia. This brief research history shows that, due to folklorists' desire for an 'ancient' heritage and their text-centered approach based on the Historical-Geographic Method, the improvisations that were context- and singer-centered improvisations – although especially important to the Seto themselves – were ignored.

The issue of Seto improvisations is related to many interesting questions in the research history of Estonian folk poetry, These include questions of the age and value of songs, questions concerning remembering or creating poetry, whether they were women's or men's songs, problems of generic composition and of the age of genres in the singing heritage. Often the writings on improvisations have a disparaging tone. Research paradigms that fixate on ancient songs and the memorizing singer have created

a situation in which the collectors and researchers of improvisations have found it necessary to 'apologize' for dealing with such a subject. In most cases, they have excused their interest in improvisations by claiming that they were studying the creation methods used by singers. In other cases, the collection and study of improvisations has also been initiated by references to the names of prestigious figures occurring in the lyrics, or to a search for particular songs or singers who might be considered representative of the tradition for ideological purposes.

The second chapter, *Folksong Publication as Creation: The Representation of the Seto Heritage in* Setukeste laulud *by Jakob Hurt*, analyzes some aspects of the production of the edition *Setukeste laulud* and the editing principles of the Seto songs defined by Jakob Hurt and Kaarle Krohn. This analysis emphasizes the importance of the editors' role and reveals the methodological and ideological backgrounds of this publication. Hurt's editing practices derived from his theoretical framework, based on Jacob Grimm's comparative linguistics, Darwinist enthusiasm for fossils and Krohn's Historical-Geographic Method of folklore studies. The understanding that the Seto were less developed, and the hope to be able to use that fact to write the history of the Estonians (who were considered more developed), incited scholars to focus on the older part of the Seto singing culture (lyric-epic songs) while paying less attention to lyric songs and disregarding improvisations related to a site or individual.

In studying the editing and publishing principles of Hurt and Krohn, focus is placed on the practice of dissecting the songs and the concurrent justification of such a practice. The process of classifying songs for publication has been investigated on the basis of the archived personal correspondence between Hurt and Krohn. These scholars differentiated between the so-called simple and complex Seto songs, while the compound songs appear to contradict their typological

system. This resulted in month-long discussions between the two scholars; their urge to create a typology and classification changed their assessment of songs that did not fit into the system. Jakob Hurt's publication of *Setukeste laulud* ['The Songs of the Seto'] clearly reflects the collector and his collecting ideology. It recontextualizes the songs and gives only one possible version of the Seto singing culture.

The third chapter, *The Context of Fieldwork and the "Creation" of Research Material: A.O. Väisanen's Fieldwork in 1922 and His Recording Seto Women*, gives an overview of the special features of the collection of Seto folklore and explores, in the form of a case study, the fieldwork of A.O. Väisanen in Setomaa in 1922. The chapter aims to reveal the stories of the creation of documented folklore texts that have been published or stored in the archives. I explore the context of doing field work and the encounters with the 'Seto folk' as a process of dialogue, which forms an integral part of my research, alongside the folklore performed and recorded.

To introduce the analysis of Väisanen's field work, it gives an overview of the rhetoric and rationale for his comparison of the Setos and the Karelians, but it also describes the field work methods of the former collectors of Seto folklore and analyzes the reflections in their travelogues. It explores the collaboration between collectors, scholars and singers, based on their reflections on Seto traditions, customs and their gender system. An intriguing issue appears to have been the practice of paying for the performance of folklore. Based on the abundant documented material of A.O. Väisanen's fieldwork during 1922, it has been possible to recover and subsequently deconstructed the process, while using the improvisations performed and conversation extracts in order to trace the experience of a documentation event with Seto women. This results in a narrative about field work events that makes it possible to hear the 'voice' of

the individual or individuals being recorded, thus providing a kind of counter-narrative to Väisanen's fieldwork accounts.

The improvisations recorded by Väisanen and the extracts of conversations that he had written down show the other side of folklore collection – the context of the recording process that has seldom been reflected in later publications. These observations and the contextual analysis set the songs performed, the photos taken, and the works of art created (sculptures, paintings) in a different light and demonstrate the dominant role of the researcher in the process of selecting and storing 'sources'. The ultimate fieldwork result to be preserved depended primarily on the will of a selecting, combining and directing researcher/collector. A dialogue between the recorder and the individual being recorded undoubtedly occurred, but it was clearly unequal and subject to the researcher's will.

The impact of Väisanen's 1922 fieldwork on Estonian folkloristics was not restricted to the songs, photos and works of art he took back to Finland. His fieldwork and writings left a mark on the later discourse of Seto Studies more generally. As a foreigner, Väisanen's regular fieldwork in Setomaa and his special interest in documenting Seto culture left a permanent impact. His presentations of Seto culture and his opinions reflected in them have influenced later representations and served as a model for Estonian researchers.

The forth chapter, *To Whom Does the Seto Heritage Belong? The Story and Reception of Samuel Sommer's Folklore Collection*, presents the story of the foundation of Samuel Sommer's folklore collection and how it ended up at the Estonian Folklore Archives. This chapter focuses particularly on the ownership problem of folksongs and discusses the image of folklore collection. The foundation of Estonian folklore collection was a symbolic project from the very beginning: folklore collections were seen as common national property, the common

capital of Estonians that was presumed to prove the nation's existence and greatness in spirit. The collection practices and the size of 'our' (i.e. Estonian) collections have at times dazzled other folklorists and inspired them to start more ambitious and larger publication and collection projects. Among the latter, Sommer's folklore collection was without doubt one of the most extraordinary. This chapter introduces Sommer's views and visions, his organized collection of Seto folklore and its reflection in the media. Based on contemporary personal correspondence and also on discussion in the newspapers, it sheds light on his conflict with Oskar Loorits, the head of the Archives, who subsequently influenced the fate and representation of Sommer's folklore collection. The present discussion presents the institutional relations with the owners of private folklore collections and Sommer's court case, after which his collection was declared ancient heritage and taken under the Archive's protection as national property. The analysis touches upon several sensitive issues in the history of Estonian folkloristics (ownership and location of folklore collections, their pending sale or disappearance) and the metaphors used in connection with collecting folklore.

Untangling the story of Sommer's collection reveals the political nature of folklore collecting practices, culminating in the creation of a national archive. It also shows how much the history of the discipline has been influenced by interpersonal relations and the media. In the conflict between Sommer and the Archives, a question emerged: to whom does the Seto heritage belong? Symptomatically, the Seto people were left out of this discussion, the only question asked was whether the heritage belonged to the organizer of the collection or to the whole Estonian nation – and thus to the national Archives. In the discussion about copyrights and heritage protection, the Seto were excluded, although they, as the creators and performers of their culture, were closest to the subject of the argument. The main

problem appears to have been the debate about when an item of documented folklore would turn into national property, and thus become part of the ancient heritage of the Estonian nation, to be registered and preserved.

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Landscapes of the Living and of Bygone Days: Kolguev in the Everyday Life, Recollection and Narration of the Nenets

Karina Lukin, University of Helsinki

The Nenets are an ethnic community living in northern Russia and northwestern Siberia. They comprise a part of the so-called small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North, an administrative whole of 40 ethnic communities in the Russian Federation. During the Soviet years these peoples were settled from the tundra or taiga into the Soviet type settlements, leaving the surrounding landscape uninhabited but still significant and vital. *Landscapes of the Living and Bygone Days* discusses the conceptions of place and landscape among Nenets living on the island of Kolguev, situated in the Barents Sea. The study focuses on the places and landscapes of everyday life and their narration of a post-Soviet community that has left its traditional environment and moved towards the settlement and modernization.

The research material was collected in Bugrino in four periods of ethnographic fieldwork during the years 2000–2005. The main material of the study consists of oral
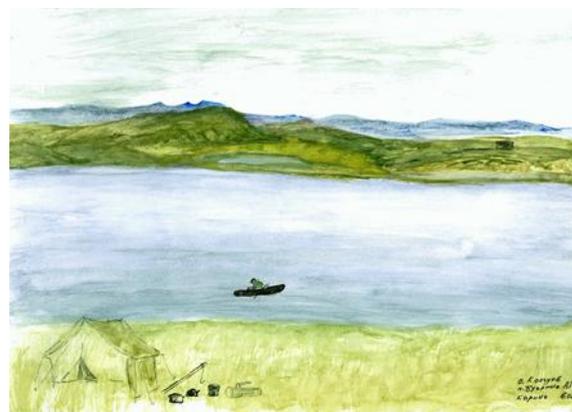
A Kolguev landscape painted by Grigorij Ivanovich Ardeev, a Kolguev islander

traditions and recollections performed in Russian, along with Russian and Nenets place names. The complementary archival and other written material functions as a background for the Nenets speech material and makes it understandable, but is also juxtaposed with the Nenets material.

The study unfolds the relationships between Taleworlds, physical places and

landscapes and different periods of time in the life and speech of the Kolguev Nenets. Accordingly, the study leans on Keith Basso's (1996) ideas about sense of place and interanimation. The Halbwachsian ideas about places as permanent frames, and thus their importance for a community's sense of stability, are also central in this study (Halbwachs 1980; 1992).

When analyzing the oral tradition, the study focuses on the thematic contents of speech in the context of Nenets oral tradition. Oral tradition is here regarded as an intertextual system built around collective systems of utterances, contents, structures, genres and their simultaneous and interactive usage in the creation and interpretation of meanings. It is an open system that is available in different ways to different individuals in the community. The analysis aims to uncover how and why performers build connections to previous performances and the larger body of Tundra Nenets folklore. Concentration on thematic analysis means that research has been oriented toward finding recurring themes and their contexts and frames of performance.

The concepts of Taleworld and Storyrealm developed by Katharine Young (1987) provide a point of departure for the disentanglement of thematic wholes. Whereas Storyrealm refers to the event of the telling as a bounded act in the realm of a conversation, a Taleworld is the world created by the teller in the Storyrealm. The relationship between Taleworlds and place is twofold. On the one hand, the tellers themselves create the places of a Taleworld in relation to the previous Taleworlds. On the other hand, everyday life outside the Storyrealm penetrates into the Taleworlds. All in all, Taleworlds are not separate from physical landscapes. These interact constantly with each other in the Storyrealm, but also outside of it. Taleworlds animate physical landscapes, which reciprocally lend their features to the Taleworlds.

The Settlement

The analysis moves from the contemporary settlement to the tundra, which was and remains a significant landscape for the Kolguev Nenets. The settlement is a community that arrived in Bugrino from different directions. Russians and Ukrainians came to build a new Soviet community; Nenets moved there because the prospect of life in houses and settlements represented modernity and progress. In the Taleworld of the radiant past (*svetloe proshloe*), Bugrino is a home for the community of the collective economy.

The negative sense of place attached to the settlement is analyzed as a part of a long continuum of descriptions, according to which the Nenets living in or near the Russian villages are seen in terms of degeneration and exploitation. In these descriptions, Bugrino is evaluated in relation to big cities of the mainland or in relation to the evaluations of the outsiders about the settlement. The negative sense of place is produced in the speech of Kolguev islanders within the genre of litany, transmitting the image of complete disintegration (*polnaia razrukha*) (Ries 1997). Although attached to the same physical environment, the Taleworld of the radiant past and the negative sense of place are almost total opposites of each other.

Taleworlds of the Past

The places of Kolguev Island are situated in multiple and diverse levels depending on the point of view. In the beginning of the analysis, the Nenets and Russian senses of the Kolguev landscape are sketched as two different views, i.e. marine view and tundra view. As, in the 19th century, the Nenets lived on the island year-round, herding and hunting, they dominated the tundra and came to the coast from the inland tundra. The Russian Pomor traders and hunters, on the other hand, came to the island from the sea and stayed in coastal areas when visiting Kolguev. Based on this concrete division of the landscape in the past, both views are reflected in place

names, recollections and written materials. Although the views differ, they are not completely opposite or mutually exclusive.

I contrast these landscapes using the terminology of Denis Cosgrove (1989). The dominant landscapes are especially Russian images of the island and they are concentrated in the coastal areas of Kolguev. These landscapes are opposed to the alternative landscape of the Nenets that is often ignored in travelogues and the diaries of outsiders. As a dominant landscape, Kolguev is a strange, frightening and empty island detached from the mainland. In addition to the sea and the mainland, coastal residences provide points of view for perceiving the whole island. The depths of Kolguev (*glub' ostrova*), from which the Nenets come to the trading posts, are unknown to the Russians. In addition, the trading posts are described as filthy, gray and crude places, and the trading itself is described as exploiting the Nenets.

The alternative landscape in the Nenets recollections represents a different kind of Taleworld of the past. Especially important are the areas near the trading post of Bugrino and the old harbor of Sharok, as these are also central dominant landscapes that occur in Nenets recollections. They are places where culturally significant times and places meet. These are called hot spots of tradition (Siikala & Siikala 2005) in the study. The hottest point in Nenets recollections is Sharok Harbor. It is the place where the Nenets forefathers landed when coming to the island; a place where a shaman built a chapel and where the Nenets performed their rituals. Reindeer were slaughtered in Sharok, both reindeer and the products of hunting were stored in the harbor's granaries; it was a trading post where communally important issues were discussed. Sharok was also a place for encounters between different ways of thinking, between the different religious ideologies that are reflected in the recollections and in the physical artifacts of the harbor.

The hot spots of the past's Taleworlds seem to gather in the places that were not centers of everyday activities. The significant periods and places for the community are indeed significant because of their exceptionality. In addition to Sharok, there are other such kinds of places on the coast of the island. For example, the recollections of the primordial Nenets on the island, told in frames that play with historical and mythical Taleworlds, center on the coastal areas. Everyday life does not give rise to circulating recollections as the elevated events in the life of the community do. Thus, daily nomadic life is not attached to the places where recollections are centered. Nomadic life is attached to routes or interplaces (Casey 1996) and the camp sites that are surely significant places for the senses of place of individuals. In this study, they only come up through place names and implicitly as parts of the Taleworlds of the past.

Landscape of Spirits

In addition to the hot spots and nomadic routes, a landscape of spirits is sketched in the study. This landscape is not accidentally repeated; it expands and deepens with the material. The landscapes brought out in this study represent *sirtia* landscapes (where one can meet the *sirtia*-creatures), networks of shamans' graves, chapels and significant Nenets sacred places. They have been narrated within personal experience narratives, international narrative motifs and shamanic or mythic narration.

The ancestral territories (*rodovye zemli, rodovye mesta*) encountered frequently in Nenets speech are an inherent part of the landscape of the spirits. As the sacred places and family cemeteries are situated in the ancestral lands, these landscapes carry a strong religious charge. Besides the oral tradition, the continuity and tenacity of the religious sense of places are reflected in episodes through which Kolguev Nenets have negotiated the meanings of the island's places within a society that requires modernization. The study focuses on two main examples, one relates a sacred place called Seikorkha and the

other a narration about the last shaman, both concerned with incongruities in understandings and their mediation.

The landscape of spirits tells of the places to which a community that has undergone sweeping changes wants to be attached. The landscape of spirits attracts the attention of outsiders, but because of the inner terms of the tradition and also because of Soviet-based attitudes, this landscape is partly inaccessible to them. It is a private landscape of the islanders. Ironically, this landscape justifies unambiguously to whom the island belongs.

The Taleworlds described in this study are circulating within the island's Nenets community. While some are better tellers than others, the Taleworlds are common knowledge in the community. Speech of this kind is never insignificant or without meaning. The speech intertwines with and conjures up landscapes; place names, narration and recollections represent speech about places and landscapes with special significance for the whole community. Both in spite of and because tellers intermittently criticize the Taleworlds or handle them with humor – testing them – the Taleworlds remain tenaciously alive.

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Words as Events: Cretan Mantinádes in Performance and Composition
Venla Sykäri, University of Helsinki

Words as Events introduces the tradition of short, communicative rhyming couplets, the *mantinádes*, as still sung and recited in a variety of performance situations on the island of Crete. Recently, these poems have also entered modern mass media and they are widely being exchanged as text messages by Cretans. Focusing on the multi-functionality of the short form, Sykäri demonstrates how the traditional register gives voice to individual experiences in spontaneous utterances. The local focus on communicative economy and artistry is further examined in a close analysis of the processes and ideals of composition. By analyzing how the "restrictions" of form and performative conventions in fact generate impulses of creativity, the author creates a theoretical approach that is sensitive to the special

characteristics of the short, rhymed poetic traditions.

In this interdisciplinary study, the reader is invited to become familiar with the current folklore theory of oral poetry, which has a long tradition in Finland. The author combines the results of earlier folkloristic and anthropological insights, and extends the theoretical concerns further to address questions of spontaneity and individual agency. The research data has been produced in communicative interactions during long-term fieldwork. As a result, the short, rhymed poetry, often neglected by scholars in earlier research paradigms, can now be seen in new light – specifically as *dialogic poetry* – through its extended, multi-layered dialogic qualities.
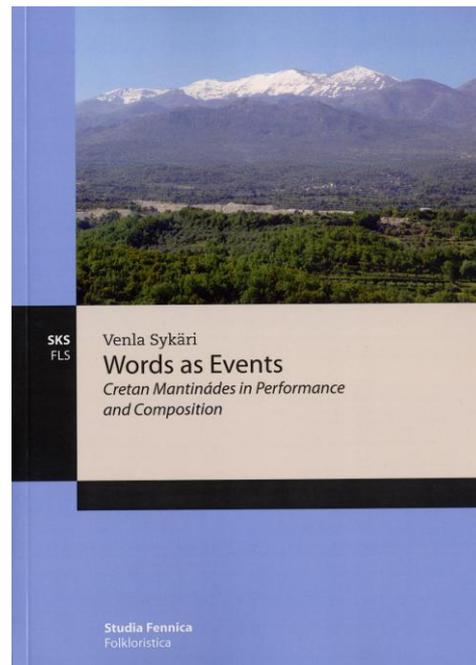
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Master's Research Projects

The Language of Birds in Old Norse Tradition: A Preliminary Introduction
Timothy Bourns, University of Iceland

Select individuals in medieval Icelandic literature are endowed with the ability to understand the language of birds. This phenomenon has not received sufficient academic attention and is deserving of detailed, extensive, and interdisciplinary study. With their capacity to fly and sing, birds universally hold a special place in human experience. Their effective communication of wisdom to people in Old Norse tradition offers another example of their unique role in humanity's socio-cosmic reality.

Special attention will be given to the Vǫlsung cycle of eddic poetry and legendary literature. After slaying the dragon Fáfnir and tasting its blood, Sigurðr comprehends the speech of birds (*Fáfnismál* and *Vǫlsunga*

saga). They warn him of Reginn's intended betrayal, advise him to take the serpent's treasure for himself, and direct him towards Brynhildr. The dragon-slaying symbolizes a heroic initiation whereby a numinous ability is acquired. In *Guðrúnarkviða I*, Guðrún tastes Fáfnir's blood and also gains this skill; and in *Ragnars saga Loðbrókar*, Sigurðr's daughter Áslaug learns from three birds of her husband Ragnar's deceitful plan to wed Ingibjörg.

Other texts containing bird-human communication shall receive analysis, including *Ynglinga saga* (King Dag and his sparrow), *Morkinskinna* (King Óláfr III and the Kráku-karl), *Helgakviða Hjǫrvarðssonar* (Atli and the "fogl fróðhugaðr"), *Rígsþula* (Konr and the crow), and the conversation between a valkyrie and a raven in the poem *Hrafnsmál*. Parallels with mythological material will also be drawn: Óðinn's daily dialogue with the ravens Huginn and Muninn who travel the world(s) to bring him knowledge, and Óðinn's spitting the mead of poetry into Ásgarðr whilst in the shape of an eagle.

The differences between each scenario are significant, but the connections between them are the most telling. Birds serve narrative, religious, and symbolic purposes. Wisdom emerges as central. A person is considered to be particularly wise if she or he can understand bird-speech; likewise, birds provide useful (and often necessary) insights. It is also significant that birds are not speaking a human language; rather, the sources clarify that certain humans have the capacity to understand an animal language. Similar to shape-shifting, it is a process that can be named 'becoming-animal'.

The wide chronological and geographical range of this tradition is important. In the 1st century CE, Tacitus writes in *Germania* that the act of listening to birds was a common form of divination among the Germanic tribes. Pictorial representations also pre-date the medieval texts (e.g. the widespread carvings of the Sigurðr legend)**.** Moreover,

the belief continued into the present era and can be detected in recent folklore. For example, in 1906, anthropologist Vilhjálmur Steffánson wrote on occult practices undertaken to understand the language of birds in modern Iceland.

The significance of bird-human communication must receive comparative consideration. The cross-cultural diversity of a language of birds understood by 'the initiated' indicates that this motif is universal to the human condition. Previous theoretical approaches to birds in myth and legend will be explored. With the 'transcendent function', Carl Jung proposed that birds can symbolize movement from the conscious to the unconscious mind; Mircea Eliade wrote extensively on the connection between shamanism and mythic bird-imagery (the 'magical flight'); and Claude Lévi-Strauss offered compelling conclusions about the metaphorical role of birds as a reflection of human thought and society. Birds are a special class of species in humanity's perception of nature; Old Norse literature reflects this reality. Although other animal species are occasionally able to communicate with people, only birds are considered nature's purveyors of wisdom.

Fantastic relations between humans and animals in Old Norse literature provide an insight into the environmental beliefs of the medieval North; bird-human communication is an important example of this potential. The application of the theory of ecocriticism will challenge the existence of a human-animal dichotomy: the language of birds is one of the many moments in medieval Icelandic sources where the distinction between the 'human' and the 'animal' is blurred with mythical or folkloric fancy. The imagined human ability to understand bird-speech is a marvel that the typical modern reader cannot believe to be true; but in its symbolic complexity, the language of birds represents one of the most desired and universal goals of the human spirit: transcendent wisdom.

A Comparison of Old Norse and Modern Dialects in North-West Norway (Sammenligning mellom norrønt og moderne dialekter på Nord-Vestlandet)

Ragne Hagrum Gjengedal, University of Bergen

This thesis aims to investigate how the dialects in the North-Western region of Norway have developed from Old Norse to modern times. My background for this is an interest in the similarities between different languages and a wish to understand how and when the Germanic languages started to differ, and how we still can see the similarities. This has driven me to studies in Old Norse, Latin, and Icelandic.

There is no such thing as a single 'Norwegian' language; rather there are a multitude of dialects that can have considerable differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. When my father told me about a boy in his class in *videregående skole* ['secondary school'], who came from a small, secluded place in Nordfjord (in Norway), who could read Old Norse because his own dialect was so similar, I realised it would be a golden opportunity to study the changes that modern Norwegian has gone through. However, this similarity of the Njordfjord dialect to Old Norse was reported over 40 years ago, and since then the improved infrastructure of the area means that Nordfjord has become easier to travel both to and away from in recent years. The Nordfjord dialect has thus been open to influences from dialects from elsewhere, and so this particular dialect will have changed a lot in the past four decades. For this reason, I will base my studies of the North-Western Norwegian dialects on phonological and morphological tests done by, amongst others, Ivar Aasen (1813–1896), known in Norway as the man who made one of our written languages, Nynorsk, which he based on dialects that he traveled around and collected in the years 1843–1847.

My research will focus on a comparison of some of the dialects, and find out how they differ in aspects such as the use of the dative and the use of svarabhakti vowel. How has the use of dative changed through time, and how is it used today, if it is used at all? The dative case is not normally used in modern written Norwegian, but is still used in some dialects. When did we start to use svarabhakti vowel, and how (and why) does it differ in areas that are geographically close? These are several of the questions that I will discuss in my thesis.

In order to compare my study of modern dialects to Old West Norse (Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian), I will use Old Norse sources such as the *First Grammatical Treatise* (AM 242 fol., a grammatical treatise that offers a detailed phonemic analysis of Old Icelandic from the mid 12th century), and Old Norwegian texts preferably written in Western Norway. I will also in part build upon the research done on Old Norse dialects undertaken by Marius Hægstad.

At the end of the 18th century, the study of dialects was a popular field of research, as Norway tried to create a 'Norwegian identity', something to set us apart from Sweden and Denmark. People became interested in Norwegian language and history. Collections of Norwegian words and dialects were published, and the study of the similarities between Old Norse and dialects in rural areas of Norway was begun. However, this kind of research has not been undertaken to a great extent since then. This makes my research more difficult, but also, I think, more interesting and worthwhile.

Calls for Papers

The 16th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR): "Folk Narrative in the Modern World: Unity and Diversity"
25th–30th June 2013, Vilnius, Lithuania

An International Congress organized by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore and Vilnius University

The International Society for Folk Narrative Research – ISFNR (www.isfnr.org) is an international academic society whose objective is to develop scholarly work in the field of folk narrative research. The research interests of ISFNR members around the world cover a number of disciplines in humanities and social sciences, including folklore, anthropology, cultural studies, comparative literature, language, history, museology, education and ethnography from the point of view of narratives.

The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (www.llti.lt) is a major national research center, carrying out fundamental investigations of Lithuanian literature, folklore and cultural heritage. The Institute also hosts the Lithuanian Folklore Archives – the largest and oldest repository of folklore in Lithuania, documenting centuries-old peasant culture as well as contemporary folklore.

Altogether the Archives now store over 10,000 collections comprising over 1.9 million folklore items. Among the chief objectives of the Institute, preservation, editing and publication of the monumental sources of the Lithuanian cultural heritage should be named. The Institute publishes annually about 30 academic publications, and organizes about 10-15 research conferences, seminars and other academic events.

Vilnius University (www.vu.lt) is the oldest university in the Baltic States and one of the oldest universities in North Eastern Europe. It is also the largest university in Lithuania. The University was founded in 1579 and ever since, as an integral part of European science and culture, has embodied the concept of a classical university and the unity of studies and research. Vilnius University is an active participant in international scientific and academic activities and boasts many prominent scientists, professors and graduates. The 16th Congress of ISFNR will convene in the Old Campus - the complex of University buildings extending over a whole block of the Old Town. Its original architecture attracts the visitor's attention.

The construction of the University buildings was carried out over the centuries under the changing influences of the Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical styles. Bounded by four streets, the campus is composed of 12 buildings, arranged around 13 courtyards of different shape and size. At present, the Rector's Office, the Library, the Faculties of Philology, Philosophy, and History, as well as some interdisciplinary centers, are situated in the old town.

Topics
The general topic of the 16th Congress of the ISFNR is Folk Narrative in the Modern World: Unity and Diversity. Subtopics of the congress are:

- What is Folk Narrative? Theoretical Definitions vs. Practical Approaches
- Narrative Genres: Heritage and Transformation

- *Homo Narrans:* Remembering, Telling, Forgetting
- Folk Narrative and Social Communication
- Crossing the Boundaries: the Local and the Global in Narrative
- Folk Narratives and Modern Technologies: Preservation, Transmission, Creation

Panels

Participants wishing to suggest a panel are most welcome. Please submit your suggestions (indicating chair/convener of the panel, topic, titles of papers and participants), complying with the thematic guidelines of the subtopics and the general topic of the congress. The deadline for submitting suggestions for pre-organized panels is 1st October 2012.

Some preliminary suggestions for panels include:

- Child-Lore and Youth Lore by *Laima Anglickienė* (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania)
- Folklore and / in Translation by *Cristina Bacchilega* (University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, USA)
- Storytelling: The Building and Transformation of Identity by *Jurga Jonutytė* (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania)
- Folk Narrative in the Modern World: Computers and the Internet by *Theo Meder* (Meertens Instituut, the Netherlands)
- World in Made of Stories by *Algis Mickūnas* (Ohio University, USA)

Symposiums

Two symposiums are scheduled to be held within the framework of the 16th congress of the ISFNR in Vilnius:

1. Belief Narrative Network (BNN) will hold its symposium entitled "Boundaries of Belief Narratives".

Evolving through "legends" and "belief legends", the latest manifestation of "belief narratives" does not just signal an adjustment of the label granted to a certain kind of story, it also indicates the inclusion of stories such as "myths" and "saints legends" that have mainly been considered separate from "legends". Whereas the concept of "belief legends" (which some would consider as pleonastic) already constitutes one of the most problematic kind of story, these problems multiply when faced with "belief narratives". This also makes them extremely fascinating and a fertile ground for new research and discussions.

As part of the 16th ISFNR Congress, the Belief Narrative Committee is organizing a series of sessions exploring the boundaries of belief narratives; lively exchanges on the following, sometimes overlapping topics are anticipated:

- Beliefs, truths, and disbeliefs
- Defining belief narratives
- Old figures in new shapes
- Myths
- The issue of eurocentricity
- Prospects and projects

The above themes are merely meant as guidelines. They are meant to be expanded and criticized. For abstracts sketching the scope of the suggested themes, please check the BNN website: http://www.isfnr.org/files/beliefnarrativene twork.html. Please send your proposals for papers and/or other contributions to: Willem de Blécourt, wjc.deb@googlemail.com Do not hesitate to get in touch when in doubt about the suitability of your subject. The deadline for final proposals is 1st October 2012.

2. The ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming will also hold its symposium entitled "Charms on Paper, Charms in Practice".

Once again, following meetings in London (2003, 2005), Pecs (2007), Athens (2009), Bucharest (2010) and Moscow (2011), the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming will hold a symposium during the 16th ISFNR Congress in Vilnius (2013). More details about the Committee's work is available via the Committee's website at http://www.isfnr.org/files/committeecharms.html.

While paper proposals on all aspects of charms studies will be welcome, the symposium's title, *Charms on paper, charms in practice* is intended to highlight two topics that are particularly welcome, namely the status of charms as text (in manuscripts, in books, in archives) and the practice of charming. Proposals touching on both such spheres are welcome, as are those which attempt to link 'words on paper' and 'living practice'. As long as there is a focus on the verbal aspects of magic, there are no restrictions as to the period or the language of the material.

Please email your proposals of 150 to 300 words to Jonathan Roper, roper@ut.ee. The deadline for proposals is 1st October 2012.

Book Exhibition
The congress will also host a book exhibition of recent folklore publications. Participants wishing to contribute their publications for the exhibition may send them to:

Ms. Rūta Pleskačiauskienė (for the ISFNR book exhibition)
Library of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
Antakalnio 6, LT-10308 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Registration
The deadline for registration is 30th June 2012. Please submit your registration
by e-mail: isfnr@llti.lt
by fax: + 370 52616254
by mail: ISFNR 16th Congress

Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
Antakalnio 6, LT-10308 Vilnius
LITHUANIA

Registration Fee
Registration fees are as follows:

- Regular registration *until February 1st, 2013:* 250 EUR
- Reduced fee for accompanying persons, unemployed colleagues and PhD students: 150 EUR
- Late registration *after February 1st, 2013* or on-site: 300 EUR
- Reduced fee for the accompanying persons, unemployed colleagues and PhD students: 200 EUR

Please note: Participants of the Vilnius Congress are reminded that this is an event organized primarily by and for members of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. To ensure their full ISFNR membership status, including the right to vote during the general assembly, participants will be asked to check with the treasurer or the treasurer's representative, and ISFNR members who have not yet paid their dues will be asked to do so prior to registration. The current membership rates are 25 Euros or 30 US Dollars for the period between the major congresses, to be paid in advance. The current membership period is 2009-2013, so the next period will be 2013-2017.

Non-members wishing to participate in the Vilnius congress are welcome. Meanwhile, non-members will be expected to pay an additional registration fee of 50 Euros or 60 US Dollars prior to registration. Reduced rates at 25 Euros or 30 Dollars for non-members will only be applicable for students, unemployed, and accompanying persons. Please note that all payments to the ISFNR treasurer must be made in cash.

Submission of Abstracts
The deadline for the submission of abstracts is 1st October 2012. Sessions and panels will be

structured according to topics (with a maximum of four participants). Suggestions for panels are going to be treated as separate units, organized and submitted by the panel organizer / chair. Participants are kindly asked to indicate the sub-topic for their papers while submitting the abstracts. Guidelines for abstracts are as follows:

- Format: RTF, Rich Text Format
- Typed: Times New Roman, 12 point
- Length: up to 300 words
- Space: single [double space between title/subtopic/ author/ address and the body of the abstract]
- Deadline: 1st October 2012

You will be notified about approval of your submitted abstract by 31st January 2013.

N.B. − Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes of discussion.

Please submit your abstract
by e-mail: isfnr@llti.lt
by fax: + + 370 52616254
by mail: ISFNR 16th Congress

Institute of Lithuanian Literature
and Folklore
Antakalnio 6, LT-10308 Vilnius
LITHUANIA
Online: available soon.

Local Organizing Committee
The local organizing committee is made up of: Mindaugas Kvietkauskas (Chair), Antanas Smetona, Lina Būgienė (Secretary), Daiva Vaitkevičienė; Jūratė Šlekonytė, Radvilė Racėnaitė, Gintautė Žemaitytė,
Bronė Stundžienė, Uršulė Gedaitė and Lina Sokolovaitė

Further Information
Should you have questions, please e-mail: isfnr@llti.lt. Please find regularly updated information regarding the congress, next circulars, registration procedures, etc., on the following websites:

www.llti.lt
www.isfnr.org

Would You Like to Submit to *RMN Newsletter*?

RMN Newsletter in an open-access biannual publication that sets out to construct an informational resource and discourse space for researchers of diverse and intersecting disciplines. Its thematic center is the discussion and investigation of cultural phenomena of different eras and the research tools and strategies relevant to retrospective methods. Retrospective methods consider some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period. Such comparisons range from investigating historical relationships to the utility of analogical parallels, and from comparisons across centuries to developing working models for the more immediate traditions behind limited sources. *RMN Newsletter* welcomes and encourages its readership to engage in this discourse space and it also promotes an awareness that participation will support, maintain and also shape this emergent venue.

The publication is organized according to four broad sections: Comments and Communications, People, Places and Calls for Papers:

– *Comments and Communications*
- Short-article / discussion pieces – preferred length, 3–7 pages body text (plus images, tables, list of works cited)
- Conference report / announcement – preferred length, 2–3 pages (max. 5)
- Project announcements – preferred length, 1–3 pages (max. 5)

– *People*
- Research report (abstract / summary of conference paper): max. 1 page body text
- Published paper summary: max. 1 page
- Edited volume summary: 1–3 pages (max. 5) body text
- Monograph summary: 1–3 pages (max. 5) body text

- PhD project summary: 2–3 pages (max. 5) body text
- MA project summary: 1 page body text

– *Places*
- Outline of programmes, projects and other activities or research associated with an institution, organization or network of organizations – preferred length, 1–3 pages (max. 5)

– *Calls for Papers*

The orientation of *RMN Newsletter* is toward presenting information *about* events, people, activities, developments and technologies, and research which is ongoing or has been recently completed. Rather than presenting conclusive findings, short-article contributions for the Comments and Communications section are generally oriented to discussion and/or engaging in discourse opened in earlier issued of *RMN Newsletter* or in other publications.

The success of this publication as both a resource and discourse space is dependent on the participation of its readership. We also recognize the necessity of opening contact with and being aware of the emerging generation of scholars and welcome summairies of on-going and recently completed MA and PhD research projects.

If you are interested in making information about your own work available or participating in discussion through comments, responses or short-article contributions, please send your contributions in *.doc, *docx or *.rtf format to Frog at *editor.rmnnewsletter@gmail.com*.

For more information and access to earlier issues of *RMN Newsletter*, please visit our web-page at http://www.helsinki.fi/ folkloristiikka/English/RMN/.

RMN