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EDITORIAL PREFACE

Apardjón Journal for Scandinavian Studies is pleased to introduce the journal's second volume, derived from its celebratory launch conference, 'Northern Peripheries', which was held virtually in May 2020. This interdisciplinary volume features three articles, each focusing on a different aspect of the Viking and medieval North. In the first article, 'The Influences of Christianity on East Sámi Burial Customs', Paula Budó i Rosa investigates eastern Sámi burial customs before and after the transition to Christianity (c. 1550–1750). In the following article, '*Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* and Icelandic Identity: The Rewriting of History for a Peripheral European Community', Roberto Luigi Pagani draws new attention to the Icelandic saga *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* as a fictional product, primarily focusing on the way the saga rewrites and reinterprets the past to suit its contemporary Icelandic audience's needs. In the third and final article, 'Crusades, Cities and Castles: Finland as Sweden's Militarised Borderland c. 1150–1300', Caroline Wilhelmsson examines how Finland was militarised following its conquest by Sweden and emphasises often overlooked aspects of the Nordic Middle Ages.

Each of these articles have been subjected to a blind peer-review and have subsequently been edited by members of the journal's editorial board. The editorial board for the present volume consists of Hannah Booth, Heidi Synnøve Djuve, Deniz Cem Gülen, Ingrid Hegland, Jennifer Hemphill, Simon Nygaard, Alessandro Palumbo, Solveig Marie Wang, and Jessie Yusek. Each of these editors have contributed to the completion of the present volume, and we are incredibly thankful for their valuable participation in *Apardjón*. The volume is accompanied by eight book reviews conducted by Melissa Ridley Elmes, Amy Jefford Franks, Peggy Gilbert, Gwendolyne Knight, Giulia Mancini, Keith Ruiter, Dain Swenson, and Elizabeth West, respectfully. Special acknowledgement is due to Dr Hannah Burrows and Professor Ralph O'Connor who remain the journal's advisors; we are incredibly grateful for their continued encouragement during all stages of the publication process, both professionally and personally, and for their expertise, feedback and support. We would also like to extend our thanks to Rosemary Kelly, who kindly volunteered to participate in the final read-through of this publication. Once again, we are thankful to the University of Aberdeen Development Trust Experience Fund for financially supporting the journal. Finally, we thank you, our readers, who are steadily growing in numbers and support.

Apardjón is currently working towards multiple new and exciting projects. Thanks to further generosity from the University of Aberdeen's Development Trust Student Support Fund, we are excited to announce an upcoming interdisciplinary conference, themed 'Land and People', which will be held at the University of Aberdeen in May 2022. The conference will aim to engage researchers and students from multiple areas of study and create opportunities for cross-disciplinary networking on an international level. More information, including the call for abstracts, will be announced later in 2021. The call for papers for *Apardjón*'s third volume, however, can be found at the end of the present volume, and as always, we encourage submissions of new translations, editions, and transcriptions of medieval Scandinavian literature. Until our next publication, we hope you enjoy reading the present volume of *Apardjón*.

On behalf of the editors,
Solveig Marie Wang

Christian Influences on East Sámi Burial Customs

Paula Budó i Rosa

This paper focuses on the investigation of Eastern Sámi burial customs before and after the transition to Christianity (AD 1550–1750) and considers the area variations that are present in the Sámi world. The main research question that this article aims to answer is how Christianity changed the structure of Eastern Sámi religion, as reflected in the burial customs. Did the introduction of Christianity change the basic aspects of Eastern Sámi rituals and beliefs, or did the Sámi only borrow some symbols and tendencies from Christianity, while keeping the essence and main structure of their pre-Christian religion?

To answer this question, I focus on the religious traditions, archaeological material, and location of the Eastern Sámi graves. In addition to Eastern Sámi material, examples from other areas, such as Trøndelag in Norway or Norrland in Sweden, are used when relevant. The first half of this paper provides a description of pre-Christian beliefs of the Eastern Sámi, followed by a description of the characteristics of Eastern Sámi burial customs before and after the transition to Christianity (AD 1550–1750). The second half of the paper turns to a discussion surrounding the Eastern Sámi burial customs to evaluate the changes and continuities in Eastern Sámi religion, with particular focus on burial customs and beliefs during the late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. Due to the complexities and regional variations found within both pre-Christian and post-conversion Eastern Sámi graves, providing an extensive overview of the different types of graves and scholarly work for each type is essential before this paper can focus on addressing any potential changes and continuity of practices. In order to follow the new lines of the archaeological discipline regarding Indigenous Archaeology and Sámi Archaeology, ethical aspects and a critique of previous practices are taken into consideration throughout this paper.

The Sámi settlement area, today known as Sápmi, has traditionally been divided into Western and Eastern Sámi areas, separated in accordance with their languages and cultural characteristics (Schanche 2004: 9; Sergejeva 2000: 5–7). Eastern Sámi groups have traditionally lived on the Kola Peninsula (modern-day Russia) and the adjacent mainland area (Norway, Finland and modern-day Russia). The Eastern Sámi group is subdivided into the following five subgroups: Inari, Skolt, Akkala, Ter and Kildin or Kola Sámi (Sergejeva 2000: 5–7).

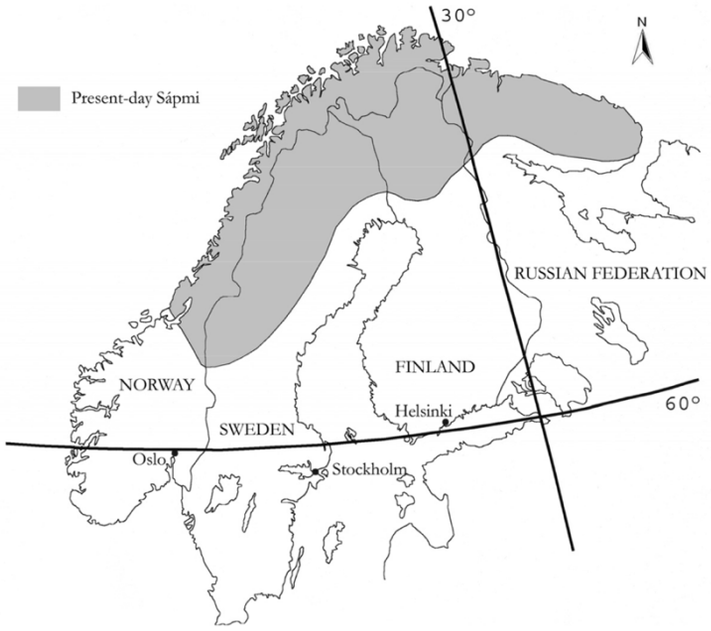

Figure 1. Present-day map of the traditional core territory of Sámi population (Ojala 2009: 68).

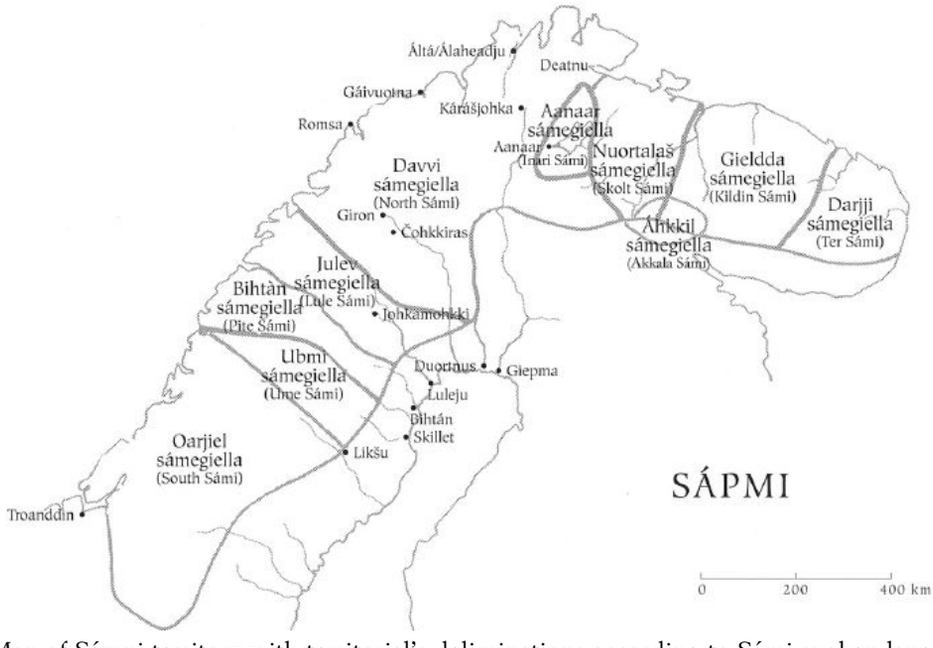

Figure 2. Map of Sámpi territory with territorial's deliminations according to Sámi spoken languages (Ojala 2009: 73); Original version in Veli-Pekka Lehtola's (2004) book, *The Sámi People*.

Sources and Source Criticism

In this paper, I use the terms pre-Christian and Christian to define the customs before and after the Sámi's transition to Christianity. However, this terminology does not represent two periods with a clear breakpoint. As I comment on later in this paper, some of the pre-Christian beliefs of Sámi peoples remained in practice following the conversion to Christianity. When using the term pre-Christian Sámi, I refer to habits and ideas that are associated with the Sámi and are assumed to originate during the pre-Christian period.

One of the main obstacles in the study of pre-Christian Sámi religion is the lack of primary sources from Sámi perspectives. Most of the extant written accounts were composed by clergymen and missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These sources carry a European religious perspective that may distort interpretations of Sámi culture. These sources' validity presents three main problems: the subjectivity of the writer; the imposition of the writer's worldviews and their assumptions that there was a homogenous Sámi religion; and finally, the recording of these traditions took place after Sámi beliefs were already influenced by Christianity (Svestad 2013b: 115). These biases are not reflected in the archaeological material, which points to the heterogeneric nature of Sámi burial practices across periods and regions. Regional variation is therefore very clear, but there are overarching shared features that are also prevalent in the material (Schanche 2004: 4; Svestad 2013b: 115).

The lack of Sámi written sources emphasises the importance of the archaeological material. Studying the archaeological remains alongside the secondary sources that are available thus allows us to interpret the material more fully and can help to clarify any previous misinterpretations made by modern scholars or what has previously been distorted to fit into an Early Modern narrative. A lot of the existing scholarship is based on nineteenth- and twentieth-century excavations that were performed by scholars who neglected to consult the local Sámi populations regarding the burial context. Furthermore, these excavations were primarily conducted to collect human skeletons for research (Aronsson 2012, Svestad 2013a). The research involving human remains presents complex challenges. For archaeologists and anthropologists, human remains represent a source of knowledge about people, places, conditions and developments (Fossheim 2013: 7). However, it is important for us to remember that excavated remains also represent people who were once alive, and to respect the remains' religious and cultural significance to their descendants. The discussion of the ethics surrounding research that involves human remains is a sensitive matter. Different

attitudes on the ethics of this topic have surfaced in the research and excavations involving the different regions of Sápmi. In recent years, Sámi people have become involved in the discussion surrounding the archaeological material found throughout Sápmi (Watkins 2005; Smith and Wobst 2005; Ojala 2009; Aronsson 2012; Holand and Sommerseth 2012; Spangen, Salmi and Äikäs 2015). Archaeological works like Luk'jancenko's study of the Kola Sámi (Luk'jancenko 1985: 202) or Olsson's 1915 excavation from Rounala in Karesuando Parish (Aronsson 2012) do not use an adequate methodology when it comes to being respectful of the excavated human remains. Both of these studies are an example of a disrespectful act of collecting material culture through excavations from sacred sites, as they exhumed the remains without permission from the local inhabitants of the region. Yet from my point of view, the data obtained from these unethical excavations is still significant for research going forward because the information that was collected is unique and, unfortunately, the archaeological process cannot be redone. Therefore, it is imperative that the material from Luk'janceko's excavation does not go to waste, but it is equally crucial that the scholars reinterpreting this material are aware of the ethical problems associated with excavation and acknowledge these issues in their work.

Sámi Archaeology is part of the sub-discipline known as Indigenous Archaeology. The term Sámi Archaeology is still controversial in some research ambits, due to the fact that in some cases, it might be perceived as a more political archaeology than mainstream archaeology (Spangen, Salmi and Äikäs 2015: 1). The concept of Indigenous Archaeology can be considered relatively recent (Smith and Wobst 2005; Atalay 2006; Nicholas 2008; Aronsson 2012; Svestad 2013; Watkins and Nicholas 2014; Spangen, Salmi and Äikäs 2015; Hillerdal, Karlström and Ojala 2017; Spangen, Salmi, Äikäs and Fjellström 2020). Indigenous critiques of archaeological practice are establishing new directions for an archaeology practice that is more politically aware of, sensitive to and harmonious with the goals of the indigenous communities (Smith and Wobst 2005: 6). Indigenous Archaeology was conceived as part of the process of decolonising the archaeology practice and has been used as a tool against the previous unethical methodologies and theories (Hillerdal, Karlström and Ojala 2017). As a result, archaeologists are having to re-think the archaeology theory and practice established during the past decades and centuries (Smith and Wobst 2005: 6). It is important for scholars to continue to be critical when approaching Indigenous Archaeology, to ensure the avoidance of re-establishing or enforcing colonial structures (Hillerdal, Karlström and Ojala 2017). George Nicholas (2008) posits that Indigenous Archaeology consists of an archaeological

expression (theoretical and practical) where the discipline interacts with values, ethical practices and indigenous sensibilities. To achieve this inclusivity, projects directed by or in collaboration with indigenous communities, with a critical perspective, are created. According to Nicholas (2008: 1660–1661), the goal of the field going forward should be to support a more representative, responsible and relevant archaeological approach towards the indigenous communities.

The inequalities in previous archaeological practices need to be repaired, and the understanding and interpretation of the archaeological record should emphasise the incorporation of indigenous perspectives. The key for scholars going forward is to continue to decolonise the discipline through the cooperation between the scientific and indigenous communities (Ojala 2009; Hillerdal, Karlström and Ojala 2017). It is fundamental that archaeologists facilitate the presence and participation of indigenous voices because indigenous peoples often share 'historical trauma' caused by previous experiences of colonisation, marginalisation and discrimination (Hillerdal, Karlström and Ojala 2017). It is important to understand the early interactions of these communities and archaeologists, in order to address past mistakes and move forward (Smith and Wobst 2005: 9). Throughout the twenty-first century, new legislation has resulted in increased Sámi involvement in controlling both their tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Watkins and Nicholas 2014: 145; Spangen, Salmi and Äikäs 2015). Sámi parliaments have been established in Norway, Sweden and Finland (with a Sámi Assembly in the Murmansk Oblast), where human rights and indigenous issues are treated (Spangen, Salmi and Äikäs 2015; Spangen, Salmi, Äikäs and Fjellström 2020: 8–9).

General Outline of the Pre-Christian Religion

Drawing on a critical reading of the archaeological record, Sámi religion prior to the conversion to Christianity was generally characterised by an animistic worldview[1] (Schanche 2004; Helander-Renvall 2010: 47–48) with shamanistic elements. The religion was flexible, dynamic and open to individual interpretations. As Svestad (2013b: 116) describes, Sámi religion lacked a fixed liturgy, scripture, or priesthood. Rather, the religion was defined by actions, narratives, myths and material utterances. The *noaidi*, the Sámi shaman, was one of the main figures in Sámi religion. They were the mediator between humans and the divine, and a guardian of morality (Bäckman 2013 [1984b]: 25; Schanche 2004: 4). However, the role of the *noaidi* was complex and consisted of multiple responsibilities and a variety of ways

to achieve them. The *noaidi* was able to find answers to the eternal and fundamental questions of life through a soul-journey (Bäckman 2013 [2005]: 40), where the *noaidi* travelled to the 'Otherworld'.

Hansen and Olsen (2014) note that landscape was a very important element of Sámi beliefs. No sharp line of division existed between culture and nature (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 337). Sacrifices were made at places in the landscape called *sieidi*,[2] or offering places, where stones, and in some cases wooden objects, were deposited. These offering gifts can be interpreted as a request for permission to take something from nature or as a way of thanking nature (Schanche 2004: 5). These offering sites have different morphologies, including depressions and cairns. An example is the mountain Stuorra Ruito on the Varanger peninsula, or circular offering sites; for instance, Biekkanoaivi in Nesseby (Äikäs and Salmi 2013; Hansen and Olsen 2014: 9-38; Spangen 2016). The *sieidi* were used by individuals, families (Rydving 2004: 97-98), and the local community, or *siida*[3] (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 167). *Sieidis* could be natural landscape features or wooden items, and many of these sites were destroyed by Christian missionaries (Vorren 1985: 76).

Hansen and Olsen (2014) discuss Sámi beliefs surrounding souls or spirits (Svestad 2013b: 122), which is an important aspect of the burial customs, as well as the Sámi perception of death. The Sámi believed that humans had two separate souls: the body soul and the free soul. The body soul is alive as long as the person is alive, and this soul is connected with the physical human body. When a person dies, the body soul remains with the skeleton (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 111). The second soul, the free soul, is active when the body is not in its normal state, such as in dreams, visions and trances. After death, the free soul gradually releases itself from the body in preparation for its next existence in Jábmiid-áibmu, the world of the dead (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 111). This soul can make trips as a ghost, but for these trips, the free soul needs space to go out from the grave. This necessity is often reflected in the grave construction, as described below. The usefulness of the free soul depends on the correct sacrificial rituals, which living people perform after a person has died. The free souls of dead people can be useful in daily life, for example, in reindeer herding (Svestad 2013b: 122-123). At the same time, isolating the dead was necessary to avoid conflicts between the dead and the living. The souls of the dead cannot return passing over water, which is an important characteristic for the location of graves (Svestad 2013b: 123).

Christian Influences

As Hansen and Olsen (2014) report, Sámi religious expressions started changing through contact with Christianity. Sámi groups had been in contact with Christianity in various ways during the early medieval period (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 160). However, the most influential moments for the Christian influence over the Sámi was at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, when manifestations of Sámi religion were criminalised (Rydving 2004). Sámi religious expressions were considered witchcraft by the Christian missionaries, and towards the end of the seventeenth century, there were multiple trials against Sámi individuals who were accused of witchcraft (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 322). Norwegian and Swedish authorities tried to eradicate *noaidi*s, through the grand-scale collection and destruction of the ceremonial drums that were used by *noaidi*s during the aforementioned soul journeys. Christian missionaries forced Sámi people to visit their own *sieidi*s, and then the missionaries either destroyed the sacred sites or compelled the Sámi to destroy the sites themselves (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 325–326). The Christianisation process developed differently in different Sámi areas, but the two main commonalities of the conversion of the different regions of Sápmi were the prohibition of Sámi practices and the imposition of the Christian religion (ideology, symbols, baptisms, the establishing of monasteries and churches and so on) on the Sámi (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 317–318).

This imposition of the Christian religion is visible in the Sámi burial traditions in multiple ways. Some of these changes only had an effect on the disposal of the burial, for example in the introduction of the use of coffins (Svestad 2013b: 123). However, other changes connected to the location of graves had more repercussions, such as the necessity to bury the deceased in Christian cemeteries. For the Eastern Sámi people, who traditionally had a nomadic reindeer herding way of life, and did not have one permanent settlement, the necessity of burying the dead in cemeteries led to the appearance of temporary graves (Storå 1971: 106, Sergejeva 2000: 12–19), which will be discussed further below.

According to Rydving (2004: 92), the destruction of Sámi *sieidi*s and the punishment of those who continued with Sámi religious practices were the main factors that weakened the Sámi religion. It could thus be argued that the missionaries' objective was accomplished. However, as archaeological material shows, for example, through finds such as holes in graves that enabled the mobility of the free soul, some Sámi beliefs remained after Christianisation. In certain areas and in different ways, Sámi people developed strategies to continue their own

religious practices in private Sámi contexts after the Christianisation of the wider Sámi societies (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 319).

Pre-Christian Sámi Burial Customs

Diversity is a clear characteristic of pre-Christian Sámi burial sites. The use of *pulka* (the reindeer sledge), hollowed tree trunks, coffins, or no container, could appear in different graves from one burial site. The corpse could be wrapped in animal skins or in birch bark, which is another important feature of the pre-Christian period. An example showcasing the diversity of pre-Christian Sámi graves is from the Pasvik Skolt Sámi burial ground on the Todd'suel Island in the Pasvik River, located in north-eastern Norway. Here, thirty-one graves and six different grave types have been uncovered (Storå 1971: 136). The presence of water is a typical element for the selection of burial sites, while another typical characteristic is the presence of grave gifts such as household utensils or ornaments.

According to Bäckman (2013 [1978]: 160), the Sámi population knew that death was irrevocable. Their death signalled the end of the corporal life and the beginning of a spiritualised condition. However, the worship of the dead was also the oldest element in the Sámi religions, emanating out of affection, hope and fear. A deceased person left the community and entered another state of existence, as the Sámi believed that the deceased still possessed the capacity of affecting their living relatives (Bäckman 2013 [1978]: 160, 141).

The type of grave used in Sámi contexts is directly related to geological conditions, as well as the formative processes of the landscape and the Sámi interpretations of said landscape (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 109). Environmental factors would determine the location and construction of burials and sacred places (Svestad 2013b: 122). As Manker (1961: 202) describes, the inhumation of Sámi graves was at most one metre deep. The depth of the grave is connected with the belief in the two souls noted above and the journey of the free soul, which I return to discuss in more detail. Schanche (2004) proposes that the landscape defined the Sámi culture. It is, therefore, important for scholars to take into consideration the bond between people and landscape when we study the Sámi past (Schanche 2004: 9), since the landscape shaped Sámi beliefs. An important element in Eastern Sámi contexts was that the grave must be beyond the water, since the Skolt Sámi people believed that the free soul of dead people could not return over water (Luk'jancenko 1985: 207). For this reason, islands, hillocks and high places near rivers were often selected by Sámi people to bury their dead (Storå 1971: 128).

The first type of grave that can be found in an Eastern Sámi context are scree and rock graves. This type of grave had a wide geographic distribution. Screes consists of large and loose broken stones that are located at the side of a mountain, or in areas that are covered by stones. These scree graves are found in northern Norway, in Trøndelag and Norrland in Sweden, in Finnish Lapland and on the Kola Peninsula in Russia (Svestad 2011: 43; Hansen and Olsen 2014: 108). Chronologically, scree graves start to appear in the last millennium BC and continue, with some modifications, until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Prior to AD 800, most of these graves are located in Eastern Finnmark in Norway. During the Viking Age and early Middle Ages, scree graves became more common in the coastal zone from Eastern Finnmark to Salten in Nordland, as well as in the northern Swedish mountain zone. After AD 1700, these graves seem to only occur in the south Sámi area (Schanche 2004: 83; Hansen and Olsen 2014: 109).

The graves were placed in scree and beneath rocks, and their morphology vary. However, a common factor of these burials is that the dead were buried in individual graves (Bäckman 2013 [1978]: 30). Another common factor is the lack of soil in the construction. Hansen and Olsen (2014: 108) describe that the corpse was wrapped in birch bark or placed in reindeer sleighs (*geres* or *pulka*). The body was collocated in an airy chamber surrounded by walls of stone, which could be natural or man-made. The chamber was then covered with slabs from the scree. These graves were designed with some apertures and gaps made for the mobility of the free soul (Svestad 2013b: 122-123).

According to Hansen and Olsen (2014: 110), bones of mammals, fish and birds were deposited in these graves, alongside other common objects like bone tools, utensils, and stone artefacts. In the graves dated from the fourth to tenth centuries, some imported ornaments from other regions have been found. Furthermore, there is no differentiation between male and female graves, and from the archaeological material, they appear to be numerically equal as well. As Svestad (2013b: 119) argues, this type of grave appears near sacrificial sites and sanctuaries. An example of this can be seen at the cemetery at Mortensnes in the Varanger Fjord, where a sacrificial enclosure and the sacred Bear Stone, a *sieidi* related to the bear cult (Svestad 2013b: 115), is found in the same location as several scree graves. Since the scree constitutes what can be called a 'dead static landscape' without vegetation, it could represent the realm of the dead, Jábmiid-áibmu (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 110). The existence of grave gifts, such as tools or amulets, is one of the most illustrative signs of pre-Christian customs because it demonstrates the Sámi beliefs of an afterlife (Manker 1961: 211-212). One

example, described by Manker (1961: 212), is the Mortensnes (Varanger) burial context of grave number 16, where a variation of materials was found. These grave gifts consisted of fishhooks, arrows, knives, fragments of wood and quartz, numerous bones of birds and fish, metal ornaments and remains of skis and staffs (Manker 1961: 212).

Figure 3. Scree grave at Čiesti/Fugleberget near Mortensnes, Varanger (Hansen and Olsen 2014: 109).

A second grave typology are the stone coffins used by the Skolt Sámi in north Finland and modern-day Russia (Storå 1971: 87). These coffins consist of a hollow with stone walls placed on top of each other, which do not reach more than the surface ground level. The base of the grave consists of small stones or of thin and flat slabs of stone, with a larger flat stone placed at the head and feet of the coffin. The corpse's head was protected by three stones, which were propped up against each other. Larger slabs of stone were used for the coffin roof and over it, and on top of which were more layers of stones. Like the scree graves, this type of grave was built for individuals and various utensils such as arrows, fishing hooks, animal bones or amulets, were placed inside the grave (Storå 1971: 87). In this type of stone-coffin grave, the body would be wrapped in skins, or birch bark, and would lay in a hollowed tree trunk in the form of a boat or trough (Storå 1971: 92).

A third type of grave documented in Eastern Sámi context in pre-Christian times are graves above surface. The Sámi graves that are on or above the surface could be permanent or temporary seasonal graves, where the dead body was laid on the surface of the ground and

covered with snow in winter, or a wooden or stone shelter (Storå 1971: 98). Graves that are constructed of piles of stones and graves in caves can also be considered as this type of surface grave (Storå 1971: 100). As a result of late 1960s investigations, it was believed that there were also crematory graves,[4] however further archaeological investigations have since denied this (Hedman and Olsen 2009: 4-6). Regarding the relation between the coffin and the dead, Manker (1961) defines the different types of coffins that were used by Sámi people, including Eastern Sámi, during pre-Christian times. Trees were the main resource from which Sámi coffins were constructed. These coffins consist of a chest made from birch bark, plank or logs in boat-shaped sledges. Hollowed tree trunks were also used for adults, while coffins hollowed out from logs were used for children. It is not clear when the use of reindeer-sledges (*pulkas*) started (Svestad 2013b: 123), but it could be a very old tradition, as there are indications of such burials that date to the first millennium BC (Murashkin et al. 2016: 190-191). The entire body of the deceased was wrapped in birch bark, and it was important that the wrapping of the full body was done correctly to avoid the body soul slipping away (Manker 1961: 209).

After the Transition to Christianity in the Eastern Sámi Region

Following the Eastern Sámi's conversion to Christianity, burying their dead in churchyards became an obligation. However, these cemeteries are still located beyond the water, in line with earlier pre-Christian traditions. Temporary graves appear as a short-term solution on the occasions that the dead could not be buried in a churchyard immediately after their death. Wooden coffins became more common during the Middle Ages and the graves are given superstructures on some occasions. In the post-conversion grave structures, the holes for the movement of the free soul are still present. Another changing element following the Eastern Sámi's conversion to Christianity is the use of clothing for shrouding the body. The use of birch bark did not have a practical purpose during this period, whereas prior to their conversion, it was used to warp the corpses. The Christian cross was introduced as a symbol, which became part of the grave monument (Manker 1961: 214). Necessary utensils for the next life were still present in the Christian graves as burial gifts. In addition, new rituals after the death appeared, where a Christian priest played a necessary role. The heterogeneity of the constitution of the graves was still visible during this period, such as in the structures of graves.

The Eastern Orthodox Church first came to modern-day Russia in the tenth century, and Christianity began to spread gradually from this period onwards. Monasteries extended

their administrative power and influence in the Sámi regions from the end of the fifteenth century through missionary work. Eastern Sámi were in contact with Christianity for some centuries before they were converted by Russian Orthodox missionaries or monks around AD 1550 (Sergejeva 2000: 20–21). Due to this previous contact and interaction with Christian peoples, Eastern Sámi were already familiar with Christian practices, which perhaps made the conversion easier (Sergejeva 2000: 20–21). In addition, the monasteries promised to protect the Sámi people against western attacks (Sergejeva 2000: 20–21).

According to Sergejeva (2000: 23), some Christian ideals gradually merged with Sámi beliefs. Occasionally, these Christian beliefs complemented the Sámi beliefs, while on other occasions, they replaced Sámi beliefs altogether. Between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, church leaders began to act condescendingly towards the beliefs of the Sámi, resulting in the Sámi having to break with their own principles, ways of life and rituals, which had endured in spite of the Sámi having accepted Christianity. Another type of Christianisation strategy that must be considered is the construction of churches and fortifications as a physical manifestation of the Church's power and capacity (Ojala 2009: 206; Hansen and Olsen 2014: 257). The conversion of the Eastern Sámi was, nevertheless, different from the conversion of Western Sámi peoples, who saw more aggressive conversion processes between AD 1650 and 1750 (Svestad 2013b: 118; Hansen and Olsen 2014: 318).

One type of grave that can be found after the Christianisation of the Eastern Sámi are temporary graves. Burying the dead within a churchyard became an essential Sámi practice after the rise of Christian influences. If it was not possible to bury the corpse in a churchyard immediately after death, the body would be buried in a temporary grave until it was possible to rebury the dead in a churchyard. According to Storå (1971: 103), the use of temporary graves may have been initiated for other reasons. Firstly, the temporary burials could have been a reaction to the climate conditions. In winter, it was not always possible to dig graves in the frozen ground, so the corpse may have been buried in a temporary grave until the summer, when a proper grave could be prepared. In the summer, bodies could not be transported by sledge, so perhaps a temporary grave would have been used until the arrival of winter and snow enabled transportation by sledges. In these cases, archaeological material suggests that the Skolt Sámi used aerial graves, like trees or platforms, and would leave the body to dry so that it would be easier to move in winter (Storå 1971: 108). Secondly, a few Skolt communities had seasonal settlements and, if only one of these settlements had a cemetery, the person could not be permanently buried until the change of season and

settlements arrived (Storå 1971: 202). These temporary burial types consisted of tree burials or platform burials, a tradition which stems from an earlier pre-Christian Sámi burial custom (Storå 1971: 116).

In the Skolt Sámi territory, the so-called grave-house burial custom is also a common grave type still present after the conversion to Christianity. This burial type refers to a superstructure built over the grave that resembles a small house. Storå (1971) argues that some variation exists between these grave houses. This burial custom was still practised in the orthodox churchyard of Sevettijärvi in Northern Finland in the late 1950s (Svestad 2013b: 128) (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Grave house at Sevettijärvi (Storå 1971: 319).

One type of grave house is a construction made of one to three planks laid on top of each other, and another type consists of a large and timbered superstructure that was more than one storey. The last type of grave house consists of a round tree trunk on either side of the grave, with a ridge roof built directly on top of the tree trunks.

The grave house was as large as the grave itself. In all types, a cross was either placed at the foot or in the middle of the grave. On some occasions, the grave houses were painted red, and they occasionally had some decorations, as well. A small window would traditionally be implemented at the western part of the superstructure and above the head of the corpse. This window or hole penetrated the inside the coffin, which allowed contact between the deceased and living people that the person left behind. The window was also used to offer food to the body or to introduce incense. The 'feeding' of the deceased continued for several

weeks after the burial (Storå 1971: 155–156). The tools used for digging the grave were usually placed in the grave house. Burial gifts, such as axes, fishing tackle, reindeer meat or small jars containing spirits, would also occasionally be left in the grave house (Svestad 2013b: 128–129).

Figure 5. Grave house (*domvit*) from the Eastern-Sámi churchyard in Sevettijärv; the aperture for the 'souls' or 'spirit' is visible (Svestad 2013b: 129).

Storå (1971: 148–149) states that the Skolt Sámi may have borrowed the custom of graves houses from the Russians of Karelia, who used dwelling houses with many of the same construction details to bury their dead, or perhaps from older northern hunting peoples' traditions. An example of this type of Sámi grave is found by the Tuloma River, where there are three graves with superstructures resembling houses, probably dating to the nineteenth century. The roofs were built with two sloping boards, on which a third board was placed in a horizontal position. A kind of roof ridge was placed on top of the horizontal board. At the southern wall of the house, there was a little rectangular aperture related to the movement of the soul (Storå 1971: 144; Svestad 2013b: 128–129). Another example is found in the Island of Mogilnyi, at the Lake Imandra, where Sámi graves houses similar to the ones found by the Tuloma river were discovered (Storå 1971: 144).

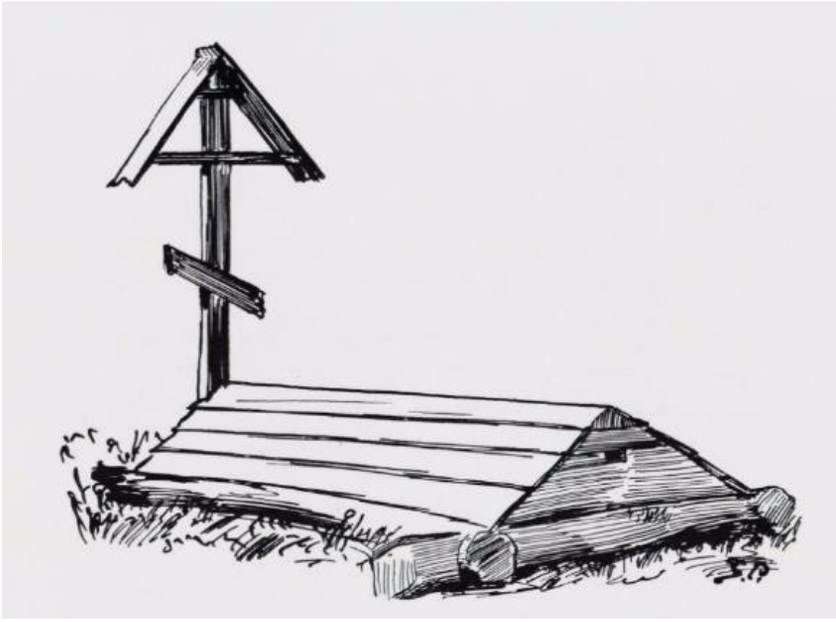

Figure 6. Grave house (*domvits*) from a Suonikylä Skolt burial ground (Storå 1971: 317)

According to Storå (1971: 207), the Skolt Sámi death-related rituals observed following their Christianisation can be sorted into five different groups. Storå's study is primarily an ethnographic reconstruction of Skolt Sámi burial traditions. First are the rites before the moment of death. Prior to their death, the dying person was placed on a suitable board. The kitchen utensils were taken out from the house, so they would not be contaminated. If they had children, the dying person distributed bread and commemorative gifts to their children so that they would have abundance of these things throughout their lives (Storå 1971: 206). After the transition to Christianity, it was important that the house where the dying person was placed remained silent. The second ritual took place at the moment death occurred, when apertures in the house or the tent were opened to let the soul leave. However, the main entrance was not opened in order to prevent the soul from coming back inside (Storå 1971: 210). The body of the deceased was then washed, and the deceased received the 'holy papers' (Storå 1971: 269). These holy papers were leaflets on which Russian prayers were written and were obtained from a priest (Storå 1971: 214). Thirdly, there was a ritual for the time period between the death and the burial. During the first three days following a death, the deceased was considered as a guest and taken care of as if a baby. Everybody had the duty to wait upon the dead, and no working, nor washing of themselves, was permitted. During this time, the coffin was constructed by a boat-builder (Storå 1971: 269). Three days after death, the burial was celebrated. A piece of white cloth was tied to the reindeer that pulled the body for the burial procession (Storå 1971: 269). The last group of

rites, or memory rites, were done on the third day after the funeral, then forty days or six weeks after the funeral, and again three years after. The main element in these commemorative feasts was the meal served in memory of the dead. All of the family members of the deceased took part during these collective feasts of remembrance (Storå 1971: 270).

The use of cemeteries and the presence of Orthodox crosses becomes present in Kola Sámi burial traditions following their conversion to Christianity. Kola Sámi groups started burying their dead in cemeteries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as a result of the conversion to Christianity. The Kola Sámi communities had two different settlements: one for winter and another for summer. If the summer and winter settlements were near each other, there would only be one cemetery for that community. However, if the summer and winter settlements were far apart, it was common for each settlement to have its own cemetery. Another possibility in the Kola Sámi context was the existence of spring or autumn camps for individual families. In these cases, the families would have a small family-only cemetery near the spring or autumn camps (Luk'jancenko 1985: 202).

Luk'jancenko (1985: 203) proposes that Kola Sámi people preferred to build their cemeteries on high ground and beyond the water, using the island of Chalmny-Varre (eighteenth to nineteenth centuries) or the side of Lake Imandra, both in Murmansk, as examples. According to the C-14 datings from the graves of Lake Imandra, the burials can be dated to the second half of the second millennium BC (Ojala 2009: 211-212). From this example, it is possible to observe how the pre-Christian belief that water worked as an effective barrier preventing the dead returning to the world of the living survived into Christian practices (Luk'jancenko 1985: 208-209; Svestad 2013b: 123). The Kola Sámi graves described by Luk'jancenko consist of an oval marked ring of boulders, which could be interpreted as an Orthodox cross at the foot of the grave. Inside the oval marked rings, there was a covering of large stones over the head and smaller stones at the foot. The majority of the crosses had a type of roof that was made of two boards in the form of a gable, which covered the upper part of the cross. In some cases, these wooden crosses had a carving of the face of the dead. Unless there was an influence of Orthodox Christianity, it is believed that this practice came from a pre-Christian Kola Sámi custom (Luk'jancenko 1985: 208-209). The cross was placed on the grave several days after the burial (Luk'jancenko 1985: 205). This type of grave is a good example of the intersection of pre-Christian and Christian burial customs.

The depth of the graves in the cemeteries studied by Luk'jancenko vary from 40 to 50 centimetres to 1 or 1.5 metres. In rocky areas, the graves tended to be shallower. According to Luk'jancenko (1985: 204), the depth depended on the soil conditions. The position of the grave varied relating to the points of the compass. In Chalmny-Varre, most of the corpses lie Southeast(head)–Northwest, in Iokanga, Northwest (head)–Southeast, and in Pulozero, West (head)–East (Luk'jancenko 1985: 204). The deceased were buried in board coffins with a lid. The bodies lay face up with the hands crossed across the chest or belly. In pre-Christian times, a sled or *pulka* was used instead of a coffin. However, with the influence of Christianity, *pulka*s were replaced by coffins (Luk'jancenko 1985: 204; Svestad 2013b: 123).

The axe used to dig the grave was placed at the right side of the body. This axe was also used to make circles around the grave, which were intended to restrict the deceased from leaving the grave. Archaeologists have found remnants of birch bark in the coffins. It is believed that, following their conversion to Christianity, the birch bark did not have a practical reason to be there, contrary to the pre-Christian times when it had a useful role for wrapping the corpse (Luk'jancenko 1985: 205; Svestad 2013b: 126). Lukjancenko's study also considers the rituals that took place during the burials. The close family of the deceased did not participate in some aspects of the preparation of the body, such as the washing and dressing of the deceased, the preparation of the coffin or the digging of the grave.

In the Kola Sámi tradition, after the transition to Christianity, there was another type of grave: the cenotaphs. These graves were only used when someone perished, and the body was never retrieved. As it was impossible to bury the unfound corpse in the churchyard, the living group would instead construct a symbolic grave. In the symbolic grave, the community buried an empty coffin. One example of this practice is the cenotaph found at the Chalmny-Varre burial ground. This cemetery was in use during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the coffin, there was a small bit of human collarbone. The grave marker was a board covering with a cross, on which the carved outline of the deceased's bearded face was clearly visible (Luk'jancenko 1985: 206).

Discussion

The border between the Eastern pre-Christian burial customs and the Eastern burial customs following the conversion to Christianity is fluid, which makes the study of the rituals harder. We have more information from some areas, but this does not allow us to discuss the region as a whole. Additionally, some grave material has been destroyed by treasure hunters (Storå

1971: 86), which makes it even more difficult to create a general understanding of Eastern Sámi burial customs. In this section, I will discuss Sámi ideas regarding the soul, as well as the material and the location of the Eastern Sámi graves. These are the topics which I consider to be central to Sámi burials customs, and the topics that allow us to observe what the transition to Christianity meant in terms of the funerary practices of the Eastern Sámi groups.

The Importance of the Free Soul

Human behaviour becomes regulated and routinised because of our active cohabitation with things (Olsen 2013: 206), and the Eastern Sámi people had the habit memory of making a hole during the construction of the graves. Prior to their conversion to Christianity, the tradition of creating a hole in the grave was a fundamental part of the process of the grave construction. Sámi people had a complex vision of the souls; there was a lot of fear around the souls themselves and what these souls could do to the living people. I find it likely that this fear of the souls, in combination with the established habit of leaving space for the soul in the grave construction, is what caused the custom of drilling these holes to linger after the conversion to Christianity. The free movement of the soul appears to have been an element that was too important to the Sámi consciousness for even their conversion to Christianity to remove the tradition entirely or replace it with another burial practice.

Eastern pre-Christian Sámi graves were not buried deep in the ground, due to the importance of the free soul's movement. Shallow burials after conversion suggests that the beliefs concerning the twofold soul were so important in Sámi culture and practices that they remained in existence, despite the conversion and influence of Christian religion. As far as I am concerned, this continued tradition of shallow burials is yet another example for the importance of habit memory. From years of repetition, post-conversion Sámi coffins were built with holes or gaps for the soul and their graves were not buried particularly deep. This is the way that Eastern Sámi groups learned how to bury their dead as the burial customs were passed down through generations. Although parts of their burial rituals were changed with the influence of Christianity, the construction of the graves remained unchanged. According to Eastern Sámi traditions and through their habit memory, this was the only possible way to construct graves for their dead. As I have demonstrated, the Eastern Sámi population must have understood these characteristics as an essential condition for the construction of the graves.

The Sámi understanding of the soul seems to be reflected in the burial materiality, both in pre-Christian and Christian burials. Although the morphology of the graves and the treatment of the corpse changed with Christian influence, the importance of the souls, especially the free soul, and its nature and role after the life, did not seem to change. This is evident because the free soul is still present in the burial rites after the conversion to Christianity (Storå 1971: 189). The material proof of the enduring importance of the free soul is unmistakable in the existence of holes in grave houses, interpreted as windows for the movement of the free soul. This custom was still practiced in the Orthodox churchyard of Sevettijärvi in Northern Finland until the late 1950s (Svestad 2013b: 128). Another example of this practice could be the burials excavated in the churchyard of Gullholmen in the municipality of Tana in Sweden. According to Svestad (2013b: 127-128), most of the coffins documented in Gullhomen have small holes drilled at the short end of the coffin. Most of these holes were asymmetrical, so they would not have been used for a practical reason such as transporting the coffin. I agree therefore with Svestad's proposal that these holes were made for the movement of the free soul of the dead (2013b: 127-128).

The continuation of the burial traditions surrounding the soul may also be described as habit memory, as defined by Henri Bergson (1991): a non-cognitive form of memory accomplished by repetition, as an embodied habit (Svestad 2013b: 130). As Bergson puts it:

> Like every habitual bodily exercise, [these memories are] stored up in a mechanism which is set in motion as a whole by an initial impulse, in a closed system of automatic movements which succeed each other in the same order and, together, take the same length of time (Bergson 1991: 80).

In my opinion, as Svestad (2013b) and Olsen (2013) expose regarding habit memory, the Sámi cult of the soul continued after the transition to Christianity because the concept of the soul and its material tradition were so inculcated and important in Sámi tradition.

The Material in the Graves

There is a great variety in the materials that are included in the Eastern Sámi burials. Following the Sámi transition to Christianity, not all of the grave goods remain the same as the pre-Christian goods. Some of the materials are replaced by others, some materials persist

but change their role in the grave, while others altogether disappear. The use of wooden coffins increased, and the shrouding customs changed with the transition to Christianity. An example of these changes following the conversion to Christianity is reflected in the Kola Sámi burial customs, who replace the use of *pulka*, the aforementioned sledges, with the use of wooden coffins. Near the confluence of the Kista and Varzuga rivers, located on the Kola Peninsula, there is a small cemetery, dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that contain some of the earliest coffins in a Sámi context (Svestad 2013b: 123-124).

In the pre-Christian burials, birch bark was a basic element in Sámi graves, which was used to wrap the body. The use of birch bark as wrapping material gradually changes and and the birch bark starts to only be used to cover the body. Its use begins to become more symbolic than practical, and during the Middle Ages, the birch bark used to wrap the body was eventually replaced with an ordinary dress (Svestad 2013b: 123). In my view, the change in the use of birch bark suggests that the continued usage of birch bark after the conversion is the result of habit memory in Sámi burials. However, I propose a difference between the use of birch and the habit memory of creating the holes in graves, which I have discussed in the previous section. The birch bark is still present in the graves, but the practical use of the bark (wrapping the body) has changed. This could result from the fact that the use of birch was based on a belief that changed with the arrival of Christianity, and this change of ideas is perhaps the reason as to why birch bark was still present in the graves, but in a different form. In some cases, there is a combination of pre-Christian practice and Christian practice, such as the use of the Orthodox crosses with carved faces, found in the cemeteries of Kola Sámi. It is thought that the particular practice of carving faces came from an ancient Sámi custom (Luk'jancenko 1985: 209), where the ritual consisted of depicting the face of the deceased. Following the transition to Christianity, the Orthodox crosses would have been added to the face-carving ritual.

The continued inclusion of metal objects in the graves is an entirely different case. In Eastern pre-Christian Sámi graves, objects made of metal had a sacred character and were the most frequently present artifacts found in the graves (Schanche 2004). Knives, axes or jewellery were included in the grave as a method of protection for the deceased in their next life. This practice continued in Christian burials, in my opinion, because of the importance of protecting the soul and the person in the next life. The presence of metal goods perhaps shows continuity of this belief and the importance that Sámi people still placed on the next

life. The same situation is found in animal pelts deposited in the grave, as described in the Kola Sámi burials (Luk'jancenko 1985).

The Location of the Graves

Apart from the change in materials buried inside the coffins, there were also some changes surrounding the location of graves and their nature. One of the major changes is that the Sámi people began to bury their dead in Christian churchyards. One example is the Sevettijärvi churchyard located in northern Finland (Svestad 2013b: 129). This change in location meant that the Sámi needed to create a temporary solution for the instances when the body could not be moved to the churchyard. This is presumably why temporary graves appear. Bodies were buried temporarily in a manner similar to the old Sámi burial customs; for instance, with the bodies being placed in trees or on platforms (Storå 1971: 103–108). In my view, when Sámi people introduce the custom of burying their dead in churchyards, the problem of not always being able to immediately bury the deceased following their death arose. Confronted with this problem, it is understandable that Sámi people referred to their habit memory of the pre-Christian burial types as a temporary solution.

Even though the Eastern Sámi people began to bury their dead in churchyards, the location of the cemeteries was still determined by older Sámi beliefs. Cemeteries were located beyond the water, as they traditionally were in pre-Christian period. This stemmed from the belief that water was an effective barrier in preventing the deceased from returning to the world of living. As shown in the analyses of Bäckman (1978) and Svestad (2013b) above, the Eastern Sámi were afraid of the free souls coming back to the land of the living. Therefore, it is likely that they preferred to continue with their pre-Christian practice of choosing a burial location beyond water, as a method to prevent the dead disturbing the living communities (Svestad 2013b: 123). The location choice could also be an example of habit memory, similar to those that I have suggested in the earlier examples of pre-Christian traditions carrying over to the Christian burials. Alike the previous hypothesis that the burial traditions surrounding the souls continued post-conversion was a result of the Sámi fearing these souls, the continued connection between burial location and its proximity to water could also stem from the importance that the souls had in the pre-Christian Sámi world and their fear of the power of the free souls after a person's death.

Another example of continuation of pre-Christian practices in the Eastern Sámi cemeteries is the use of oval stone rings on boulder graves (Luk'jancenko 1985: 207; Svestad

2013b: 126). Stones were important in burial customs because of their sacred character, and it has been suggested that stones were connected with the cult of ancestors (Luk'jancenko 1985: 207). As we have seen with the metal objects, the sacred character of the grave materials was deeply rooted in pre-Christian Sámi beliefs. The materials' connection with ancestors was deeply important for Eastern Sámi people. It is for this reason, that the practice of using oval stone rings in these graves outlasted the transition to Christianity.

I have explored many differences between Sámi religion and Christian religion, and how these differences translate onto the Eastern Sámi burial customs. However, there is one major religious notion that is completely different between the two religions. Christianity has a fixed liturgy and interpretation that are determined by the head of Church. Christianity is also less personal on an individual level, as well as less being fluid, than in the Sámi religion (Storå 1971: 254). As a result, I suggest that as the Christian influence became more prevalent in Sámi communities, the Sámi religion became more restrictive and less personal. The rites become defined, and the presence of the priest became indispensable, for example, in obtaining the holy papers. Although the role of the *noaidi* was to help with the pre-Christian burial traditions, from my point of view, the priest's role is absolutely essential for the Christian burial rites. In addition, an economic aspect also appears following the Sámi conversion, because, as Storå (1971: 254) explains, payments from the family of the deceased had to be made to the church for the sacrifices for the deceased (Storå 1971: 254). These payments that Storå (1971) discusses, in my view, introduces a kind of business transaction to the burial ritual, which was not present in pre-Christian Sámi culture.

Conclusion

The main focus of this paper is to address how Christianity changed the structure of Eastern Sámi religion, as reflected in their local burial customs. Once a full overview of the pre-Christian and post-conversion Sámi burial rites is considered, it is possible to return to the initial question of how the conversion to Christianity is reflected in Eastern Sámi burial sites.

As demonstrated in my application of habitual memory, the Eastern Sámi concept of the soul was maintained after the transition to Christianity, which is particularly visible through the existence of holes in the graves. The continuation of these holes indicates that movement of the free soul continues to be present in Eastern-Sámi Christian burials. Additionally, the change of the grave's location is one of the most significant changes after the transition to Christianity. Firstly, the bodies had to always definitively be buried in a

churchyard. Secondly, the impossibility of always carrying the body to an appropriated burial site forced the creation of temporary graves. Yet, even though there were changes in grave locations, these burials were still located beyond the water as in pre-Christian times, which signifies that the belief that souls could not return over the water was maintained following conversion.

Although the coffin format was standardized through the introduction of wooden coffins in churchyard burials, summer graves and pre-Christian coffin types, like boat-shape sledges or tree trunks, were also still used. Post-conversion Sámi burial rituals adopted the characteristics of Christian burial traditions; the main characteristic being the indispensable role of the priest during the burial rites. New traditions were adopted by the Eastern Sámi because of the influence, and in some cases the imposition of, the Christian religion. However, there are two possible reasons for the continued maintenance of some pre-Christian features. One potential reason could be the prevalence of habit memory, while the second possible reason could be that the pre-Christian Sámi beliefs were strong among Sámi Eastern people. In my opinion, both of these factors probably shaped the material expressions of the Eastern Sámi burials.

In conclusion, following the Eastern Sámi's transition to Christianity, certain symbols, like the cross, and other characteristics of the Christian religion, like churchyard burials and shrouding the corpse with clothes, were adopted by Eastern Sámi people. The influence of Christianity therefore provoked some modifications in the customs and materials of Eastern Sámi burials. In some cases, these modifications were drastic, like the change in the shrouding material of the corpse changing mainly from being constructed of birch bark or animal skins, to the use of clothes. In other cases, some of these burial modifications still preserve some pre-Christian elements; for instance, burials in churchyards being strategically separated from the living communities by water reflects a continued tradition of the pre-Christian Sámi belief whereby water was considered protection from the dead for the living. Furthermore, other elements of the pre-Christian Eastern Sámi beliefs, such as holes in coffins that allowed the retreat of the 'free soul' following the burial rite, as well as the presence of metal objects in graves, continued following conversion. Overall, Eastern Sámi burials continue to show a heterogenic nature in all the periods.

Notes

[1] An animistic worldview consists of a culture where nature is considered alive. Animism predominantly relates to how human persons relate to the world and includes social space for humans and non-humans to interrelate to each other (Helander-Renvall 2010: 44). For further information regarding the animistic worldview, consult Helander-Renvall (2010). For further information regarding Sámi worldviews, consult Ojala (2009) and Hansen and Olsen (2014).

[2] I mostly use North Sámi terminology and orthography here, as it is the language that is used in the majority of secondary sources that I refer to concerning the general pre-Christian religion.

[3] Sámi local community.

[4] Nils Storå (1971) suggests that some indications of Skolt Sámi crematory graves exist in Finland (1971: 92-93). Later, it was discovered that these rectangular structures delimited with stones were actually hearth-row sites, not crematory burials. It was not until the 1980s that these hearths emerged as an individual category in Sámi archaeological studies (Hedman and Olsen 2009: 4-6).

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Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls and Icelandic Identity: The Rewriting of History for a Peripheral European Community

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The story of Gunnar *Keldugnúpsfífl* ('the idiot of Keldugnúpur') has received very little scholarly attention.[1] It was first edited in 1866 by Þorvaldur Bjarnarson, then later in a popular edition by Guðni Jónsson in 1947, and eventually in the scholarly *Íslenzk fornrit* edition by Jóhannes Halldórsson from 1959. Aside from being briefly mentioned in articles focusing on other subjects,[2] this saga has been substantially neglected, and it remains one of the least known. A combination of factors has contributed to this neglect, including its young age, as one of the latest *Íslendingasǫgur* (sagas of the Icelanders) to have been composed (Cf. Callow 2017: 26), and the fact that it differs quite significantly from those sagas that have been traditionally considered canonical by earlier scholars. Perhaps a more determining factor, however, has been what may be interpreted as a lack of originality in the text: Jóhannes Halldórsson (1959: lxxi-lxxvi) has noted how '[h]öfundur dregur til sögunnar efni úr ýmsum áttum' (in the saga, the author employs elements from different sources). Several motifs and other elements are borrowed from earlier sagas, particularly *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar*, *Hjálmþés saga* and others.[3] Ferrari (2020: 124) notes that:

> Le avventure di Gunnar con gigantesse e troll [...] riprendono descrizioni e schemi narrativi dalla Saga di Sigurðr il Silenzioso e dalla Saga di Egill il Monco, mentre il codice d'onore vichingo esposto nel capitolo 14 della versione contenuta nel codice AM 554 i 4to [...] ripete quanto esposto nella Saga di Friðþjófr il Forte e nella Saga di Oddr l'Arciere.

> The adventures of Gunnar with giantesses and trolls [...] borrow descriptions and narrative schemes from the *Saga of Sigurðr the Silent* and the *Saga of Egill One-Hand*, while the viking code of honour, as presented in chapter 14 of the version contained in the code AM 554 i 4to [...], repeats the above in the *Saga of Friðþjófr the strong* and in the *Saga of Örvar-Oddr*.

It is thus evident that this saga owes many of its elements to other texts, another characteristic which may explain the minimal scholarly interest it aroused in the past. In fact, earlier saga scholarship was politically motivated by Icelandic nationalism and the Icelandic sought to demonstrate what peaks Icelandic literary culture could reach when it was free from foreign control.[4] All of these factors help to explain why this saga has been so neglected in earlier scholarship. However, Pagani (2020: 29-30) suggests that the saga should be analysed in the light of its literary and social function, while Ferrari (2020: 124) adds that:

> Una tale strategia di estrapolazione e ricomposizione ha contribuito, in passato, a far ritenere poco interessante questa saga in quanto poco originale, e tuttavia credo che proprio questo metodo di composizione meriti una nuova attenzione.
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> Such history of extrapolation and recomposition has contributed, in the past, to the notion that this saga would be uninteresting as it is not very original, and yet I believe that this very method of composition deserves a new attention.

In light of the abovementioned, the purpose of this paper is to bring new attention to this text as an eminently fictional product and particularly to the way it rewrites and reinterprets the past to suit present needs, which were considerably different from those characterising the time of composition of the classical *Íslendingasǫgur*. Clunies-Ross (2002: 443) maintains that '[t]here is no doubt that saga literature was central to the development of an independent self-image among medieval Icelanders, and it continues to constitute a significant part of contemporary Icelanders' sense of national identity', and *Gunnars saga* lends itself to an analysis which aims to explore how this self-image could be expressed and articulated through the literary medium. In the light of these considerations, the present discussion will analyse *Gunnars saga*. The first section, 'Rewriting the Past', introduces the saga and its main themes, while the following one, 'The Text and its Literary Essence', explores how the composition of the saga was highly informed by the tradition preceding and surrounding it. The third

section, 'The Creation of a Past', discusses how *Gunnars saga* generates meaning by shaping an alternative literary past for the people of a remote area of Iceland. The section titled 'Gunnar as an Embodiment of Iceland' addresses the way that Icelandic history and the desires and aspirations of the Icelandic people are projected through the literary medium. 'The saga and its Legacy', the last section, showcases examples of how the literary creation of the saga has impacted the relationship between the people of the area in which the story takes place, their past and the landscape around them.

Rewriting the Past

What is of interest for the present discussion is the idea that a text may be able to serve as some kind of literary origin story without the pretence of making such myth historically plausible. A comparison may be drawn with the medieval tradition of Arthurian legends, or even the universe of *Arda*, the imaginary world created by J.R.R. Tolkien. This kind of literary product consists of a work of fantasy that reflects and problematises aspects of the contemporary reality of the audiences for which it is conceived, and which may also touch and engage with universal themes of the human experience. *Gunnars saga*, as it will be seen, seems to act in this spirit. It offers itself as a kind of literary recreation of the past which turns into an occasion to shape a fictional story not only for the entertainment of its readers, but also to project and discuss moral values with the literary codes of the time in which it was composed.

Far from being a mere patchwork of other saga episodes and themes assembled for entertainment, *Gunnars saga* can thus be understood as a literary rewriting of the past: while being set in the distant past, it nonetheless does not have any pretence to be a faithful account of it. In this sense, the saga differs quite substantially from what we observe in other *Íslendingasǫgur*, particularly in the classical sagas. Given the considerations which have been made so far, a saga that has so far been neglected can arouse new interest insofar as it can be analysed not just for its literary qualities, but also for its role as a foundational myth, shaping and fostering some kind of identity for a community at the European periphery.

The fifteenth to eighteenth centuries were characterised by an economic decline in Iceland: the country moved from being a thriving and reasonably wealthy community, to an impoverished backwater of the Danish realm. In this context, a text like *Gunnars saga* acquires a new role, fostering a sense of identity and self-worth for an isolated community. Rather than being a symptom of the decline of Icelandic society, and an example of the

twilight of the saga genre as it had been earlier in the Middle Ages, this saga is the expression of a change which intervened between the so-called golden age of saga writing, in the thirteenth century, and the time of its composition. In order to better understand this saga, one must therefore analyse it in the light of the historical context in which it emerged.

Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífl is the story of a *kolbítr,*[5] or, as Anderson (1997: 421) phrases it, a male-Cinderella: Gunnar is a lazy and disobedient teenager, considered to be an idiot (*fífl*) by the people of his area, but he surprisingly shows himself to be something of a hero by defying and eventually killing two bullies, sons of the *bóndi* (farmer, yeoman), of the area. He then embarks on a sea journey that brings him to a mysterious land which appears to be Greenland, where he kills a polar bear and a family of trolls, befriends a giantess and obtains a magical sword. He later travels to Norway, where he causes the envy of the jarl, who tries to have him killed in a fight against a *blámaður*,[6] whom Gunnar nonetheless defeats and kills. To escape the rage of the jarl, he embarks on a summer pillaging expedition in the Baltic, where he fights a band of aggressive Vikings,[7] before eventually returning home rich and with a very good reputation, which will grant him the *goðorð*, a kind of chieftaincy with legal and religious duties attached to it.

Discerning any authorial intent behind a given saga is a notoriously thorny issue, complicated by the stratification of elements, which is a consequence of their transmission. However, a case can be made for *Gunnars saga* having been intended as a fictional work from its inception. Kålund (1879-82: 314), in his *Bidrag*, refers to it as 'den opdigtede *Gunnar Keldugnupsfivls saga*' (the invented *Gunnar Keldugnupsfífls saga*). As we shall see in the course of this discussion, its plot is linear, following one single narrative strand from beginning to end, it does not strive to fit in the larger meta-narrative of the saga-age, and it shows a high literary awareness in the form of numerous borrowings of themes, tropes, situations, etc. It is also a rather late product: Jóhannes Halldorsson (1959: lxxiii) maintains that '*Gunnars saga* ber ungleg einkenni, miðað við aðrar Íslendigasögur' (the saga shows a younger character, compared to other *Íslendingasǫgur*). He dates its composition to the fifteenth century, while Anderson (1997: 421) places it sometime between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Callow (2016: 26, n113) mentions how the saga is dated to the fifteenth century, referring to it as 'the most recent extant *Íslendingasaga*'.

The standard *Íslenzk fornrit* edition integrates a number of chapters from a version of the saga which presents a number of differences and details from the version chosen as the main one. These differences have both literary merit and narrative relevance, such as the very

cinematic episode of Gunnar's arrival at the games at Hǫrgsland, where he removes his cape and a cloud of ashes scatters in the air, or the passage on his relationship with Helga. Jóhannes Halldorsson (1959: lxx) maintains that these two versions must have originated from a common one, but that both of them must have changed somewhat in the course of the transmission. It is thus necessary to study both versions to appreciate this saga as a whole.

It is a peculiar coincidence that a saga whose protagonist can be defined as a male-Cinderella, could itself be considered a sort of 'Cinderella of the sagas'. I have previously noted the curious coincidence that this 'narratively isolated' story (meaning that its plot and characters are not linked to those of other texts, as will be discussed) also takes place in a region of Iceland that has historically been one of the most isolated (Pagani 2020: 12). It is locked between two alluvial deserts swept by glacial outbursts, cut by treacherous rivers, and lacking good natural harbours along the shallow, sandy shores, which are separated from the settlements by many miles of sandy wetland. The saga is, in a way, a standalone: genealogies act as 'world infrastructures' (cf. Wolf 2012: 170) within the saga-world, but *Gunnars saga* lacks both these and trans-narrative characters.

The Text and its Literary Essence

A rather compelling and, perhaps, paradoxical fact is that, despite its isolation in the cosmos of the *Íslendingasǫgur*, this saga clearly does not spring up from nowhere, but it is the result of a creative effort which included a synthesis of a vast body of material inherited from the saga tradition. Particularly interesting is the notion of how this saga, if it was indeed one of the last – if not the very last – *Íslendingasaga* to be written,[8] condenses several elements from the tradition which preceded it; in a manner that makes this text almost an ultimate compendium of the previous saga tradition, as we shall see. Far from being a mere fairy-tale with little artistic merit and a witness to the decline of the saga genre(s), *Gunnars saga* shows how the saga-tradition could be interpreted, manipulated and re-shaped to adapt to the changing tastes of later times and fit different roles for the community in which it circulated. Different tastes and different political and social motivations may lie behind the composition of different sagas and, in this sense, the narrative elements and choices which are traceable in *Gunnars saga* may reveal important details of the society in which the saga was transmitted and read.

Rather than a lack of creativity, *Gunnars saga* is evidence of a remarkable degree of knowledge of typical literary motifs from the saga tradition, which the writer was able to

borrow, adapt and combine in a new coherent narrative that is also fast-paced and thrilling. It was mentioned in the introduction of this article how this saga is heavily indebted to other texts for a number of elements: in addition to the examples of literary borrowing provided above, it may be added that the episode of the giantesses from chapter five (chapters five and six of the main version) is very similar to that of *Sigurðar saga þǫgla*, where we also find a gift of weapons in exchange for sparing the giantess(es)' life (Cf. Driscoll 1992: 11-17), and where one of the two giant sisters is also named Fála, as in *Gunnars saga*. Also, in both sagas, the giantesses have a mighty father who lives in a luxurious mountain hall and, with some details differing between the two stories, the hero is presented with a sumptuous meal, while he is a guest of the supernatural beings. Furthermore, the motif of the sword's blade becoming stuck in wood after a violent strike can be found in a few other sagas, including *Njáls saga*.[9] In the latter, we read 'Snækólfur hjó í slána svo að fal báða eggteina sverðsins' (Snækólfur hit the wooden bar so [hard] that both edges of the word disappeared in it)[10], while in *Gunnars saga*, the same motif is worded as such: 'Gunnar bar af sér höggið og kom það í bitann svo að fal báða eggteinana.' (Gunnar avoided the hit which landed in the crossbeam so that both edges of the blade disappeared [in it]). [11]

Concerning the matter of originality and borrowing of themes and motifs, it is interesting to read this quote from Ármann Jakobsson (2001: 58), in which he explains the value and function of such borrowings in another post-classical family saga, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, particularly when they are taken from older and authoritative historical works:

> It is quite possible that 'borrowing' from other works may serve to discredit *Bárðar saga* from the perspective of modern historical criticism. But such was not the case in the fourteenth century. Borrowings from *Landnámabók* made the saga more credible, as its reconstruction corresponded to the past of *Landnámabók*. There is, therefore, a definite purpose in the saga's use of *Landnáma*.

While borrowings in *Gunnars saga* are not meant to confer historical credibility to the text, they can instead be seen as the attempt, on the part of the writer(s), to confer literary prestige to their work by means of making ample use of tropes which had become staples in the saga canon. In the same perspective, these borrowings can be seen not so much as instances of a lack of creativity and artistic value, but as an attempt, on the part of the writer, to conform to the rules and expectations of the saga tradition. Either way, searching for and identifying

the texts whence the author may have borrowed bits and pieces to compose this saga is, on its own, a philological exercise which may fail to do justice to the texts. In this regard, Shippey (2005: 388) tells us that: 'Tolkien himself did not approve of the academic search for 'sources'. He thought it tended to distract attention from the work of art itself, and to undervalue the artist by the suggestion that he had 'got it all' from someone else'. In this same spirit, it would be more interesting to look at the text of *Gunnars saga* as a coherent whole and place it into the context of its transmission.

The Creation of a Past

This saga, not unlike other post-classical *Íslendingasǫgur*,[12] shares some elements which may be considered more typical of a *fornaldar-* and *riddarasaga* (*legendary sagas* and *romances*),[13] such as the vague ancient time period, the coexistence of literary characters with historical/pseudo-historical ones, the quest-like nature of Gunnar's journeys, and particularly, the creation of a world which, while mirroring the real one in many ways (geographical, political and social) unfolds along different lines and follows different rules. As Torfi Tulinius (2002: 18-19) maintains, 'it is fair to say that all the legendary sagas have in common what might be called a connection to reality, albeit in varying degrees. The characters develop in a world that is not altogether the same as ours. Supernatural creatures abound, and the hero is usually stronger than an ordinary man'. The world-building in the saga produces a universe which, while being based on the primary world, differs from it in a number of important points, which are best explained if we see the world of the saga not as derivative from the primary world, but as a syncretic storyworld which, despite some (mostly geographical and linguistic) points of contact with our own, appears to be a separate creation, following different laws and codes.[14] As Kedwards (2020: 132) remarks:

> The Icelandic landscape [...] was not an unchanging reality that existed wholly outside the *Íslendingasögur*, and to which they merely refer. The variant versions of *Landnámabók*, and the *Íslendingasögur* written in their presence, vary in their construction of the Icelandic landscape, which may have been as much created as it was remembered.

Indeed, because of the placing of the action in an idealised pagan north, the universe of *Gunnars saga* unfolds in different ways from our own and revolves around different rules and

codes. There the supernatural is very much part of nature, the killing of evil individuals can be without consequence, and good and evil are clearly demarcated: Gunnar meets and interacts with a polar bear as well as with 'giants' and trolls, he kills frequently, but the reader is never made feel sorry for his victims, who are either monsters, pirates of abusers. His literary universe may well be partly inspired by the (imagined) past but forms a coherent and independent unit. In other words, such a world is essentially a fantastic creation freely inspired by a (factual or imagined) historical past. This is not uncommon for a late *Íslendingasaga*, a fact which reflects an evolution of the genre in a cultural landscape that had become quite different from the one in which it had originated (cf. Arnold 2003: 181–183).

While sharing this modality of world-creation with the *fornaldarsǫgur*, *Gunnars saga* is still framed as an *Íslendingasaga*, narrating the deeds of the supposed first settlers of a part of Iceland. It also presents one further notable element, which deserve some attention: in the saga, the creative construction of a fantastic world coexists with a foundational intent, epitomised by a concluding remark which is a variation on the theme 'from him/her/them many great men descend'. This theme can be chiefly found in the *Íslendingasǫgur*: in the concluding chapter of classical ones, such as *Eiríks saga rauða*,[15] *Gísla saga Súrssonar*,[16] *Heiðarvíga saga*,[17] and of post-classical ones such as *Hávarðar saga*, but also in some *fornaldarsǫgur*, such as *Ǫrvar-Odds saga*. In *Gunnars saga*, this is epitomised in the conclusive remark: 'Er frá þeim [bræðr] komin mikil ætt. Þóttu það allt vera miklir menn fyrir sér' (From them [the brothers Gunnar and Helga] came a great family. All of them were considered to be great men).[18]

Gunnar (together with his brother Helgi) is thus not merely a larger-than-life hero nestled in a narrative which essentially serves an entertainment function, but also incorporates the role of forefather for subsequent generations of real Icelanders. However, he is not a typical forefather as exemplified in an *Íslendingasaga*. We know the name of his father, Þorbjörn, but we are not told anything about his ancestry, whence they came, who they were or what they did. Chronologically, since he is described as being contemporary with Hákon jarl Sigurðarson, Gunnar's life may be placed in the last decades of the tenth century and possibly the very first ones of the eleventh: innumerable (*Íslendinga-*)saga episodes unfold in this timeframe, but the narrative strand of Gunnar's life never gets tangled with that of other saga characters. Gunnar's role as forefather can thus be interpreted as a literary trope, but one which assumes a particular meaning in the context of the rewriting of the past, which seems to be an underlying intent of this text.

The framing of the events in the saga, as I have previously noted (Pagani 2020: 11-18), differs in one important respect from what we encounter in the earlier *Íslendingasǫgur*, where the narration is corroborated by genealogies and a number of cross-references to characters and episodes from other texts: there is little, if any, attempt at framing the story in a coherent historical background, and no effort is made to try to embed it in the constellation of the family sagas. Direct cross references to different sagas or other sources are lacking. With one exception, the characters do not make an appearance in any other saga. This is peculiar: as Torfi Tulinius (2000: 247) notes, framing characters through genealogies was a device often employed not just in the *Íslendingasǫgur*, but also in some *fornaldarsǫgur*, as well as in the heroic poems of the Codex Regius. As already noted by Jóhannes Halldórsson (1959: lxxi-lxxvi) in his introduction, the only historical character present is the Hákon jarl Sigurðarson, whom Gunnar meets on two occasions.

Hákon Sigurðarson was in power between 962 and 995. Since Gunnar is either thirteen or eighteen when he meets the jarl, if we subtract his age at the time of the meeting from the first and last year of Hákon's reign, we obtain a date of birth between 944 and 977. This timeframe, however, clashes with the information provided in *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls*, to be found in GKS 1005 fol., *Flateyjarbók*, written at the end of the fourteenth century: 'Þórhallr hét maðr norrœnn. Hann kom til Íslands á dögum Hákonar jarls. Hann tók land í Sýrlækjarósi ok bjó á Hǫrgslandi' (A Norse man was named Þórhallr. He came to Iceland in the days of the Jarl Hákon. He took land at the mouth of the Sýrlækr and lived at Hǫrgsland.) (GKS 1005 fol., 55va22-23).

According to this *þáttr*, Þórhallr would have been the first settler (*landnámsmaður*) of Hǫrgsland, and was a good friend of Síðu-Hallr, one of the champions of Christianity in the conversion period in Iceland. The saga of Gunnar is set in the pagan period, and no mention is made of Christianity. If Þórhallr was indeed the first settler and lived there right up to period around the conversion, and since Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson ruled over Norway from c. 975 to 995, then Gunnar, who meets the jarl when still very young (thirteen or eighteen depending on the version), should have acquired Hǫrgsland at the same time in which Þórhallr still owned it according to *Þiðranda þáttr*, which is impossible. The *goði* Þorgrímur and his successor Gunnar could not also be the owners of the estate alongside Þórhallr. To complicate matters further, *Landnámabók* — while not mentioning Hǫrgsland — does state that the land between Fors (today's Foss á Síðu) and Geirlandsá has been claimed by a settler named Eyvindr karpi (Jakob Benediktsson 1967: 322-323).

Such discrepancies between the world of the saga and the information we gather from the earlier texts, and particularly from *Landnámabók*, may well be an indication of how the saga was composed with a more markedly fictional, rather than historical, intent. The coexistence of historicity and fictionality in the sagas has been acknowledged and explored (cf. Clunies Ross 2002), but the assessment of the weight of these elements in order to explore the intent behind the creation of a given saga is not always simple to determine. Ármann Jakobsson (2001: 57), in his analysis of *Bárðar saga*, explains how, despite the numerous examples of elements which we could classify as 'supernatural' or 'fictional', the abundance of elements borrowed from earlier texts, and particularly, the reference to historical details known from authoritative sources, clashes with the notion that the author of the saga would have consciously written a work of fiction:

> Not only is *Bárðar saga* full of historical information; most of that information is derived from *Landnámabók*. In a work of fiction this would be inappropriate, but in a serious work of history it is essential to use more ancient and thus more authoritative material. The function of this historical information is to link the life of Bárðr to the general history of Iceland.

All of this is missing from *Gunnars saga*, where the only historical character we encounter is the Norwegian jarl, Hákon Sigurðarson. It could be inferred that the composer of the saga may not have known of the existence of *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls*,[19] nor of *Landnámabók,* or else they may have tried to make the story fit more elegantly in the supposed historical frame. However, finding holes in the plot by trying to fit it into a historical chronology is in any case missing the point. If the intention of the composer had been to forge a convincing history of the *landnám* (i.e. 'the settlement') for the people of that part of Síða, we may expect them to have made different choices, such as those effected by whoever compiled *Bárðar saga*. Wolf (2012: 271) explains how:

> The idea of canon, that certain things are 'true' for an imaginary world [...], demonstrates the desire of authenticity from the point of view of the audience, who are often concerned with demarcating what is 'official' for a world or franchise.

This notion can also be applied to an extent to the *Íslendingasǫgur*, where compilers — as the case of *Bárðar saga* illustrates — did strive to make their narratives fit with the rest of the canon. This poses the question of why such an urge for coherence did not intervene in the transmission of *Gunnars saga*, and perhaps a plausible answer resides in the fictionality of the text. Disagreement between *Gunnars saga* and other material clearly did not bother its composer(s), nor its readership, or the text would not have enjoyed such a wide circulation as the number of witnesses preserved seems to suggest. As such, it differs markedly in its intent from what Ármann Jakobsson (2001) has identified in the case of *Bárðar saga*. Given how the historical component is an essential infrastructural element holding together the cosmos of the *Íslendingasǫgur*, one could speculate that the saga was indeed composed and transmitted (at least initially) as a work of fiction. It must at the very least be conceded that the composer(s) did certainly not make a considerable effort or showed much preoccupation for the historical aspects of the text.

In this spirit, it is perhaps more prudent, but also more interesting, to examine this saga not so much as the possible repository of some creatively manipulated historical memory concerning the (imagined) historical reality of the period in which it is supposed to take place, or in order to identify from what texts some of its elements were borrowed. Rather, it is more fruitful to approach it in order to explore its eminently literary character. In this way, the saga can be seen as the product of a very different creative impetus from that which seems to have animated the composition of earlier *Íslendingasǫgur*, and it can be appreciated for its value as a witness to a literary taste that had moved away from the need for historicity and as a projection of preoccupations and aspirations of the Icelanders.

Another element of *Gunnars saga* which not only makes it appear to be a world apart, but which could also be an indication of its fictional character, is the moral code emerging from it, which differs from that typical of the *Íslendingasǫgur*. Similarly, the reactions of the characters to common saga events, such as murder, are different from what we would expect from a typical family saga. Jóhannes Halldorsson (1959: lxxiii) already notes how 'fram kemur óvenjulegt hátterni manna á þeim tímum, þegar sagan á að gerast' (there appears an unusual behaviour for the men of the time in which the saga is supposed to have happened). To give a few examples: Gunnar faces no consequence for the killing of Þorgrímur's sons, no feud is initiated, and Þorgrímur dies heartbroken for the death of his children; no *weregild*, i.e. a financial compensation established by law for a killing, is sought, no vindication is carried out, almost as if that was how it was meant to be, given the evil nature of the victims. It may

be argued that this lack of a real connection with the historical past results in a clearer demarcation of good and evil, which would be a result of the eminently fictional intent behind the saga, showing a reflection of a different mentality in Icelandic society at the time in which this particular saga was composed and circulated. This representation of clearly demarcated and identifiable good and evil would be more easily expressed in an eminently creative work.

In depicting such a story, where good and evil are more promptly identifiable, it appears that the composer of the saga seems to have wanted to shape some kind of uplifting origin story and an alternative history for the people of the area, in the heart of the Síða region (of which they show a decent degree of geographical knowledge), and one whose morality would resonate more with the sensitivities of the contemporaries.

The attempt to demarcate unambiguously good and evil in in the world of the saga produces some interesting results. While Gunnar's opponents do not ever behave ethically, it is interesting to observe the length to which the writer went to find a convoluted way in which he could frame Gunnar's summer raiding as noble activity, as opposed to that of his opponents. In the episode by the Baltic island, Gunnar's opponents are portrayed as evil *víkingar* (here clearly a derogatory term), and their names, Svartur and Jökull, parallel those of the bullies of the district whom Gunnar had killed earlier in the saga: Þorgrím's sons Grímur ('Masked one') and Jökull ('Glacier'), and the slave whom Gunnar kills during the games, Svartur ('Black'). According to Ferrari (2020: 123–124), these names are used symbolically to trace the boundary between good and evil, describing the negative role of these characters. There is thus a lack of ambiguity, which is perhaps another consequence of the different and later origin of the saga, which was most likely not written to embellish (let alone record) events passed down through popular memory, but as an original work with the authorial intent of representing the protagonist under a specifically positive light. This does not imply, however, that there is a lack of nuance in the saga. While the characters are generally either clearly good or clearly bad at any given time, their characterisation can change in the course of the story: Gunnar himself does not start out in the most positive light, being presented as lazy and disobedient, before his heroic character emerge; the giantess Fála, while entering the story as a life-threat, becomes a friend to Gunnar and a helping character; the evil bóndi Þorgrímur dies heartbroken, showing himself capable of very humane feelings; the jarl Hákon, despite being presented (this is true for the second version of the saga) as '*öfundsjúkr, kappsamr og yfrið harðr*' (jealous, confrontational and extremely inflexible) and

living up to this description in the following chapters, eventually forgives Gunnar and allows for reconciliation.

Gunnar as an Embodiment of Iceland

Writing about the function of the *Íslendingasǫgur* in thirteenth-century Iceland, Torfi Tulinius (2000: 242) explains how: 'these seem to deal more than others with uncertain identities, a feature which is of particular importance in understanding the relationship between literary development and social change in medieval Iceland'. It would thus be fascinating to attempt an explanation of what kind of societal and cultural developments may be reflected in *Gunnars saga*, and perhaps in its *kolbítr* protagonist. The fact that this saga survives in around fifty manuscripts from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries may be an indication of how something in it resonated particularly with the Icelanders during that period. These were difficult centuries for the country, which had gone through a plague, become an impoverished part of the Danish realm, lost wealth and prestige, and struggled with poverty and natural calamities, not to mention the establishment of a severe and economically detrimental Danish trade monopoly.

Arngrímur Jónsson's work, *Brevis commentarius de Islandia*, published in 1593, was specifically aimed to dispel the prejudices and the misconceptions surrounding Iceland at the time. The frontispiece recites that the book is a:

> Brevis commentarius de islandia: quo scriptorvm de hac insula errores deteguntur, & extraneorum quorundam conviciis, ac calumniis, quibus Islandis liberius insultare solent, occurritur (Jakob Benediktsson 1968).[20]

> Brief commentary on Iceland: where the mistakes of writers about this island are revealed, and where the injuries and lies of certain foreigners, with which they freely insult Iceland, are refuted.

A parallel to this can be found in the AM 106 fol., *Þórðarbók* version of *Landnámabók* (35v33-35), a clear indication that the image that they were projecting to the outside world was a real preoccupation for some Icelanders:

> Það er margra manna mál, að það sé óskyldur fróðleikur að rita landnám, en vér þykjumst heldur svara kunna útlendum mönnum, þá er þeir bregða oss því,

> að vér séum komnir af þrælum eða illmennum, ef vér vitum víst vorar kynferðir sannar [...]
>
> It is the opinion of many that it is unnecessary knowledge to write on the settlement [of Iceland], but we rather claim to be able to answer back to foreigners, when they say we are descended from slaves or miscreants if we know for certain the truth of our origin.

It would be strange to presume that this was intended directly for foreign readers. It was most likely conceived as a tool for Icelanders to protect and nurture their sense of identity and self-esteem as a people, a preoccupation which seems to have accompanied them for a good part of their history – somewhat unsurprisingly, for such a small nation, surviving throughout the centuries at the European periphery. Torfi Tulinius (2006: 226) suggest that:

> Ef til vill voru Íslendingar svona uppteknir af kolbítnum vegna þess að samband þeirra sjálfra við konungsvald var ávallt flókið og einkenndist í senn af hrifningu og sjáfstæðisvilja, eins og lesa má úr sögu landsins.
>
> Icelanders were so fond of *kólbitar* because the relationship between themselves and the kingly power was ever so complicated and was always characterised by a fascination and desire for independence, as one may read in the history of the country.

In this perspective, Gunnar may be seen as an embodiment of Iceland. He acts like the symbolic representation of a country which conceals a great potential but suffers from the prejudice of others and is longing for emancipation and opportunities to prove his worth. Another saga character, Grettir Ásmundarson, the protagonist of *Grettis saga*, has been traditionally considered a literary embodiment of the country.[21] Sigurður Nordal (1938: 4) writes that 'Grettis saga á dýpstu ítök sín í hugum Íslendinga einmitt því að þakka, að þjóðin hefur þekkt sín egin örlög í örlögum Grettis' (Grettis saga owes its deepest influence in the mind of the Icelanders to the fact that the nation has recognised its own destiny in that of Grettir). The symbolic role of Grettir, who becomes cursed, and thus becomes increasingly weaker, going through a series of misfortunes, only to die an outlaw on an isolated island, as Hastrup discusses in her article, changed through time. In the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, when Iceland had become embedded in the Norwegian kingdom, Grettir becomes

'a hero, who defended the pristine society' (Hastrup 1986: 305). Later on, in the fifteenth century (possibly the same time in which *Gunnars saga* was composed), Grettir's role is to show 'how 'a real man', an 'Icelander', and 'one of us' is able to fight the dark forces threatening the country from outside' (Hastrup 1986: 307). Gunnar however, unlike Grettir, is not doomed: he can prove his worth under the right circumstances and complete his destiny after a journey, real or symbolic, facing his enemies and eventually obtaining through heroic deeds the prestige that is due to him. The curse inflicted on him by Þórdís is lifted with a payment, and the conclusion of the saga is positive and serene. This would make Gunnar a more hopeful and less fatalistic reflection of the same concerns that are represented in *Grettis saga*. The hero of *Gunnars saga* is not a tragic figure doomed to fail, but someone who eventually succeeds. If we believe the notion for which *Gunnars saga* was one of the latest *Íslendingasǫgur* ever to be composed, then we may be tempted to read a shift in the attitude of the Icelanders from the time in which *Grettis saga* was first composed and circulated. A brighter and hopeful attitude towards the fate and the future of the nation takes the place of a fatalistic and pessimist one, and perhaps provides the readers with a form of literary escapism from the harshness of reality.

At this point, parallels between Icelandic history and episodes of the sagas can be drawn: the bullying perpetrated by the *bóndi* Þórgrímur and his sons works well as a literary representation of real abuses perpetrated by powerful and overbearing local administrators. Gunnar's journey into distant lands acquires a symbolic value too, becoming the representation of the nation's journey from subservience and humiliation to glory. Gunnar shows an ability to interact with powerful external forces, personified by the giantesses and the trolls, by eventually befriending some of these and gaining more power, in the form of a magical sword, *Fálunautr*. Very tentatively, we may also see this as symbolic representation of the Icelanders' future ability to partly tame a hostile and dangerous nature for their own economic advantage. The episode where Gunnar calls a polar bear, which obediently waits for him to catch up, before getting killed as a trophy, almost seems to echo the statement we find in chapter VI of *Íslendingabók* (Jakob Benediktsson 1968: 13), where Ari *fróði* makes sure it is very clear how 'land þat es kallat es Grœnland, fannsk ok byggðisk af Íslandi' (the land which is called Greenland was discovered and colonised by Iceland). This could reflect an ongoing concern in Iceland about receiving due credit for its role in the discovery and settlement of the new land. Having earned an impressive track record, Gunnar is invited to join a foreign court, but he is not treated fairly by the Norwegian jarl. He, however, manages

to teach the jarl a lesson, at first triggering his fury, but eventually earning his respect. Here we find an echo of foreign rule and the consequent struggle for independence, eventually earning the respect of the former rulers and becoming master at home. The glory of Gunnar and his righteousness is further manifest in his role as a force for good even in the context of an ethically dubious activity such as summer pillaging. Here, he defeats forces of evil, such as the vikings in the Baltic.

The concluding remark of the saga, in which Gunnar is presented as the forefather of great men, sounds almost like an invitation to prospective authors to pick up this narrative strand for further development, similar to what *Jökuls þáttr* does for *Kjalnesinga saga* or *Bolla þáttr* does for *Laxdœla saga*. In a sense, *Gunnars saga* is in itself a kind of spin-off, although one that does not fit very elegantly with the metanarrative that embraces the rest of the canon, as we have seen, but inconsistencies are to be found in most created worlds: from that of King Arthur to those of *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*. The cosmos of the Icelandic sagas is a vast pool of material for the shaping of new literary ideas, as the story of Gunnar shows.

The Saga and its Legacy

The subsequent history of this text, however, shows that it must have escaped its literary boundaries to influence the way in which Icelanders from the Síða area interpreted and interacted with the local landscape. In this regard, Meulengracht Sørensen (2000: 11) argues that:

> The relationship between society and literature is not so simple and operates in both directions. [...] The literature was not only a consequence of that history. The literature also contributed to the shaping of history in a self-affirming process whereby a people with a special historical recollection and mode of thought made narratives about the past a meaningful part of their present.

We do have a clear example of this in the Síða area. While on the one hand, the story clashes with the earlier accounts of *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls* and of *Landnámabók*, there is a natural feature, not mentioned in the saga, which is linked to its protagonist. Gunnarshellir is a cave in which, according to local belief,[22] Gunnar would have hidden a treasure, casting a chest into a pond in the depth of the cave.[23] Since none of this is mentioned in the saga itself, it may be deduced that the association between the hero and the cave was established following

the composition of the saga, as a way to reconnect the landscape with the storyworld. Similarly, in the plains to the south of Hǫrgsland, we find the placenames Gunnarstangi and Gunnarsflóð. We thus have instances of how this saga has actually affected the landscape, illustrating the role of the story in the development of local identity and historical consciousness.

Conclusion

In the course of this discussion, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* was analysed for its role in the community as a symbolic projection of Icelandic identity at the northern European periphery. The saga was interpreted as an interesting product, not only in the sense that it incorporates stylistic elements from different saga strands, but also in that it serves a multifunctional purpose; being on the one hand a fictional product designed for entertainment, but more interestingly a work designed to write an alternative literary past for a region of Iceland and a symbolic representation of the country. The saga does not generate meaning by fabricating a convincing set of characters and episodes with the pretence of embedding them in historical events, but by providing a legendary tale of heroism, rewriting history to serve the needs of a disadvantaged present, and possibly even providing an origin-story for a people who felt they were lacking one. The composer does not start from the scant historical information about Síða and the neighbouring areas, which can be obtained from older sources such as *Landnámabók* or *Flateyjarbók*, but by creating *ex novo* characters, and assembling creatively a number of episodes and motifs to obtain an original product. The story of Gunnar is thus turned into an occasion for Icelandic readers to engage with their own history and identity.

Notes

[1] I will use modern Icelandic orthography when dealing with this saga, given that all of the witnesses in which it is contained are post-medieval, and by that time a significant amount of phonological changes in the direction of modern Icelandic had already happened.

[2] The saga is cited, for example, by Callow (2016) in a general chapter on the dating of sagas, or by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013) in a chapter on women and magic.

[3] Cf. Margrét Eggertsdóttir (1993: 250).

[4] For a detailed discussion of saga scholarship and its political undertones and motivations, see Arnold 2003.

[5] The *kolbítr*, an unassuming and seemingly talentless person who grows to be a hero, is a literary motif that occurs very frequently in younger sagas: Sigurðr of *Sigurðar saga þögla,* Refr of *Króka-Refs saga*, Glúmr of *Víga-Glúms saga*, Ketill Hœngr of *Ketils saga Hœngs*, and Starkaðr of *Gautreks saga* just to name a few. For an introduction and discussion on the motif, see Torfiu H. Tulinius 2006: 226-229, and Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2005: 87-100.

[6] See Arngrímur Vídalin 2020 and Price 2020 for discussions on the term *blámaðr*.

[7] Despite the current English use of capitalising this word and treating it as an ethnonym, its meaning in this saga is clearly a pejorative refering to pirates.

[8] Cf. Callow (2017: 26).

[9] This can be found in ch. 7 of the main version and, with different wording, ch. 14 of the second version.

[10] Cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1954: 204).

[11] In *Njáls saga*, the word for 'bar/beam' is *slá*, in *Gunnars saga* it is *biti*, meaning 'crossbeam'.

[12] For an in-depth discussion on the post-classical *Íslendingasǫgur*, see Arnold 2003.

[13] Genre as a taxonomical tool for the study of sagas is a notoriously thorny and controversial topic, and one which cannot be entered here for reasons of space and convenience. However, of particular interest for this subject are the chapters by Bampi, Sif Rikhardsdóttir, Rösli and Glauser in Bampi et al. 2020.

[14] For an extensive treatment of the notion of *storyworld*, and its application within the fields of media studies and narratology, see Ryan, Marie-Laure, and Jan-Noël Thon 2014.

[15] Cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson (1935: 236-237).

[16] Cf Björn K. Þórólfsson, Guðni Jónsson (1943: 118, 258).

[17] Cf. Sigurður Nordal, Guðni Jónsson (1938: 328).

[18] The second version of the saga has: 'Er frá þeim [Gunnari og Helgu] kominn mikill ættingr og sá frændabálkr kallaðr Keldunúpingar, en um nöfn þeira er eigi getið í þessari sögu eðr um tilburði á þeim dögum.' (From them (Gunnar and Helga) came a great offspring, and the family name Keldunúpingar, but their names, and the events of those days are not mentioned in this saga.).

[19] Here the standardised classical Old Icelandic orthography is used, as it is more in accordance with the convention of the manuscript in which this text is contained.

[20] Page not numbered in the facsimile edition. It comes immediately after page xlii.

[21] For a discussion on the role of Grettir in the Icelandic collective imagination and identity, see Hastrup 1986.

[22] Ólafía Jakobsdóttir, viva voce.

[23] This story is mentioned in a publication attached to the newspaper *Morgunblaðið Lesbók Morgunblaðsins*, 1st August 1948: 356, where it is also reported that the cave had been explored, and that no pond (let alone any treasure) had been found.

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Crusades, Cities and Castles: Finland as Sweden's Militarised Borderland c. 1150–1300

Caroline Wilhelmsson

Finland was part of the Swedish kingdom for about six hundred years until 1809, when it fell under Russian rule (Sjöstrand 1996: 7). Historical evidence, which includes papal letters, ecclesiastical documents and testimonies of Swedish military expeditions to Finland, point to it having formally been incorporated into the kingdom of Sweden sometime in the thirteenth century. However, Sweden may have exerted political influence over its eastern neighbour since at least the mid-twelfth century as suggested by thirteenth-century sources including *Erikslegenden* (Bengtsson and Lovén 2012: 24), as well as letters written by the popes Innocent III and Alexander III referring to past political manoeuvres in the region (Christiansen 1997: 114–115). Medieval Finland is a particularly interesting region to study because of how the power dynamics between its native populations and the Swedish colonists shaped the country's history. Indeed, many important milestones in Finnish history were the product of these interactions, from Finland's Christianisation to the development of its legal tradition, from the establishment of its government and administration to the building of its most important towns (Line 2007: 410–462). Less positive events were also the result of the fusion of these two societies: many of Finland's deadliest armed conflicts were conducted under the Swedish flag, including but not limited to the Thirty Years War (Kirby 2006: 30–32). In this context, the present article aims to answer a simple question: why and how was Finland militarised following its conquest by Sweden?

The article will start by summarising the political process through which Finland became a militarised borderland under the authority of Sweden starting from the mid-twelfth

century. The study is limited to the years 1150–1300 to stay in line with the approximate dating of the three so-called Swedish crusades, with the first commonly thought to have happened in the mid-twelfth century, and the last having been launched in 1293 — more on this shortly. Out of convenience, the names *Sweden* and *Finland* are readily used to denote the areas that gave birth to today's states, but the political situation at the time was more complex (Sawyer 1989; Ahola, Frog and Tolley 2014). Similarly, the term *Scandinavian* will be used to refer to anyone coming from anywhere in modern Norway, Denmark or Sweden. The first part of this article will be a justification of my interpretation of Finland as a borderland which, like Bradley Parker, I define as 'areas between political or cultural entities' (Parker 2006). This is an important step, because the Swedes' interest in Finland came from the fact that it was strategically located at a crossroads between cultures and trade routes. Finland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is therefore a region that lends itself naturally to this volume's theme about northern peripheries.

The preliminary aspect of this research paper will include a discussion surrounding the Northern Crusades, their likely aim and the reason why Finland may have been a strategic target for Christian settlers. Again, the term 'crusade' will be used freely because it easily conveys the idea of religious conflict, but the question of whether Swedish expeditions to Finland truly fit the definition of a crusade has been the subject of considerable debate over the years (Lind 2005). Secondly, the article will discuss how the newly arrived colonists changed Finland's landscape through the combination of urbanisation and the fortifying of new settlements. The southern Finnish city of Åbo, widely known as Turku, will be taken as a case study. The study will thereafter examine a selection of four prehistoric and medieval castles either built or used by Sweden during the period under study. These four examples will allow for a discussion of four aspects of castle-building. The first castle, Viborg, will provide an example of a secondary settlement growing into a city. Haga will be discussed in light of its function as a stand-alone fortification, while excavations at Lieto may help redefine the timeline of Swedish military activity in Finland. Finally, Stenberga will allow for the investigation of private ownership in an environment heavily dominated by the Swedish Crown. The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the development of these structures in the context of Swedish-Novgorodian conflicts and religious warfare, and the questions that their study may raise.

Medieval Sweden and its dominions are notoriously difficult to study. This is because sources are extremely scarce: the fire at Tre Kronor in 1697 and the subsequent destruction

of Åbo in 1827, also by fire, have deprived us of most archives regarding the early history of Sweden and its territories. The scarcity of local sources can be compensated by using continental sources but makes research concerning medieval Sweden and its territories more laborious and uncertain than desirable. Nevertheless, each generation of scholars has produced works concerning most aspects of medieval Sweden and medieval Finland as far as feasible, especially during the twentieth century. Of course, earlier scholars all worked with the source material available at the time and presented their interpretations of it partly based on the religious, ideological and political contexts in which they wrote. This inherent subjectivity is an important aspect of scholarship to keep in mind, especially when studying areas occupied by foreign forces, such as Finland. Indeed, Finland belonged to Sweden for seven centuries. As a result, a significant proportion of the early scholarship concerning Finnish history was written by members of the Swedish intellectual elite with the linguistic, cultural and political bias that came with their backgrounds (Kirby 2006: 96–98). Among other pioneers of Finnish nationalism such as novelist Zachris Topelius, Finnish historian Väinö Voionmaa largely contributed to the beginnings of medieval Finnish history as its own discipline (rather than as a segment of Swedish history). He notably wrote about taxes and institutions in medieval Finland (1912) but also land administration (1924) and royal manors (1911), all of which are directly linked to the militarisation of Finland by Sweden. But the most famous historian of medieval Finland is perhaps Jarl Gallén, whose most famous work, *Nöteborgsfreden och Finlands medeltida östgräns* (1968), is a study of the peace treaty of 1323 confirming the border between Finland (then part of Sweden) and Novgorod. In his influential article 'Kring Birger jarl och andra kors-tåget till Finland' (1946), Gallén successfully argued for an earlier dating of the Second Swedish Crusade, which permanently influenced later scholarship on the subject. Other important historians of northern crusading history include Eric Christiansen, who authored *The Northern Crusades* (1980, reedited 1997), but also Alan Murray who has recently edited several volumes dedicated to these expeditions including *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150–1500* (2001, reedited 2017) and *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier* (2009, reedited 2016).

But while the scholars I just mentioned have all contributed to our understanding of the political and religious reasons behind the Swedish conquest of Finland, few have studied the topic from an archaeological perspective. In fact, the specific study of Sweden's medieval castles as part of the state-building process is a relatively new area of scholarship. Finnish archaeologist Juhani Runne produced several of the first scholarly studies of Finland's

medieval castles including *Suomen keskiaikaiset mäkilinnat (Finnish medieval hill castles)* (1914), and *Tanskalaisten ristiretket Suomeen linnatutkimuksen valossa (Danish crusades to Finland in the light of castle research)* (1923). Birgitta Fritz was the first scholar to focus on Sweden's medieval castles and their role in administration. Her PhD thesis, *Hus, land och län: förvaltningen i Sverige 1250–1434* (1972–73) was very influential in advertising this new area of study. Other relevant works by Fritz include the article 'The Building of Castles and the Administration of Sweden' (1997) which highlights the links between state formation and the fortification of Sweden including Finland. Since Fritz, the study of castles in Sweden and its territories has flourished with archaeologist Knut Drake notably helping to popularise the field (1989). One of the first works on medieval fortresses in Sweden to attract a wider audience was however art historian Christian Lovén's book titled *Borgar och befästningar i det medeltida Sverige* (1996). This followed a similar book on Finland's castles written in 1993 by Carl Jacob Gardberg and Per Olof Welin, *Finlands medeltida borgar*. More recently, Martin Hansson (2011) published an analysis of Sweden's medieval castles and their role in politics, *Medeltida borgar: maktens hus i Norden*. For more detailed analysis of archaeological elements concerning Finland's castles, one needs to delve into excavation reports and analyses such as those presented by Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen (1990). If scholarship concerning medieval Sweden, especially that written in English, is generally rare, it is even more so concerning Finland. Early Finnish researchers, often basing their works on national romantic ideology, usually wrote in Finnish only, thus making it difficult for an international audience to access this field. In addition, it is also a result of some of the historical events I shall discuss in this article that medieval Finnish history has often remained in the shadow of its Swedish and Russian neighbours. However, the past couple of decades have seen the emergence of a new generation of scholars based in Finland and the Baltic region striving to make up for this imbalance, and this paper will also help complete the picture.

Northern and Southern Finland as Meeting Points

Finland may be considered a borderland from different perspectives. Firstly, from a geo-climatic point of view, it occupies an interesting location. In terms of climate for instance, the Gulf of Bothnia, situated between Sweden and northern Finland, can be seen as a frontier. South of the gulf, land was arable, and people lived sedentary lives in permanent settlements (Christiansen 1997: 8–10). However, north of the gulf, people relied on hunting, fishing and tracking skills, and followed a nomadic lifestyle (Christiansen 1997: 8–10). These stark

differences in lifestyle north and south of the gulf show that this climatic frontier was also a cultural one. From this perspective, Finland served as a link between continental and Arctic cultures. Finland is also lodged between Scandinavia and Russia, and today it shares land borders in the north with no less than three countries (Sweden, Norway and Russia) within just a few hundred kilometres. Long before the violent clashes that would later involve Swedish colonists and Finnish populations, there had been exchanges including trade but also intermarriages and migration, between Finland and Sweden. This is reflected in several sagas but also in the archaeological material (Mägi 2018: 167–171). For instance, there are a few examples of runestones which mention men called 'Tavast'. In Uppland, two stones were erected by sponsors named as such. The first one, U 722, says that *Tafæistr let rceisa stcein at ... brodur sinn. [...].* This means: 'Tafaist erected this stone [...] after his brother'. The second stone is U 467 which explains that *Tafæist[r) . . . [ræi]sa stæin penn[a] [...].* This translates as: 'Tafaist [...] erected this stone. [...]' (Roslund 2017: 188). Both artefacts have been dated to the eleventh century, thus at least a century before the conquest of Finland by Sweden. This ethnonym has been interpreted notably by Mats Roslund among others as direct reference to the region of Tavastia, an inland region of southern Finland. These men may therefore have emigrated from Tavastia. Alternatively, their ancestors may have done so (Roslund 2017: 188). In any case, the presence of this ethnonym in runic inscriptions from Sweden is evidence that there had been immigration and integration into Swedish society before the Baltic crusades.

In Southern Finland, Tapani Tuovinen also likened the Finnish archipelago to a borderland due to its changing nature, from coast to islands, islands to rocky islets, and islets to the open sea (Tuovinen 2011: 28–29). This landscape was a meeting place in medieval (and probably earlier) times for the inland populations and the coast dwellers, where cultures met, goods were traded, and individuals encountered each other (Tuovinen 2011: 28–29). Still today, the Gulf of Finland remains a geo-political meeting point between Finland, Estonia and Russia, with modern Saint Petersburg located at the eastern end of it. In medieval times, its proximity to Novgorod made the area ideal for trade. However, archaeological remains of early harbour sites in the Baltic region can be difficult to detect. Marika Mägi explains that there are several reasons for this. Firstly, the harbours may have been infrequently used. Secondly, these structures are 'difficult to find because of fewer metal items in their culture layer' (Mägi 2018: 93). Thirdly, prior to the Viking Age, river-cruising

may have been a more popular option, making these harbours 'particularly complicated to distinguish from "ordinary" settlement sites' (Mägi 2018: 94).

In the specific case of the Finnish archipelago, the rocky islets, and numerous islands which Tuovinen (2011: 28–29) points out as being a borderland may in fact have hindered Finland's access to the main trade routes. While the Estonian coasts are incredibly rich in artefacts and archaeological remains evidencing vibrant trade over the centuries, the evidence is sparser for Finland (Mägi 2018: 93–99). It has been suggested that the rocky coast of southern Finland would have been difficult to navigate, while the lack of arable land meant that crews overwintering or stopping for a while risked supply shortages (Mägi 2018: 98). Tuovinen however proposes that some of the harbours situated along this inconvenient coast may have served as transhipment stops where ships were reloaded (Tuovinen 2011: 44). Nevertheless, there are also archaeological imprints of cargo and shipments outside of settlements and possible harbour sites which suggest that at least part of the sea traffic did have Finnish ports as destination (Tuovinen 2011: 44). As Mägi pointed out, the difficulty associated with navigating Finnish waters does not invalidate the possibility that some seafarers would have done so anyway (Mägi 2018: 99). The fourteenth-century Codex Holmensis A41, which Gallén (1993) argued was written by a Franciscan monk, contains an itinerary (possibly in use as early as the thirteenth century) which shows that safer routes were used to reach Finnish ports such as the southern harbour at Hangö (Zwick 2017: 55–63). In addition to this, there is evidence of inland trade in Finland as well, where commodities such as fur and food would have been exchanged (Ahola, Frog and Tolley 2014: 495–498). Land and river routes running from Scandinavia and Russia led to Finland, and traders could therefore easily reach the region without requiring open sea travel (Ahola, Frog and Tolley 2014: 495–498).

The Swedish Crusades to Finland

As mentioned previously, Finland is located at a crossroads between nations, and shares a particularly long border with Russia. This proximity to both Scandinavia and Russia has played a major role in Finnish history since the early Middle Ages. It was notably a fundamental aspect of the religious wars that raged in the Baltic Sea region between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. These religious conflicts are known by scholars as the Northern (or Baltic) Crusades (Christiansen 1997: 1–8). They were expeditions conducted in the name of the Catholic Church against the pagan communities of the eastern Baltic region

and had a profound effect on Finland. These expeditions led to Finland's permanent integration into the Swedish kingdom during the thirteenth century (Westerholm 2002: 129–130). There were several documented crusades launched from Sweden to Finland during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Although they were never explicitly described as such in contemporary documents, similarities with their counterparts in the Holy Land are obvious, hence the denomination ('Northern Crusades') they were given by scholars (Christiansen 1997: 50). It is unclear when and where exactly the first wave of attacks took place. According to late thirteenth-century sources such as *Erikslegenden* (*The Legend of King Eric*) now preserved in the *Registrum Upsalense* (Bengtsson and Lovén 2012: 24), the so-called First Swedish Crusade took place sometime in the mid-twelfth century. The story tells of King Eric's voyage to Finland accompanied by a bishop, Henry. There, they preached to the native populations; when the local populations refused to convert, they were attacked by the king's troops, after which a Christian community was established. Eric sailed back to Sweden while Henry supposedly went on to become the first bishop of Finland (*Sankt Eriks legenden,* ed. Schmid 1954: xix). Most aspects of this episode are regarded as a literary construction and it remains debated whether the Swedes went on a crusade to Finland before the thirteenth century (Christiansen 1997: 114–115). However, the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, which covers various political events from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, clearly states that in the year 1142, '(...) a Knyaz of the Svei with a Bishop in sixty boats attacked merchants who were coming from over sea in three boats (...)' (*The Chronicle of Novgorod*, ed. Michell and Forbes 1914: 17).[1] In addition, several papal letters also seem to suggest that Swedish attempts to convert Finland did take place during the twelfth century. In 1165, Pope Alexander III wrote to the archbishop of Uppsala and Jarl Guttorm to complain about the Finns who, he wrote, kept pretending to accept the Christian faith but always reverted to their old beliefs as soon as the Christian armies withdrew:

> Phinni semper imminente sibi exercitu inimicorum, fidem seruare Christianam promittunt, et praedicatores et eruditores Christianae legis desideranter requirunt, et recedente exercitu fidem abnegant, praedicatores contemnunt, et grauiter persequuntur. (SDHK 207)

> Finns always promise to serve the Christian faith following the threat of their enemies' army, and longingly seek the preachers and scholars of the Christian

> law, and upon the army withdrawing, deny the faith, disregard the preachers and persecute them severely.[2]

This indeed seems to confirm that Swedish armies had been involved in Finland since the mid-twelfth century, although control of the area may have been brittle. What is more certain is that Swedish troops launched several expeditions to Finland during the thirteenth century with the clear aim of gaining and keeping control of the native populations.

The Second Swedish Crusade is said to have been headed by Birger Magnusson (later known as Birger Jarl) either in 1249, the date that Christiansen retains (1997: 117) or 1239 as supported by other scholars such as Jarl Gallén (1946). This discrepancy will be explained shortly. Again, direct evidence for the expedition is meagre. The only surviving medieval source for the expedition is the fourteenth century *Erikskrönikan* known in English as the *Eric Chronicle* (Line 2016: 73), which is the oldest surviving Swedish chronicle. It was probably written in the first quarter for the fourteenth century but now only survives in later manuscripts, including Codex Holmensiens D2 dated to ca. 1470 (Österberg 2012: 13). Because the chronicle is our only written source for this event, the possibility of a significant crusade has sometimes been met with scepticism (Line 2007: 438; Lind 2017: 143). Most scholars, including all those referenced so far, nevertheless accept that there was some expedition to Finland around the mid-thirteenth century. The lack of sources is a typical problem when it comes to studying medieval Sweden, and lack of contemporary writings about an event should therefore not be taken as definite proof that it did not happen. Indeed, there are reasons to believe that the Second Crusade did take place as it is told. Complaints about the Finns' lack of cooperation with the Catholic authorities did not stop in the twelfth century. A letter from 1237 written by pope Gregory IX expresses the exact same concerns as the ones quoted above, namely that the Finns reverted to their old beliefs and persecuted the Christians again:

> Nam sicut transmisse ad nos vestre littere continebant illorum qui tauesti dicuntur, nacio que olim multo labore ac studio uestro & predecessorum uestrorum ad fidem Catholicam conuersa extitit nunc procurantibus inimicis crucis prope positis ad antiqui erroris reuersa perfidiam cum quibusdam barbaris nouellam ecclesie dej plantacionem de tauestia funditus dyabolo coadiuuante subuertunt (...) (SDHK 514)

> In fact, as transmitted to us by your letters which contained all that the Tavastians are said to be, a people once converted to the Catholic faith through your hard work and zeal, as well as your predecessors', now returned to the faithlessness of the old pagan beliefs by close, instigating enemies of the cross, [who] with the devil's help, along with some savages, completely upset the new establishment of God's church in Tavastia [...].

In the same letter, the pope goes on to urge the archbishop of Uppsala and his suffragans to go on a crusade to Finland. In this context, it is not surprising that an attack was launched a few years later.

However, the dating of the Second Crusade is problematic. Two dates are usually proposed, 1249 and 1239 (Line 2007: 439), although other alternatives exist. The dating of 1249, which was for a long time accepted but is now rejected by many modern scholars, is based on a particular interpretation of the *Erikskrönikan* and the events it relates. But the chronicle gives no date and is generally considered unreliable because it is at odds with other, more chronologically accurate sources such as *Hákonar saga* (Line 2007: 438). The dating of 1239, initially proposed by Gallén (1946), is more coherent notably because the crusade would have been a direct reaction to the papal letter quoted above. It would also fit with other diplomatic events happening in Germany during the same year, as the Danes were granted lands in Estonia. Therefore, the Swedes may have wanted to consolidate their position in Finland in order to repel the Danish threat (Line 2007: 439). Leading such an expedition as early as 1239 would have allowed Birger Magnusson to improve his reputation as a leader in preparation for his later career as Sweden's most powerful medieval statesman. However, the lack of mention of this crusade in contemporary sources suggests that the expedition was not as successful as it was intended to be (Line 2007: 440). John Lind agrees that the event was probably insignificant although this expedition indicated Sweden's political ambitions clearly (Lind 2017: 143). Nevertheless, by the mid-thirteenth century, Sweden's lasting influence over Finland was a lot more obvious. While papal legate William of Modena held authority over the bishopric of Finland in 1234 (SDHK 40858), Philip Line and Per Olof Sjöstrand (1996: 23) among others posited that by 1241 this authority was held by the bishop of Linköping (Line 2007: 433). By 1245, the administration of the Diocese of Finland was the archbishop of Uppsala's responsibility as evidenced by the pope's requests that he financially support and later formally punish Bishop Thomas in Finland (SDHK 547, 549). In 1253, the first historically attested Swedish bishop of Finland, Bengt, was listed among other Swedish

bishops belonging to the archdiocese of Uppsala (SDHK 682). Bengt was Birger Magnusson's son, which shows that Sweden's grip over Finland was now firmer than it had ever been before.

The Northern Crusades in general targeted many more areas besides Finland. But the latter was an important battleground because of its location on the doorstep of the Orthodox Church. Indeed, while the crusades, both southern and northern, primarily targeted pagans and heathens, increasing tensions between the Catholic and Orthodox churches seem to have justified some of the attacks perpetrated by the crusader states against non-Christian Baltic populations (Nielsen 2016: 231–233). Until the thirteenth century, relations between Catholics and Orthodox Christians were mostly peaceful, as evidenced by the trade relations they maintained not only with the Swedes but with the Germans as well and many others (Ekdahl 2016: 4). At least, there are few mentions, if any, of obviously religious conflicts between both groups. However, in 1229, a papal letter was sent to the bishop of Linköping, rector of Visby, and Cistercian abbot in Roma (Gotland) which forbade traders from doing business with the Russians because they harassed the Christians of Finland (SDHK 460). There is a small chance that some of these Russians were pagan, but we know that the traders visiting Visby from Novgorod were generally Orthodox as evidenced by the Russian churches that were built in Visby itself (Blomkvist 2005: 498–500). Therefore, the hostility shown in this papal letter (SDHK 460), and many similar ones across the Baltic region, is indicative of a deterioration in relations between the two churches. Reasons for this change of mood have been studied by scholars such as Mark Muzinger (2006: 167) and Torben Nielsen (2016: 231–253) who blame the hostile attitude towards the Orthodox on a clash of cultures between East and West. Muzinger argues that this clash went beyond religion, with a different ideology such as that evidenced by legal practices and interpersonal relations playing a role in the growing schism between the two churches (Muzinger 2006: 167). Line (2016: 89–97) focuses instead on the trade arrangements in place between East and West at the time and the increasing need for western kingdoms to control access to Lake Ladoga. This very large lake, situated near modern-day Saint Petersburg just across the Finnish border, serves as meeting point for several important waterways. These waterways, in turn, provide access along the Russian river and water networks to the White Sea in the north, and to the Black and Caspian seas in the south (Line 2016: 89–97). This strategic position necessarily led to competition over the lake's control. This tense geopolitical situation may have precipitated the Third Swedish Crusade launched in 1293 against the Karelians (Christiansen 1997: 118–122; Line

2016: 89–97). Genuine religious fervour can never be discounted either. There may therefore have been a mix of different reasons behind these military expeditions towards Finland, with the result being that by the mid-thirteenth century, the region was under Swedish control.

Urbanisation and Fortifications: Åbo and its Castle

Up until the Swedes' mass arrival in the thirteenth century, Finland had been a sparsely populated area. By the twelfth century, it is estimated that the population of the whole of Finland was only about 40,000 people (Westerholm 2002: 124). One of the first effects of Swedish rule in Finland was to allow for the immigration of Swedish settlers, many of whom were farmers simply looking for new arable land and relief from increasingly heavy taxes (Westerholm 2002: 124–125). As discussed previously, Finland had already been on the political periphery of Scandinavia for some time. It had a diocese, initially under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Lund and later the archbishop of Uppsala, since the twelfth century (Andersson 1990: 54–55). The diocese was first established in Nousis (Fin. Nousiainen), which is a settlement about twenty kilometres north-west of Åbo. Archaeological remains point to the bishop's seat having later been moved to the settlement of Korois, before it was subsequently moved to Åbo during the thirteenth century (Harjula and Immonen 2012: 2–3). However, there are no written records of this move. Dating these developments is difficult as contemporary sources are very scarce. Rather than being distinct seats, Mikko Heikkilä (2012: 455–456) proposes that Åbo initially referred to the bishop's official residence while the actual seat was in Korois. Following the growth of the settlement around the bishop's palace, he posits that the surrounding area and eventually the cathedral came to be known as Åbo (2012: 455–456). Korois is now a recreational green space which lies in the centre of modern-day Åbo. In any case, two letters from the bishop of Finland, Thomas, were written in 1234 from Nousis (SDHK 496; 497). What happened in the few years after this is unclear but, in 1259, a letter from Pope Alexander IV (SDHK 778) was addressed to 'Capitulo aboensi', the chapter in Åbo. It is difficult to determine how many settlements existed in Finland before the arrival of the Swedes, or how big they were. However, the parochial system, with Åbo at its heart, started taking hold in Finland in the 1220s and 1230s (Haikinnen 2010: 343–344).

While the Swedish crusades reaffirmed Christianity in regions which may still have practised paganism to an extent, the Swedes were not the first Christians in Finland. There is no indication that the first bishops of Finland were Swedish, and we know that the region's

Christianisation process started during the Viking Age (Ville Laakso 2014: 110). There is also archaeological evidence that Christian (or at least Christian-inspired) practices such as inhumation instead of cremation had been taking place long before the crusades (Fewster 2016: 98–99). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the oldest church building identified in Finland might have been built by Swedes. In 2013, the remains of what is thought to be Finland's oldest church were found and excavated in Ravattula, about three kilometres from Korois. These were dated to the second half of the twelfth century (Ruohonen 2017). All coins found at the site so far came from Gotland. Furthermore, the design of the chancel is reminiscent of what Ruohonen calls 'Scandinavian' examples (Ruohonen 2017: 50–52). Although Ruohonen does not explain what he means by 'Scandinavian', the plan of the church at Ravattula (with the chancel built lower than the nave) was very common in Sweden during the same period (Linscott 2006: 14–18). Even more strikingly, the church, presumed to have been wooden, was built on top of a stone foundation: a design rarely seen in Finnish architecture of that period, if ever (Ruohonen 2017: 50). But stone was commonly used in Sweden: by the first half of the twelfth century, all churches on Gotland were made entirely of stone (Ranta et al 2009: 85). It is therefore possible that this church was built by Swedish or Gotlandic people, or according to their fashion. The church was most probably abandoned around the time when the bishop's seat was moved from Nousis to Korois (Ruohonen 2017: 57–58). Despite the evidence found at Ravattula, the building of Finland's earliest churches cannot systematically be attributed to the Swedes because there were Christians in Finland before the Swedish conquest. The result of the ongoing excavations at Ravattula shows that from the thirteenth century onwards, the urbanisation of Finland accelerated under the Swedes' influence. In order to illustrate the process, I shall focus on two examples: Åbo and Viborg.

There had been another wooden church about a kilometre away from Korois since at least the mid-thirteenth century (Andersson 1990: 55). By the 1270s, it had been upgraded with stone additions and scholars such as Andersson have speculated that by the 1290s it had become the cathedral of Åbo (Andersson 1990: 55). However, Drake (2003: 129) posits that this church was probably mainly made of wood until at least the fifteenth century before stone elements were added. It also remains debated whether the cathedral of Åbo was purpose-built in anticipation of a move from Korois, or if, as Andersson argued, an earlier church was reused. As Bertil Nilsson (2017: 663–664) points out, neither the archaeological evidence nor primary sources give a clear answer to this question. In any case, the evolution

of Åbo Cathedral from wooden to stone church mirrors the increasingly systematic conversion of wooden churches into more imposing and permanent stone churches which took place during the same period elsewhere in Finland (Drake 1989: 5). Markus Hiekannen has produced many studies on the subject and identified the period between 1430 and 1560 as particularly dynamic in terms of the replacement of wooden churches with stone ones (Hiekannen 2020), which is in line with Drake's assumption. In any case, Åbo was referred to as a city by 1309 ('civitatis', SDHK 2289), and might have enjoyed that status before that. Norman Pounds defines a medieval town as 'a human settlement, larger than a village and not primarily dependent on agriculture for the employment and support of its inhabitants' (Pounds 2005: 1). In western Europe, for a town to be granted the superior status of city, certain requirements had to be met. These requirements and, indeed the very concept of *civitas*, were based on urban systems stretching back to the Romans (Pounds 2005: 125–132). Few places met all criteria, but some of the most important were to have a cathedral, a sufficiently numerous and dense population, as well as an advanced infrastructure including fortifications. Intense economic activity through the holding of markets and fairs was expected as well (Pounds 2005: 125–132). Another useful indicator of how established and powerful a town was, is the presence of authority seats such as a court of justice but also any other building from where legal authority and administrative duties were exercised (Pounds 2005: 130–131). The concept of the medieval *civitas* developed chiefly in England, France and the Mediterranean regions on the example of Greco-Roman central administrative towns (Pounds 2005: 6–7). Many European cities such as London, Byzantium and most of the French cities were in fact initially founded as *civitates* by the Romans and kept a similar function during the Middle-Ages (Pounds 2005: 6–7; 86–87). By the twelfth century, Sweden was undergoing a process of Europeanisation of its culture and practices (Lindkvist 2006). There is therefore no reason to believe that the pattern of development for northern cities was any different.

For Åbo, the change from town to city probably happened relatively slowly, however. For instance, while there is evidence of Swedish coins being minted in Åbo, it was not before the very early fifteenth century (Jonsson 2014: 10–11). There are a couple of possible reasons for the late establishment of a mint in Åbo. Firstly, it may have been part of King Erik's plan to help Finland become more autonomous in the context of the Kalmar Union (Jonsson 2014: 10–11). Secondly, giving Finland its own supply of Swedish coins spared it the need to rely on foreign currencies, which depreciated significantly at the turn of the century (Jonsson

2014: 10–11). In addition to the establishment of a mint, Erik also gave Åbo its first court, the *landsrätt*, thus fulfilling another criterion of importance (Jonsson 2014: 10–11). But in any case, the fact that Finland (despite belonging to Sweden for over a century) did not strike coins and did not have its own judicial premises unlike the rest of the kingdom, emphasises the idea that the region was still peripheral. It also shows that Åbo, despite its local importance, may not have had the same privileges as other cities in Sweden until at least the fifteenth century, which gives a rough idea of how long the urbanisation process took in Finland.

I mentioned that a good indication of whether a settlement was a city was the presence of fortifications. Many castles were built by the Swedes over the six hundred years that Finland belonged to Sweden. Carl Gardberg's *Finlands medeltida borgar* (1993) gives a general overview of their development over the centuries, while Knut Drake's article 'Borgar, kyrkor och ekonomi i Finland 1220–1520' (1989) gives a more precise classification of each type of fortress represented in Finnish history and their function within society. I thus recommend both these works, should the reader wish to delve deeper into the subject. In Åbo, a castle was built in the middle of the thirteenth century by the Swedes. As with anything concerning medieval Sweden and Finland, the exact date of construction remains unclear (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 27). It is also unclear whether an earlier, wooden fortification had been erected there, and if so, by whom. It is generally the case that stone churches and castles in Finland replaced earlier wooden structures (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 27), a phenomenon which is witnessed all over Europe as well. A date of ca. 1280 is often proposed for the erection of the stone castle of Åbo (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 27). This date was notably suggested by Ericus Olai in *Chronica regni Gothorum* (ed. Heuman and Oberg 1993–1995), although the historicity of the events presented in the source itself is contested (Drake 1989: 4). For reasons expressed below, the present author however agrees with the date of ca. 1280 for the fortress's construction.

But if it was indeed built in 1280 and if the Second Crusade took place in 1239, there may have been a forty-year gap between the establishment of Åbo as an important ecclesiastical settlement and the building of its first stone castle. This seems a rather long time span. Of course, I already mentioned that there may have been an earlier structure there, made of wood, which is obviously less advanced than a stone castle. If a wooden castle was enough to protect Åbo for four decades, warfare in the region cannot have been very intense. This would confirm the view, held by scholars such as Line (2016: 97) and Lind (2017: 142–

143), that the Second Swedish Crusade and its short-term aftermath were not as intense as what transpired in their later historiography. Indeed, as the papal bull from 1237 showed, the Holy See's primary concern was to return pagan populations to the Catholic faith. The local populations lacked the know-how and means to resist the Swedish forces, let alone take down a castle, even a wooden one (Line 2016: 97). There was probably no immediate need to invest heavily in military infrastructure for simple peacekeeping. However, towards the last years of the thirteenth century, tensions with Novgorod escalated especially in terms of trade domination, which partly explains the Third Crusade (Line 2016: 89–97; Lind 2017: 143–144). The Novgorodians started building their own stone fortresses in Karelia, the region lodged between central Finland (which the Swedes had by then well under control) and Russia. These new opponents were a lot more powerful and skilled than the farmers the Swedes had faced during their first two Crusades. It is therefore probably not a coincidence that Åbo's castle was upgraded from its originally rudimentary design to the mighty structure that still stands today around 1280. In fact, several waves of castle-building have been identified in Finland, the first one starting in the late thirteenth-century. All other imposing stone fortresses built by the Swedes, such as Viborg, were also either built or significantly upgraded starting from 1280 (Gardberg and Welin 1993), which shows that this was a period of transition in the region's militarisation. The development of Åbo from a small episcopal settlement during the first half of the thirteenth century to acquiring city status by the 1300s and the growth of its wooden church into a stone cathedral also help illustrate the region's urbanisation during the same period.

The Castle of Viborg and its City

While an important city for ecclesiastical and political reasons, Åbo was not the only area to experience rapid growth or development following the Swedish conquest. Viborg is another settlement worth mentioning. The town of Viborg (also known as Vyborg), which is not to be confused with its Danish namesake, was strategically situated on the Finnish side of the border region with Russia, only three hundred kilometres away from Novgorod. Today, Viborg is in fact located in Russia. What is interesting about Viborg is that rather than starting as a settlement to which a castle was added, it seems to have been the other way around. Its construction may have been a direct consequence of the beginning of the Third Swedish Crusade (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 65) and the Novgorodian raids that occurred during that time. Both the *Novgorod First Chronicle* and *Erikskrönikan* clearly mention the construction

of Viborg. The *Novgorod First Chronicle* says that in 1292, 'the Svei, 800 of them, came in arms to ravage, 400 went against the Korel, and 400 against the Izhera', and the next year, in 1293, 'The Svei having come put up a town in the Korel land' (Michell and Forbes 1914: 111). While *Erikskrönikan* does not give an exact date, the chronicle emphasises the impenetrability of the fortress. Concerning the Swedes, it says:

> Sidhan foro the til hedna landa // ok lösto skadha ok mykin wanda // the hedne men gingo them alt affnär // thet war thera mesta ärende ther, // ok bygde eth hus a then ända, // ther cristin land ather wända // ok hedhin land taka widher. // Ther er nu swa goder frider, // mere liise ok mere roo // ok flere the ther a Gudh troo. // Thet hus heter Wiborgh ok ligger öster, // thädhan warder mangen fange löster. // Thet hus er hedna manna atherhald, // swa at the haffwa ther nu minne wald // rytsa än the haffdo föör // utan finna skadha för sin dör. // The lotho thet hus alt mura aff steen. (Erikskrönikan ed. Sven Bertil Jansson 2003: 72)

> Then to the heathen lands they went // To end the damage and great torment // (too close to them the heathens were) // that was their main task over there, // and built a castle at that end // to which the Christian lands extend // and heathen lands in turn begin. // Firm peace does now hold sway therein, // with greater calm and more relief // and more who have in God belief. // That castle, called Vyborg, lies in the east; // from there many captives are released. // The castle keeps the heathen men at bay, // so that now the Russian men hold less sway // than they used to before, // but now are menaced at their own backdoor. // The whole castle they built of stone. [Carlquist and Hogg 2012: 92–93]

As suggested in the rhyme and as can be witnessed on the ground, the castle held a particularly strategic location in the Karelian Isthmus, being located at the crossing point of several waterways. This gave it a prominent position in a region known for the logistical and commercial opportunities it offered, as well as its fertile lands suitable for agriculture (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 65–68). The Karelian Isthmus thus became a fortified borderland tightly kept under the grip of Viborg. The implicit border between Swedes and Novgorodians, which Viborg was clearly meant to protect, was confirmed in writing in 1323 (Roslund 2017: 196–197, Gallén 1968). As with most other castles, excavations revealed an earlier wooden

structure under the current building, together with evidence of Viking-Age culture layers in the nearby town of Viborg (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 66). It has been suggested that this settlement may have been established by the native population as far back as AD 900 and possibly earlier (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 66). My interpretation is thus that upon conquering the region, the Swedes may have replaced this settlement with their own castle. In any case, its position at the border with the Novgorod territories means that the fortress would also have been more exposed to warfare. In fact, there is archaeological evidence that the houses built around it regularly burned down and kept being rebuilt (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 67–68). Unlike Åbo, the Swedish settlement at Viborg was secondary to the castle. Indeed, a large range of amenities were required to run such an imposing castle. Food supplies had to be provided of course, but craftspeople were also required, alongside specialist workers such as farriers. These people needed to be close by and that is probably how Viborg went from being a simple castle to a larger community (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 67–68). By the mid-fourteenth century, it was also referred as a *civitas*, although its amenities were nowhere near as abundant as Åbo's (Andersson 1990: 55).

Stand-Alone Fortifications

It has now become clear that the period starting from 1280 was a turning point in the development of military infrastructure in Finland. As we can see from the examples of Viborg and Åbo, the development of large settlements and castles were often linked. Either the castle was built to defend the settlement, or a settlement naturally formed around it. Although for practical reasons this article cannot discuss this aspect of urbanisation and militarisation, it is also worth highlighting the development of infrastructure between the different strongholds, especially in the form of road networks (Masonen 1988). The castles that the Swedes built often had administrative and economic functions as well (Ehrnsten 2019: 159–160). We know for instance from a letter dated to 1281 written by King Magnus Ladulås that the castle of Borgholm situated on the island of Öland was used to collect taxes (SDHK 1197). It is likely that this sort of administrative duty would have taken place at the local castle, especially if it had been built by the central authorities themselves.

Around 1280 is also when an aristocracy, constituted of those who owned horses, was first established in Sweden by King Magnus Ladulås (Line 2007: 136–140). The creation of a new social class whose main duty was to provide armed service to the Crown shows an obvious militarisation of Swedish society which is illustrated through the fortifying of the

landscape. Nevertheless, while the building of many imposing castles and the growth of associated settlements evidences a dynamic defence policy, not all Swedish castles in Finland were built to protect large urban centres or became surrounded by one. The Swedes had started building fortifications earlier than 1280, and these were usually stand-alone fortifications which had an exclusively military role. This is especially true of the earliest castles (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 21–26). Those built during the Crusades would have served for warfare only. They would have been required to pacify the population before the possibility of establishing any permanent Swedish settlement could be considered (Taavitsainen 1990: 167).

Haga (Fin. Hakoinen)

These earlier castles include, for example, the hillfort of Haga. Haga was built on top of a rocky hill which provided it with natural protection against assailants. It is located about seventeen kilometres away from the better-known castle of Tavastehus, which was also built by the Swedes (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 23–24). Haga overlooks a lake and would have provided easy access to the shores of the Gulf of Finland (Taavitsainen 1990: 165). Unfortunately, few archaeological investigations have taken place at the site of Haga and it remains unclear when the structure was first erected. But its location on top of a natural promontory is reminiscent of similar hillforts found not only elsewhere in Finland but also all over the Baltic region. Finnish forts built in similar settings include Rapola, Lieto (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 21–26), and dozens of others as well (Taavitsainen 1990). Hillforts in Scandinavia were usually built during the Migration Period and periodically reused over the centuries (Taavitsainen 1990: 127–132). However, the abundance of specifically medieval finds at Haga has led archaeologists such as Taavitsainen (1990) and economic historians such as Frida Ehrnsten to mostly dismiss the possibility of earlier activity at the site (Ehrnsten 2019: 159–160). Furthermore, *Erikskrönikan* mentions a 'Taffwesta borg' having been built by Birger Jarl during the Second Crusade: '*Thet hus heyter Taffwesta borg, // the hedno haffwa ther än fore sorg*' (*Erikskrönikan* ed. Sven-Bertil Jansson 2003: 32) which translates as: 'That castle is called Tavestehus, // it still gives the heathens trouble' (Carlquist and Hogg 2012: 236). It remains debated whether this line refers to Haga, or to Tavastehus. Taavitsainen reviewed all arguments for the two alternatives and argues that the text passage refers to Haga (1990: 165–167). It is interesting that the author specifically mentions that 'Taffwesta borg' *still* gives the heathen trouble, which shows that the castle was

still in use as the chronicle was written, in ca. 1325. Unfortunately, this indication does not help since both fortresses would still be contenders, as Haga did not fall into disuse until the fourteenth century.

Indeed, Haga's later use is easier to determine. Archaeological finds such as coins from the reign of King Birger Magnusson (b. 1280, not to be confused with Birger Jarl) prove that the fortress was still actively being used in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (Ehrnsten 2019: 159–160). Nevertheless, because of the proximity of Haga to Tavastehus and their slightly overlapping periods of activity, I stand by the hypothesis that Tavastehus, regardless of its exact origin, replaced Haga as the latter lost its importance. A possible reason for the relocation of Haga to the modern Tavastehus at the turn of the fourteenth century might have simply been a lack of space. Indeed, I posit that its position on a hilltop with sharp ridges on each side, while naturally advantageous, may not have allowed for the fort's expansion. As conflicts worsened with Novgorod, this expansion would have probably been necessary. Pooling resources further inland may also have helped the Swedes settle more permanently, in which case a castle practical enough to be used as an administrative centre would have also been a requirement (Taavitsainen 1990: 168).

Lieto (Fin. Vanhalinna)

The castle of Lieto was built inland at the top of a rocky hill similar to Haga. It is located very close to Åbo and occupies a vantage point over the river Aura, which connects the area directly to the sea. There are clear archaeological clues suggesting that the castle was in use since at least BC 500, possibly before that too (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 21). It may have been in near-permanent use until the thirteenth or fourteenth century (Drake 1989: 4). What is particularly interesting with the hillfort of Lieto is that it might be evidence of the twelfth-century First Swedish Crusade. Indeed, it has been discussed already that this event has often been dismissed as mythical because the only extant source about it is *Erikskrönikan*. However, it has also been mentioned that contemporary Russian chronicles did record an expedition led by a Swedish king, a bishop and sixty boats. Several papal letters also suggest that expeditions took place in the twelfth century and there is no doubt that the site of Lieto was eventually taken over and fortified by the Swedes (Taavitsainen 1990: 139–141). The question is when.

Archaeological excavations at Lieto have shown that activity at the site may have paused in the second half of the twelfth century before it resumed thereafter until the mid-

fourteenth century (Drake 1989: 4). Artefacts retrieved from the site, which include coins, brooches, and scrap metal, have been dated to the crusading period. Many of them have been identified as Scandinavian (Taavitsainen 1990: 139–141) but coins found in the vicinity of the site also included English and German examples (Jonsson 2010: 25). The fact that Lieto seems to have experienced a dip in activity precisely around the time of the supposed First Crusade could suggest a link between the two events. Drake (1989: 4) points out that the Swedes may have taken over the structure as early as 1200. Before this, the fort was most probably used by the local population (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 22). The papal bull sent by Pope Alexander III to the archbishop of Uppsala (SDHK 207), which was partly quoted previously, allowed for the confiscation of local castles and military gear. It says: '*[...] si ingruerit necessitas ad auxilium & defensionem vestram non possint recurrere, nisi munitiones, si quas habent, vobis tenendas assignent*', which translates as '[...] they cannot use your help and defence in case of need unless they hand over their equipment to you if they have some [...]'. It is therefore possible that the dip in activity at Lieto may be linked to such a case of requisition, especially as there is no evidence of the castle burning down or otherwise experiencing severe damage during this period. Nevertheless, Swedish occupation at Lieto during the twelfth century remains hypothetical. Novgorodian attacks could provide an alternative explanation for the fort's quieter period as evidenced by finds of Novgorodian arrows during the excavations at the site (Taavitsainen 1990: 139–141). Indeed, while these arrows were dated to the fourteenth century, it has been noted that the original design and location of this hillfort indicate that it may have served as defence against inland threats rather than overseas attackers (Gardberg and Welin 1993: 22). The concordance between the fort's chronology of use and apparent Swedish efforts against Finland during the twelfth century might therefore prove coincidental. However, these two hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. I argue that the castle could have been initially designed by the local population to protect the area against inland threats, while also having been taken over by the Swedes in the twelfth century. There would have been no need to modify the structure's design following the Swedish takeover, as Novgorod was also an inland threat for the Swedes. Therefore, based on the archaeological evidence from Lieto, it can be inferred that Swedish military activity in Finland took place decades before the Second Crusade.

Non-Royal Private Fortifications?

Lastly, this article will focus on the status of these fortifications. All Swedish castles built during the early phase of Finland's integration within the kingdom of Sweden are assumed to be *riksborgar*, that is, royal castles. In the absence of evidence suggesting otherwise, royal ownership seems the most plausible option. In well-documented cases such as Åbo, Viborg or Tavastehus, there is no reason to believe that anyone else than the king was behind the building of these fortresses. But there are always castles of which there is no mention anywhere despite their remains being clearly visible. The castle of Stenberga is one of them. It is located about twenty kilometres north of Åbo and was also built on top of a promontory overlooking a river (Suhonen 2002: 16). Because of this, archaeologists tend to give it a similar dating to Haga and Lieto (Drake 1989: 4). Extremely little is known about the site. Basic excavations were carried out in the early twentieth century but direly require further, modern investigation (Suhonen 2002: 16). It was originally assumed by Juhani Rinne (1932), to whom we owe the first scientific study of Stenberga, that the castle predated the thirteenth century, because of its basic structure. This is however contestable, as castles were built according to their owners' goals and wealth (Suhonen 2002: 16). A small and simple castle could therefore be much younger than a sophisticated one.

The first written mention of Stenberga can be found in a charter from 1398 in which Stenberga is listed among other estates being exchanged between a German knight and Jakob Abrahamsson (SDHK 14946). Abrahamsson appeared in other sources as well under the name of Jeppe Djäken (Fritz 1972: 130–131). He was the bailiff at the castle of Åbo already in 1377 (SDHK 10955) and was named *lagman* of Finland in 1386 (SDHK 13181). He evidently owned several estates in Finland, and it is likely that he received some of these directly from the Crown. Indeed, among his responsibilities, he was entrusted with several estates that he was to administer on behalf of Queen Margaret (Fritz 1972: 131–132). However, the transaction involving Stenberga in 1398 makes no mention of it being carried out on behalf of anyone, which might mean that Stenberga was by then no longer a royal castle (if it had ever been one), or that it was at least not under direct royal control. It is therefore possible that the castle may have been an example of a fortification owned by a private individual and, considering that nothing is known of its early history, it may have been so already in the thirteenth century. This obviously raises questions, which cannot be covered in this article alone, concerning the power yielded by wealthy individuals and families in a region only recently absorbed into the Swedish Crown's jurisdiction.

It is generally accepted that not all fortresses in early medieval Sweden were built or owned by the king. Many fortifications were either built by the lesser nobility directly or were somehow acquired by wealthy private owners. Private ownership is particularly apparent in the case of coastal fortifications in Norrland, which also never appear in any sources (Line 2007: 313–315). Similarly, on Gotland, the apparition of freestanding towers (*kastaler)* in the twelfth century has been attributed to local initiative, either private or collective (Johansson 2011). While the purpose of these towers remains unclear, it is likely that they played several roles including that of granary and social space, but perhaps also served to defend their local parish (Johansson 2011: 3–8; 25). The simple design of Gotland's *kastaler* is reminiscent of Stenberga's architecture, which Juhani Rinne thought was very basic. Perhaps the castle was designed with a focus on other functions rather than only warfare, as can be assumed from Gotland's *kastaler*. The idea that castles would have been built privately in Finland during the same period is thus plausible. Of course, the building of such an imposing and expensive structure would have been undertaken by a wealthy family with enough authority to fortify its land. There were such powerful landowners in Sweden long before the establishment of an aristocracy (Line 2007). But what about Finland? Following the conquest of Finland by Sweden, it is likely that the local noble families were integrated into the Swedish elite.

Marko Lamberg has written extensively about the perception of the Finns in Swedish society during the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. He has discussed how the Finns, following their integration into the kingdom of Sweden, received the same legal rights as native Swedes (Lamberg 2004: 6–7). The conquered were therefore officially treated in the same way as the conquerors and this has been cited as the main reason why Finland's conquest was so successful (Line 2016: 97–98). Line argues that the native Finnish elite may have been allowed to retain their status. Indeed, he claims that it is probable that some Finns were integrated into the newly established mounted aristocracy (Line 2016: 97–98). He illustrates this argument by pointing out the proximity between, on the one hand, pre-crusade private churches and rich Iron Age burial grounds, and on the other hand, post-crusade medieval manors. Line interprets this proximity as evidence that pre-conquest local places of power retained their influence even after the Swedes' arrival (Line 2016: 98). This apparent continuity leads me to argue that powerful local families may have been allowed to keep hold of their strongholds. In this case, it may be that Stenberga initially belonged to a local Finnish family who may have retained it until it somehow fell into Abrahamsson's possession. Of course, this is just one possibility, but I suggest that some of these fortifications, especially

when they do not appear in any sources, may have been under private ownership, possibly that of the local elite.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has shown that while urbanisation and the building of fortifications in Finland between 1150 and 1300 were obviously linked, the Swedish authorities prioritised military development over urban growth. While fortifications were swiftly built in significant numbers, the late development of administrative institutions (such as a court of justice and a mint in Åbo) show that Finland remained administratively peripheral until the late medieval period. The article also pointed out that unlike Åbo, the town of Viborg grew around a pre-existing fortress. This development illustrates a different type of urbanisation with warfare, rather than civil administration, at its core. In addition, this paper suggested that the hillfort of Lieto may show traces of Swedish military activity preceding the Second Swedish Crusade. If further investigations supported this theory, this could confirm reports of a First Crusade, an event which is so far mostly considered mythical. Lastly, the uncertainty surrounding the history or purpose of the fort at Stenberga allowed the author to speculate on a possible private origin for a castle which otherwise does not appear to be connected to any royal initiative. The present article has suggested that native Finnish strongmen and powerful local families may have served as members of the lesser nobility in post-conquest Finland, thus ensuring continuity in the possession and expression of power at local level. It is hoped that this paper sparks further discussions concerning the different aspects of Sweden's use of Finland as military ground between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, especially concerning the role and influence of non-royal powerful families.

Notes

[1] *The Chronicle of Novgorod* (also known as the *Novgorod First Chronicle*) was initially written in Old Slavonic but I have been unable to access an edition in the original language. Thus, only the translations in English will be quoted.

[2] Unless referenced otherwise, all translations are my own.

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BOOK REVIEW

Sanmark, Alexandra. 2017. *Viking Law and Order* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

Keith Ruiter

This book, like the features of many of the assembly sites that occupy its analysis, is something monumental. With its roots stretching back to 2004 in the groundwork that paved the way for *The Assembly Project*, *Viking Law and Order* builds impressively off this carefully laid foundation, fully living up to its early promise to transcend descriptions of Old Norse assembly (*þing*) sites and enter into a rich investigation of the human practices and experiences at these assemblies. Sanmark's approach throughout is chronologically broad but careful and thoroughly multidisciplinary, allowing for new macro-level connections, analyses, and conclusions to be drawn. All this makes this monograph an indispensable contribution to scholarship that will be of interest to a wide range of researchers across a variety of fields.

Viking Law and Order consists of nine chapters, beginning with a very full, but helpful summary of the state of the field of assembly site research, demonstrating just how much time Sanmark has invested in this remarkable project. This is also where Sanmark establishes the three key themes that form the major strands of the 'thick tapestry of interpretation' (p. xviii) that makes up the volume: landscape, time, and memory. She returns to these themes throughout the book to enlightening effect, but it is here where she establishes the benchmark for her investigation: assembly sites were inscribed in the landscape, they were maintained in collective and social memory through multi-layered experience, and time, chronology, and time-depth could be manipulated by actors in these specialised spaces. From the very beginning she discusses her approach with careful reference to methodological

concerns and the limitations of each respective evidence set, moving through a helpful discussion of each set for readers who may be unfamiliar with one source-group or another.

From here, Sanmark leads the reader through her extensive study by first taking on the key features and functions of Scandinavian *þing* sites and assembly meetings; moving into how these assemblies traveled with the Scandinavian diaspora and inquiring after the comparisons and contrasts between these exported *þing* traditions and those in Scandinavia. It is transdisciplinary and theoretically rich discussions like these that will interest archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and even scholars outside of the traditional range of Viking Studies, in equal measures. She concludes with an investigation into the legacy of these socio-legal institutions in their respective spheres through the medieval period and into the modern day.

Chapter two provides a background for the Scandinavian assembly tradition in terms of its function and logistics, and Sanmark plots its development back to a continental Germanic history and context. Sanmark's problematisation of the traditional male-female binary when it comes to Norse assembly participation (males were 'included', while females were 'excluded') is especially important and revealing and offers much to present discussions of female empowerment and agency in the early medieval world. Chapter three builds off this logistical discussion by moving into a survey of *þing* sites across Scandinavia and lays out the first full articulation of an 'ever-shifting pattern of assembly sites' (p. 14), highlighting just how harmonious archaeological and textual analysis can be by demonstrating that the hierarchies depicted in the written sources are also reflected in the archaeology of these sites. Chapter four moves deeper into an exploration of these hierarchies by investigating the use of features, like mounds, monuments, and enclosures in the elite-dominated rituals of these assemblies. Sanmark shows how these features had sophisticated purposes and meaning and how they could be manipulated or even built for purpose at new *þing* sites. Chapter five turns its attention to the rest of the community at the *þing* and their activities at the assembly by making use of archaeological evidence for communal meals and accommodation, as well as reflecting on the social dynamics of these gatherings. She highlights the complex interaction between communal and elite populations at *þing* sites and the role that this interplay has in accruing and exercising political and legal authority. Chapter six, the last to focus exclusively on the situation in Scandinavia itself, finally moves to explore the changing character of *þing* sites over time in light of such factors as Christianisation, Europeanisation, centralisation of power, and eventual royal control.

Chapter seven shifts its gaze to the North Atlantic Scandinavian diaspora, exploring Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland respectively, while demonstrating the continuity of *þing* models and traditions in each of these spheres. Sanmark does highlight some key differences between the Scandinavian traditions and the newly established assemblies in the areas of Norse settlement: namely, the use of *þing*-booths and a lack of connection between *þing* sites and mortuary sites, which she interprets as being due to a lack of necessity to lean on historical legitimacy in the sparsely populated North Atlantic fringe. By way of contrast, Chapter eight moves to look at the peculiar picture presented by Norse Scotland, where the connection between *þing* sites and mortuary monuments, especially large mounds, served as a way of connecting the socio-legal legitimacy of the *þing* to the local past. Sanmark also presents compelling evidence for cross-cultural influence of the Picts and Gaels in Norse assembly practices. With an eye on drawing the final threads of the tapestry together, Sanmark uses Chapter nine to confront questions of continuity and change, exploring the influence of major *þing* sites on central places and, eventually looking at modern administration, explores why some sites were used and reused for centuries while others were very short-lived.

Scholars of Anglo-Scandinavian England and the Viking diaspora in Normandy and Russia may be disappointed to find that *Viking Law and Order* does not cover these regions; however, the reasons provided by Sanmark for the geographical bounds of her study are justified and the sheer depth, breadth, and panache of her scholarship here provides ample comparative material, a range of exciting discussions on gender, diaspora, administration, social dynamics, ritual, and memory, and a masterclass in transdisciplinary methods. As such, the book not only reveals new and richer ways to think about the Viking Age and the peoples who populated it, but it does so in ways that spark interest, plug into pressing debates of the day, and invite further discussion. In my view, these factors make *Viking Law and Order* essential reading for specialists and generalists alike, while also offering a host of possible extracts and case studies for undergraduate and postgraduate classrooms.

BOOK REVIEW

Crawford, Jackson. 2019. *The Wanderer's* Hávamál (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett)

Giulia Mancini

As a result of the increased attention to the Viking Age, brought about for example by TV series such as *Vikings* and *Norsemen,* the past decade or so has seen a resurgence of attention to the Norse subjects. A fascination with the religious practices of this period, especially the mythological aspects and its characters, is at the forefront of this renewed interest on the topic, which attracts both people from inside and outside of academia. Although this wave of interest is undeniable, the mythological texts, especially the Eddic poems, remain largely inaccessible to the general public. This is a result of the archaic — and often complicated to read — tone of the existing translations, that are catered more towards an academic audience than a popular one. While this is understandable, given the highly enigmatic and often obscure nature of the sources, it seems that Jackson Crawford has set his mind on changing the status quo with his publication of *The Wanderer's* Hávamál (2019).

Translator of the *Poetic Edda* and *Völsunga Saga* (*Saga of the Völsungs*), as well as being a YouTube sensation with a channel counting thousands of followers, Crawford has made a name for himself in making Old Norse material accessible to everyone. He carries on with his mission in this new volume, an eminently readable translation of the Eddic poem *Hávamál*, meaning 'Words of the High One' or 'Words of the One-Eyed' (pp. xviii-xix). The final product is a well-structured volume, which includes an in-depth analysis of the Eddic poem, the original text, a commentary, four related texts, a glossary, and the *Cowboy Hávamál*, which is one of the jewels on the crown of this publication.

From the beginning, Crawford takes his time in providing a detailed and yet clear overview of the poem which is suitable for both scholars and a general audience. His introduction delivers just the right measure of details about the text, without leaving the reader overwhelmed with information. He starts by succinctly introducing what *Hávamál* is in its entirety, and then proceeds in placing the text into context in terms of its provenience, content, structure, and linguistic aspects. Discarding the notion of the poem as a 'Viking code of ethic' (p. xii), as it is often billed, Crawford describes it as 'resolutely a poem of this world, of enduring its hardships rather than of withdrawing from them' (xii). He then continues by discussing the possibility that the five sections that compose the poem may have been written at different times, before detailing each section by providing the name and a summary its contents.

After describing the poem's structure, Crawford deals with the etymology and meaning of the title *Hávamál*, the poetic metres, and the choices that he made to provide a fluid English translation. This is possibly one of the most technical parts of his work, and it might have incurred into the risk of becoming either too complex or too oversimplified for the reader. Crawford, however, manages to keep this section simple yet informative, while also providing an explanation of the terms leaf, *recto* 'front leaf', and *verso* 'back leaf' in a note, a seemingly small bit of information that is often implied in academic publications, but one that is important for the general reader. Finally, he concludes the introduction by producing a series of useful tools to approach the text on hand, such as notes on language, spelling, pronunciation, and further readings for those interested (xxviii–xxxvii).

The following section of the book is the parallel translation itself. Stemming from popular demand, the translation presented in this standalone version of *Hávamál* was previously published, with some modifications, in *The Poetic Edda: Stories of the Norse Gods and Heroes* (2015), together with his *Cowboy Hávamál*. The latter was also originally featured on his website. Here, Crawford employs what he defines as a 'rhythmic free verse in English' (xxvi), choosing to preserve the meaning over the technical form of the poem. This results in a more modern-sounding translation, aimed at making the text palatable for all types of audiences. The translation consists of a facing-page text, through which the reader can follow the original Old Norse while reading the translation. This choice brings immense benefits to the work, making it an excellent tool for those who wish to learn and practice Old Norse, as well as for those who simply want to enjoy a more

readable translation. Furthermore, the choice of a parallel translation allows the readers to formulate their own theories in the face of the more-obscure portions of it, and to disagree with the Crawford's choices in translation.

Indeed, while Crawford is an undeniably skilled and highly trained linguist, I found myself disagreeing with some of the choices that he made in the translation, albeit these disagreements represent only an infinitesimal percentage of the work and are often simply a case of personal taste and interpretation. An example of this disagreement is, for example, the phrase 'Margr verðr af ǫðrum api', which he translates as 'you become foolish by listening to the fools' in stanza 75 (pp. 36-37). As Crawford explains in the commentary (note 75), the translation of this phrase depends on whether one chooses to follow Sophus Bugge emendation, which has the third and fourth word as 'af ǫðrum' ('of others'), or David A. H. Evans' which sees the third and fourth word as 'af aurum' ('of wealth') (p. 109). Crawford chooses to follow Bugge's emendation, thus translating the line as 'you become foolish by listening to the fools', fools being the others, as opposed to Evans's, which would read 'many become fools because of money' (p. 109). However, given the meaning of the following three lines 'one man is rich, another man is poor, neither has the one to blame' (p.37), Evan's interpretation would make more sense in my opinion, as Bugge and Crawford's choice seems slightly removed from the following lines.

A similar case is the recurring phrase 'Ósnotr ψ [maðr]' which he translates as 'an unwise man' in stanzas 24 and 25, and then as 'a stupid man' in stanza 26 and 'a fool' in 27 (pp. 12-15). Here the meaning of the text does not change, and it is evident that he chose the fluency of the text over adherence to the form, as he specifies in the introduction. However, one might argue that this choice ends up erasing the traces left of the supposedly oral past of the poem, which is instead evident in the original text through the use of formulaic phrases such as this one. Furthermore, throughout the translation, his position on formulaic verses is not consistent, sometimes choosing to translate recurring phrases in the same way, and sometimes changing his translational choices from stanza to stanza.

Lastly, in strophes 61 and 114, I had issues with his choice to completely ignore the word *þing* in the translation. In strophe 61, for example, the phrase 'Þveginn ok mettr ríði ψ þingi at' – which, to my knowledge, would translate to 'a man should ride to the assembly washed and fed' (transl. by the reviewer) is translated instead with '[Y]ou should always go out well-kempt and well-fed'. Whether the word was

omitted because of the scholarly tendency to leave the word *þing* (assembly) implied or to make the text clearer for the general reader, the lack of a comment explaining such a choice remains somewhat odd to me. Whatever the reason, I believe that this could have been the perfect setting to introduce the audience to this custom in Crawford's clear and informal style. Furthermore, I always understood this strophe to mean that one should always appear at one's best at important functions — i.e. the assembly — without feeling shame for one's wealth and condition, which acquires an even deeper meaning in a context of law and politics, such as the *þing*. Thus, omitting it, takes away part of the power of this strophe. A similar case can be done for strophe 114, where Crawford translates the phrase 'Hon svá gørir at þú gáir eigi þings né þjóðans máls' as 'She will enchant you so that you will not care for advice nor a powerful man's words'. Again, this may be clearer for the general reader, but the strophe loses its power. Translating it slightly more literally as 'she will enchant you so that you will not care for the assembly or the words of a ruler' (transl. by the reviewer) shifts the meaning entirely. It is not only that one may grow reckless by not listening advice, but rather that one may end up placing oneself outside of the law (i.e. not caring for the assembly and/or the words of a king).

Following the translation, the volume then moves onto the third section, where Crawford comments on the text and justifies his translation choices. He starts by describing the poem in the context of the manuscript in which is found, and then gives a few more details on the abbreviations present in the original text (e.g., ψ for *maðr* 'man'). The commentary, in its simplicity, is very thorough and gives great insight into the thought process behind his translation choices. Here, too, his explanation of the linguistic and scribal elements, oddities, and characteristics is not overwhelming and at the same time, not patronizing towards the reader. This balance ensures that his commentary is useful for both scholars and the general reader. Furthermore, while one may disagree with some of the choices made in the translation, Crawford's commentary gives the possibility of contrasting one's ideas with those of the translator, providing food for thought, and a confrontation of ideas, albeit indirect.

One of the most interesting features of this publication is, however, the presence of four related texts, each translated by Crawford. These additions are included to contextualise Óðinn and the other figures connected to him. The texts are the *Darraðarljóð* (*Dorruð's Poem/Song*), which is included in *Brennu-Njáls Saga* (*Saga of Burned Njál*), *Eiríksmál* (*Words of/for Eirik*), *Hákonarmál* (*Words*

of/for Hákon), and an excerpt from *Gautreks saga* (*Saga of Gautrek*). These works are succinctly introduced by Crawford and translated in the same modern style that he uses for his translation of the *Hávamal*. I found Crawford's choice to not include other excerpts from the *Poetic* and *Prose Edda* to further contextualise the god extremely interesting. Indeed, while one could easily access the more famous mythological texts, which are already suggested and named in the introduction, he chose excerpts that the casual reader is less likely to stumble upon. Furthermore, the texts included provide a wonderful overview of the god in other types of literature, such as sagas, skaldic poems, and funerary songs. The related texts are followed by a four-page glossary, aimed at briefly introducing the characters and figures that are featured in those additional readings. This inclusion proves once more just how much this is a text addressed to the most rather than the few. In terms of the structure, the glossary is brief and concise, making it a great tool for both for those already acquainted with the Nordic mythological world, and for those who seek a starting point to further delve into it.

Lastly, the book finishes with the *Cowboy Hávamál*, which is, without a doubt, Crawford's most interesting addition to the volume. It consists of a modern and condensed rendition of the section of the poem called *Gestaþáttr* (Guests' Portion), inspired by the similarity between *Hávamál*'s down-to-earth nature and his grandfather's advice. Composed by Crawford in an 'eye dialect' of sorts, based on his grandfather's, the 80-stanzas' composition reads like a homage to what must have been an impressive man. In addition to this, Crawford's reinterpretation of *Hávamál* succeeds in giving a fresh start to such an ancient poem, bringing it closer than it could ever be to a modern audience and proving just how much the wisdom it carries is not a thing of the past, but still relevant nowadays.

In conclusion, *The Wanderer's* Hávamál is a read that I have enjoyed immensely. Jackson Crawford has succeeded in creating a volume that could easily be a step forward in making the Norse Poetry a less niche subject. He produced a translation that is not only readable and modern in tone but is also supported by a detailed explanation and supplementary reads and caters to a much wider audience than ever before. The work perfectly balances factual information and an informal tone, without once falling into oversimplifications or sounding condescending towards the reader. This achievement is something that speaks volumes, not only about the quality of *The Wanderer's* Hávamál, but also of Crawford as a communicator. This is, without a doubt, a text that I would have loved to have access to when I started making my first steps into the Norse world, and that I still

appreciate now, a few years later, as it brings new life and vitality to the wonderful and enigmatic world of Norse mythology.

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BOOK REVIEW

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir. 2020. *Valkyrie: The Women of the Viking World* (London & Oxford: Bloomsbury)

Amy Jefford Franks

The 1990s saw a handful of monographs discussing Viking women, but since then there have been few monographs in English on the topic: in these twenty to thirty years, research on the Viking Age has continued to expand, but no monographs to date had followed the ground-breaking works of Judith Jesch and Jenny Jochens. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's recent book takes this place and is the latest addition to the growing corpus on Viking women, giving a fresh take on the topic. Taking an interdisciplinary approach of textual, archaeological, and runic analyses, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir demonstrates her expansive knowledge of the Viking world, and allows readers an in-depth and inclusive exploration into the lives of Viking women. Not only this, but the accessible language and excellent communication of ideas means that this text is suitable for academics of all levels, alongside casual enthusiasts.

Valkyrie follows the life cycle of Viking women, both within Scandinavia and throughout the diaspora, to explore what their lives would have looked like. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir includes the experiences of young girls, royal women, enslaved women, and a whole host more in a way that avoids the assumption of a hegemonic experience. It is my opinion that this book should not be seen as a text to explore the 'special interest' topic of Viking women, but should be seen instead as an essential text on the lives of Viking people: the author centres women in the day-to-day lives of Viking

society in the way that men often are (pp. 16, 75–82), and therefore provides a ground-breaking piece of work on the foundations of Viking society.

The book starts with infancy and childhood, in which the author considers the way Vikings perceived childhood, highlighting the high infant mortality rate and the deep emotional pain resulting from this. She also presents evidence of infanticide, and that this may have been more likely to happen to young girls due to structural inequalities. Moving on to exploring childhood, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir considers the evidence for children both playing games and beginning training for work, noting their entrance into the social world.

Following this, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir explores the experiences of teenage girls, which appear to centre around marriage. She highlights that we meet many saga characters as they are about to enter marriage, for example, arguing that this was 'clearly conceived as a pivotal moment in a woman's life' (p. 37). She continues to bring these elements to life. She notes that Unnr *djúpúðga*'s granddaughters are married off in Orkney and the Faroe Islands before the rest of the family leave for Iceland: 'Ólöf and Gró are left behind in a new place, never to see their family again' (p. 37). By reminding us of this reality, the author encourages readers to feel the emotions of these young Viking women in a way that many other historical works do not. Continuing from this, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir also explores instances of rape and sexual assault; a topic rarely considered, and the author centres the emotional pain that these women experienced. The discussion of teenage women also explores women who break the mould. The author presents information on evidence of a female skald, before thoughtfully and robustly tackling the discussions around burial Bj. 581 and the concept of female warriors. In an excellent move toward queer inclusion in our academic work, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir makes use of they/them pronouns when discussing the debated individual. Furthermore, she makes the necessary point that the focus on Viking warrior women reflects our own understanding of power as inherently connected to masculinity and strength, arguing that we need to be expanding our own understandings of power.

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir uses her next chapter on adulthood, married life, and divorce, to centre women within the history of the Viking Age. Exploring their roles in textile production, geographic mobility, and providing advice to their husbands, the author demonstrates that women drove the Viking Age. Following this chapter, she explores pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood. By covering topics such as royal mothers in politics,

women goading their sons into revenge killings, and examples of stepmothers caring for their stepchildren, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir continues to demonstrate the diversity of experience within the Viking Age, challenging the idea that Viking women were a monolith in the Viking world. Furthermore, the author reminds readers of the reflections upon our own modern world, and she highlights that many children in the diaspora were likely bilingual. This would have also been the case within Scandinavia, where many migrants lived. This is an important reminder for our field, as we continually face the racist narratives of white supremacists.

The final two chapters discuss widows, followed by old age and death. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir identifies the ritualised performance of grief and provides examples of when women did and did not follow this, again demonstrating the diversity of experiences of Viking women. She also discusses the rights of widowed women, exploring how they could, on occasion, thrive after the death of their husband. She then moves on to focus on old age, noting the perceived wisdom of older women, and the respect they seemed to receive in old age. She also considers possible vǫlva burials, alongside the fabulous burial of the Oseberg ship and the two women interred inside. Finally, the author discusses the contentious issue of women and the afterlife, noting that Hel was likely viewed as a comforting place, creating an image of the afterlife that reminds us of the humanity of women in the Viking Age.

A key strength of *Valkyrie* is the consideration for the variety of experiences women had, and their importance in Viking society. Instead of pretending that 'Viking women' is a monolith of experiences that need to be lifted from an antifeminist space into a space of power defined through masculinity, the author delves into the lived reality of Viking society. In the introduction, she argues that:

> Individual women no doubt sometimes broke glass ceilings and rose to positions of power, perhaps enabled by a particularly advantageous social network, but on a structural level, upper-class women were still less powerful than men. However, their lives would have been very different from those of peasants and servants, let alone slaves, who probably had dreadful lives, and elite women might not have shown much solidarity with their sisters across class divides (p. 14).

She demonstrates that textile work, being a large part of the adult lives of most women, was 'not some quaint hobby but serious business' (p. 82) by attesting to the value of the textiles produced and the time, labour, and skill required. She goes on to state that:

> In fact, the Viking Age would not have been possible at all without the contribution of women — their labour and expertise yielded the sails that set the ships in motion and clothed the Vikings for their expeditions. They ran farms and raised children, keeping entire households prosperous, often without their husbands. And these children went out into the world and achieved great things in turn (p. 115).

This underlines her argument that we must shift the way we view power away from masculine strength, and instead considers the power Viking women had in enabling the Viking Age to be possible. Alongside this, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir writes emotional intelligence and connection deeply into every story. She states that 'the sagas communicate heart-breaking stories of girls' and women's traumatic experiences that resonate strongly today' (p. 12). Throughout the text, the reader is reminded of gendered oppression and discrimination faced by Viking women, and how this affects the preservation of this knowledge. When reading this book, one cannot help but to feel connected to the women of a thousand years ago and to feel connected to their pain and joy in a way that many other monographs do not consider. For this, I highly commend Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir.

The only minor criticism that I have of *Valkyrie* is simply that it holds a few typographical errors and a handful of sentences with grammar and spelling mistakes — however, these are, of course, the publisher's responsibility to correct. The fact that this is such a minor point, however, stands testament to the high quality of the book, and I applaud Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir for this. Overall, *Valkyrie* is an excellent text that should be an essential reference book for any academic working with the Viking Age. I maintain it should be recommended reading for all introductory Viking Age classes, and highly suggested to any non-academic but fascinated reader. The ability to write a book that appeals to all these markets is no mean feat, but Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's accessible writing, emotional intelligence, and deep understanding of the necessity of women to Viking society captures a comprehensive and enjoyable exploration of Viking women at the heart of the Viking Age.

BOOK REVIEW

Leneghan, Francis. 2020. *The Dynastic Drama of Beowulf* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer)

Melissa Ridley Elmes

In *The Dynastic Drama of Beowulf*, Francis Leneghan makes a case for interpreting the famed Old English poetic narrative as 'a dynastic drama concerning the fluctuating fortunes of the great royal houses of Scandinavia in the fifth and sixth centuries' (x). He argues that shifting focus from the eponymous character to the wider social and familial structures that shape the narrative gives mythic significance to the poem's monster fights, centring the legends of the Scyldings, Scylfings, and Hrethlings to present an Old English Book of Kings that 'mythologiz[es] the origins of dynastic kingship in the pre-Christian courts of southern Scandinavia' (x).

The book opens with family trees and a *dramatis personae* listing the names of each character in the poem with brief descriptive genealogical notes and, where applicable, grouping them into their affiliate houses, which will certainly be appreciated by students of the poem seeking to understand the relationships and affiliations of its various persons.

The introduction sets forth a framework for reading *Beowulf* as a dynastic drama, with an emphasis on contextualising this reading with chronicles, legends, and other texts contemporary to and/or clearly associable with the poem's cultural and historical setting. Leneghan lays out in broad strokes a two-pronged twentieth-century critical reception of the poem in terms of his subject: the W. P. Ker view, that the monsters are a nuisance and a digression from the serious work of the poem in recording Scandinavian history and early Germanic kingship, and J. R.R. Tolkien's paradigm-shifting view that the poem is more so a folktale with a historical setting, the monsters central to, rather than digressions from, the poem. Leneghan seeks to bring these views together and reconcile them; in reading this poem

as a dynastic drama, he argues, 'the dynastic material does not merely serve as "background" but provides the essential context for the monster fights, while the monster-fights themselves serve to dramatize dynastic legend' (6).

Following this initial establishment of the central argument of the book are introductory discussions of the poem's origins and manuscript and of the text's modern recovery and critical reception, consideration of the problem of the poem's uniqueness, and discussion of the poem's presentation of Beowulf as a king and of the theme of royal succession, all leading to the specific discussion of the dynastic theme which Leneghan argues lies at the heart of the poem. The introduction concludes with a statement regarding the argument and structure of the monograph and a claim that this reading resolves some of the poem's critical puzzles, its unusual structure and digressions, for example, by aligning them with one another as products of the poet's preoccupation with his dynastic theme.

Chapter one begins with a chronicling of critical frustrations with the poem's structure, offering a nice historiography of the issue. Following this discussion, Leneghan presents a series of close readings of passages that feature dynastic content in support of an argument that, through 'narrative foregrounding', a literary technique proposed by Clare Kinney in which 'certain themes are alternately emphasized or muted depending on the needs of the discrete narrative moment' (38) the poet structured his materials to emphasize its dynastic content. Rather than reading the poem in two parts, for example by way of Beowulf's youth and old age, as Tolkien recommended, it can be read as representing three phases of the life cycle of an archetypal dynasty: its birth, in the death of Scyld; its youth and maturity, in the subsequent rise of his son to prominence and generational prosperity and the digression of Offa and Thryth; and its old age, decay, and death, represented in the cautionary digression of Finnsburg and in Beowulf's speech before facing the dragon. Wherever it occurs, Leneghan emphasizes the poetic juxtaposition of one state against the other for dramatic intensity, as with Hygelac and Beowulf: 'While the aged *gūd-cyning* sits fretting over the ruin of his royal hall, the young Geat is all action and determination' (55).

Chapter two opens with brief summaries of the traditional dynastic storylines associated with each of the three Scandinavian houses treated in the poem. These provide a baseline from which to consider the *Beowulf*-poet's interventions into these traditional tales and the poetic license he took with his materials. Leneghan argues that the *Beowulf*-poet shaped the poem's narrative around King Hygelac's legendary untimely fall from power, which in turn serves as the catalyst for the development of Beowulf, a composite of an existing

story of a famous swimmer, Sigemund the dragon-slayer, possibly Old Norse folk heroes like Grettir and Bödvar Bjarki, and several folk-tale types, here rendered a dynastically significant figure representing the last of the Hrethlings. Leneghan proposes that the *Beowulf*-poet contrasts the legendary foundation of the royal house of the Scyldings against this presentation of Hygelac's decline, taking advantage of the opportunity to enhance the dramatic tension of the poem and create a poetic parallel between the foundation and decline of dynastic powers at its heart. This reading situates the poem as one using folktale elements to dramatize key moments in dynastic history, rather than a folktale in poetic form with a pseudo-historical setting, a reversal of the view of some of its famous critics, including Klaeber, Tolkien, and Niles. Leneghan concludes this chapter with a proposal that the evolution of Beowulf's legend can be understood to have eight discrete stages, assigning the last three of these as innovations of the *Beowulf*-poet. To my mind, this is among the most interesting and likely to prove one of the most contentious of his conclusions, because it is so speculative in nature; folklorists in particular will want to have a look at this chapter.

Chapter three turns to discussion of the monsters of the poem, with the central argument that they serve as portents for national crises and dramatisations of the major concerns that plague a dynasty. Grendel is painted as an illegitimate usurper through the lens of the Christian Fall of the Angels; Grendel's Mother, as a conflation of issues of gender, succession, feud, and revenge as they are encoded in the royal women throughout the poem and then inversely through her, and the dragon, as a representation of the conflict between warring dynasties, specifically, the ongoing historical dynastic wars between the Scyldings and Hrethlings. Leneghan reads the monstrous episodes as contributing to a narrative programme comprising a series of personal, dynastic, and national tragedies woven together which, in turn, shape the poem's final scenes and eventual outcome as dramatic, because it is tragic. Much of this chapter consists of the reframing of long-recognised narrative, metaphoric, and allegorical functions of these various monsters, with the analysis of the dragon being the most original contribution. I offer a good-natured quibble with Leneghan's contention that 'on the whole Grendel's mother has attracted less critical interest than her son or indeed the dragon' (178); there is almost certainly more scholarship, and particularly more recent scholarship, on Grendel's Mother than on the dragon.

In chapter four, the argument moves from discussion specifically of the materials included in *Beowulf* to how they might fruitfully be read against the biblical *Book of Kings,* making the claim that the Beowulf-poet saw something analogous between 'the flawed but

admirable kings of the Old Testament' and the 'noble, pre-Christian rulers of the Danes, Swedes, and Geats' (30). Acknowledging that 'nowhere does the poet directly compare a Scandinavian pagan king to an Old Testament ruler in the way he connects Grendel with Cain, for example' (197), Leneghan makes a case for the idea that 'like other thinkers of his age [...] the Beowulf-poet [...] understood earthly kingship through the lens of the *Bible*, in which Old Testament rulers serve as figures of Christ, the King of Kings' (198), setting up a historical discussion of kingship and succession in various early medieval cultures to frame a comparison of Beowulf's kings to Christological themes. From this comparison, Leneghan turns to a suggestion that the poem could have served as a mirror for political realities in early medieval England, broadening the poem's importance as a repository of mythic, legendary, and earlier historic materials.

The conclusion turns to a consideration of the poem's early transmission history and how its early audiences might have received and interpreted it. Leneghan traces the poem from its probable composition during the age of Bede, when English kingship was being reformed towards alignment with the teachings of the Church, through the age of Alfred, where Leneghan views it as intersecting with political, spiritual, and cultural concerns important to the Alfredian court, such as the morality of rulers and the relationship between kings and God, and the reigns of Aethelred II and Cnut, when it was copied over into the Nowell Codex, perhaps in response to the intense dynastic upheaval and renewed contact between England and Scandinavia. The monograph concludes with plot summaries of two of the Old Norse sagas potentially analogous in some way to Beowulf: *Skjöldunga saga* and *Hrólfs saga kraka*.

Overall, this book presents a fresh approach to an ancient text, provides a nice synthesis of the critical and historical interpretations of the poem's significance, and offers much to consider regarding what we know, what we think we know, what we do not know, and what we cannot know, about *Beowulf*. Obviously of interest to students and scholars of the poem and Old English specialists, it will also find traction among folklorists, literary historians of medieval Northern Europe, and to lesser extent, medieval feminist and monster studies scholars.

In terms of the book's presentation, it will perhaps not seem especially important or consequential, and I cannot say whether this is true of the hardbound version, but I very much appreciated that the e-book has been prepared with footnotes as opposed to endnotes. It is tedious to continuously have to flip back and forth between the chapter and its notes

when endnotes are employed, and this small but significant consideration of the reader's experience with the digital text is most welcome.

BOOK REVIEW

Merkelbach, Rebecca. 2019. *Monsters in Society: Alterity, Transgression, and the Use of the Past in Medieval Iceland* (Berlin: De Gruyter)

Peggy Gilbert

Rebecca Merkelbach's first monograph is one of the latest in a line of recent studies to examine the links between medieval monsters and the societies that created them. The irresistible draw of the uncanny and the monstrous has permeated through centuries of literature, from its earliest surviving manuscripts to contemporary fiction. Twenty-first-century scholarship in monster studies, in particular, has flourished, and Merkelbach uses this momentum to expand on developing theories of monstrosity, further showcasing the link between literary monsters and society. Building on the work of scholars such as Jennifer Neville (*Monsters and Criminals*, 2001), and Dana M. Oswald (*Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, 2010), she explores what it is that truly makes a monster monstrous. Merkelbach, in this publication, aims to address the social anxieties in medieval Icelandic society and explore how they are expressed through the social monsters in the literature. Applying J.J. Cohen's *Monster Theory* (1996) to these monstrous characters further emphasises that the value of interpreting and reading medieval monsters is becoming more and more apparent, and culturally relevant. They are a valuable source for, as Cohen posits, 'reading cultures from the monsters they engender' (1996: p.3). Many Old English monsters have had their representations investigated in this manner, from *Beowulf*'s Grendel to the many *Wonders of the East*.

It is notable, however, that a cohesive study of the monstrous characters and their functions in the Icelandic sagas is considerably lacking in current scholarship. Merkelbach

addresses that gap with this publication, identifying the monstrous characters in the *Íslendingasögur,* then establishing their key traits and the effects that they have on society. Firmly placing these monsters in a social context, she examines their role in the texts.

In her introduction, Merkelbach offers her own interpretation of monster studies, as well as the means by which monster scholarship may be enhanced and furthered through reference to the *Íslendingasögur*. She redefines the monstrous 'as that which borders on both the realist and the fantastic' (p. 2) and asserts that both Cohen and Neville's studies of monstrosity in Old English literature can help inform the study of medieval Icelandic monsters. This study, in turn, can then give us a valuable insight into how the *Íslendingasögur* work to elucidate issues in society, by looking at the past through this literary lens.

Society, as it was, is the crux of Merkelbach's study. Somewhat controversially — as acknowledged by the author — this study deviates from other scholarship in that it also classifies the Icelandic outlaws as monstrous beings. She gives due justification for her approach and emphasises how this study focuses on these marginalised characters in the sagas having at least the potential for monstrosity and explores how it gets fulfilled to various degrees. This results in the potential monstrous diagnosis of those who might have evaded such a damning verdict in the past. Through an in-depth study of individuals on the edges of society in the *Íslendingasögur* — revenants, outlaws, *berserkir*, and practitioners of magic — the author establishes social monstrosity as a spectrum. Eliminating the overly simplistic approach to monstrosity as something one either is or is not, Merkelbach posits the notion that 'the monsters of this literature are therefore firmly embedded in the social fabric, even though they move along its margins: without a society to perceive its disruption, there would be no monster' (p. 167). She identifies the key factors necessary for an individual to traverse the line of monstrosity, and discusses how far along it particular characters can, and indeed do, travel. These monsters are socially disruptive: they destabilise society by infecting others and have detrimental effects on the economy and prosperity of the community. As such, this study is focused on the social, rather than the physical, nature of monstrosity.

Pivotal to this approach is studying the interactions and reactions between society and the liminal characters who transgress into monstrosity. Taking the revenants as her first subject, the author begins by delving into what it is that makes these terrifying characters particularly disruptive to society, establishing a base from which to judge and recognise other, less obvious societal monstrosities. In chapter two, the author highlights the key factors that contribute to a social monster in medieval Icelandic society: hybridity and transgression,

contagion, and economic impact. It is clear that the revenants are certainly hybrid and transgressive in that they are dead, yet mobile. They transgress the line between life and death, which in itself unnerves society. Furthermore, they disrupt society by causing harm to its members, attacking them physically and mentally, and often driving individuals mad; at the same time, they take over and damage property, causing severe economic injury. Through a closer study of such characters as Hrappr and Þórólfr, the reader is shown how revenants express their hybrid nature in many ways, not only by being somehow both alive and dead, but also by their ability to shapeshift and control animals. Undertaking a case study of both individual and group hauntings by revenants on an unsuspecting medieval Icelandic society, Merkelbach clearly establishes the social upheaval caused by these monsters.

There is also consideration given to how the monstrous figure of the revenant is to be removed from society effectively and permanently, and this is then compared to the other monstrous figures in this book. The monster often needs to be dismembered and reconnected with the natural world in order to truly banish them. Merkelbach uses this observation both to connect her other subjects with monstrosity, and in studying how society reacts to social monsters in chapter six. Indeed, she makes the point that society's perception of a marginalised individual as monstrous could be manipulated in some instances. For example, Styrr and Snorri treat Halli and Leiknir in the same way one would treat a monstrous body (by steaming them to the brink of death and burying them in a marginal area), which then works to sway society's opinion of them, making Styrr and Snorri's acts of violence seem more justifiable.

Having established the parameters necessary to qualify as a social monster in the *Íslendingasögur,* Merkelbach then systematically takes the other three qualifying monstrous figures — outlaws, *berserkir*, and magic-users — and determines where they fall on the monstrous spectrum that she intends to establish. The fluid nature of social monstrosity truly becomes apparent in chapters three to five as the complicated and nuanced nature of each character's liminality is revealed.

For example, in the case of the outlaw, the author establishes a 'marginalization process' (p. 52) that leads to his ultimate classification as a monster. Once outlawed, these characters dwell on the edges of society, are banished from the community, and are essentially left in the wild. However, this physically liminal position is not what Merkelbach deems to be the formative factor of the monstrous outlaw; rather, it is his disruptive behaviour, along with the largely negative impact he has on society, that truly ostracises him. Interestingly,

chapter two begins with a study of the youth of three main outlaws chosen for the discussion — Grettir, Gísli, and Hörðr — and pinpoints particular incidences and relationships that could be responsible for the early onset of their socially disruptive behaviours. This section gives a fascinating insight to psychological and experiential factors that affect an individual during their early years. Monstrous potential, and the danger of its realisation, is vital to consider. The idea that some of these monsters were created by the society that ultimately rejected them is developed fully in chapter six.

When addressing the threat of the ferocious *berserkir*, Merkelbach engages with the existing scholarship, and convincingly justifies her digression from the well-trodden path of classifying *berserkir* primarily on their shape-shifting abilities. Focusing not on what they *are*, but instead on what they *do*, the author ties her investigation of *berserkir* in with her own concept of social monstrosity, as she notes that '*berserkir* behave like animals rather than turning into them, and this is in keeping with my observations about the action-based nature of social monstrosity more generally' (p. 106). Using the monstrous prerequisites formulated in earlier chapters, Merkelbach comments on the clear transgressiveness of *berserkir*, while also asserting that it is their sexually violent nature that truly makes the *berserkir* dangerous to both individuals and society. In the aggressive rape of Icelandic women, the *berserkr* not only damages the woman physically and emotionally, but also has a drastically negative impact on society as a whole: he challenges the 'honor and status' (p. 112) of a woman's male guardian, along with the rest of the family and their power and possessions. This monstrosity is clearly shown by Merkelbach to be fearfully contagious, as this sexual attack would be liable to produce monstrous offspring, and also taint the woman and her family with monstrous association long after the transgressive act is performed. This association is then a gateway to monstrosity — the author notes that Yngvildr's contamination through sex with Klaufi pushes her away from society and towards monstrosity, so she can as a result be punished in more brutal ways that would not usually befall women.

In fact, Merkelbach illuminates the value of using the *Íslendingasögur* for more than mere entertainment. She makes the point that portraying the *berserkir* and their sexual abuse of women in the *Íslendingasögur* allowed Icelanders to distance themselves from the sexually transgressive figures inherent in their society, in an attempt to externalise and explore it in an innocuous way. As Merkelbach demonstrates, the writers of these texts used the past to closely examine the present.

The last marginalised group that Merkelbach addresses in this monograph is that of the practitioners of magic. The study of medieval magic is briefly introduced as being of interest to a wide variety of scholars, from scholars of literature, to anthropologists and historians of religion, due to the sheer volume of figures with magical knowledge depicted in the literature. Merkelbach asserts that the existing scholarship, however, focuses too much on what magic is, and less on what it does. She remedies this omission in chapter five, as she turns her focus to 'who practices magic, and to what purpose — on the action and direction of magical practice rather than on its nature' (p. 125). These medieval Icelandic magic-users are discussed in detail and are noted as the most ambiguously monstrous beings discussed in the study.

In addition, Merkelbach acknowledges the importance of 'differentiating between divinatory and efficatory magic' (p. 127), a separation that was originally proposed by Clive Tolley (1995). Focusing on efficatory magic, in keeping with the general process of studying the actions and reactions of the monstrous subjects in this investigation, produces an interesting observation. Practitioners of magic are deemed monstrous if the impact of their magic is damaging to society; on the other hand, magic-users may also benefit society if their magic produces a positive result. This emphasises the author's theory of monstrosity as a fluid spectrum that an individual can tread along — sometimes lingering in society, and sometimes transgressing fully into monstrosity. The practice of magic is connected with a desire for power and control, and this traditionally poses a threat to society. The author shows how even when magic-users have shown no evidence of foul play, malicious rumours about them will still be readily believed by the public, as evidenced by the treatment of Geirríðr in *Eyrbyggja saga*.

In a succinct and effective conclusion to the work, Merkelbach gives a considered range of suggestions for directions in which her findings could be taken in the future. In doing so, she cements the place of both herself and her work firmly in the field, as she clearly outlines the gap she has filled, and also directs the reader to where scholarship can go next, taking the theories explored in this work into account. This text presents the reader with a well-structured and clear argument, with effective signposting throughout and strong engagement with primary textual evidence to support the author's ideas. Merkelbach has not shied away from challenging existing scholarship, and has thus developed a gripping argument, and a new lens through which the *Íslendingasögur* can be studied. However, she acknowledges that there is much more to be done to expand on her theory of social

monstrosity. As this monograph covers a very broad subject matter, the potential for various closer studies is vast. This book, although focusing on the monsters of the *Íslendingasögur,* is certainly a valuable resource for any scholar of medieval monsters, particularly when examining the monster in relation to the society it haunts. As Merkelbach acknowledges, the monster exists to point towards something, and so too does this text. It opens the door towards future discussion on the theory of social monstrosity, and suggests that the revenants, outlaws, *berserkir,* and magic-users could be traced across the other Icelandic saga genres. After this work, the triangulation of the individual, the paranormal, and society in connection to the monstrous can now be extended and developed by application to the *Íslendingasögur,* but also to medieval literature at large.

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BOOK REVIEW

Kershaw, Jane F. 2020. *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) Original work published in 2013.

Elizabeth J. West

Stemming from her doctoral research, this reprint of Kershaw's book brings together a collection of over 500 metal finds, comprising of brooches and pendants that are dated to the late-ninth to early-eleventh centuries. Kershaw's main aim is to challenge our understanding of Scandinavian settlement and cultural identity within England, through an examination of these metal artifacts. This is done by questioning the origins of Scandinavian-style jewellery, wearers of this jewellery and the reason for skewed distribution of these finds, as there are particularly high densities of finds in some areas. Kershaw weighs in on many key debates surrounding the Scandinavian settlement in England, including its scale and impact. Breaking from convention, this work challenges the popular notion of quick cultural assimilation in favour of a new approach, which sees the preservation of Scandinavian identity into the eleventh century. Broken down into seven chapters and three appendices, Kershaw uses recent discoveries, including many previously unpublished finds, to create a comprehensive study. Kershaw's book on Viking Identities is the first work of such depth across the broad corpus of Scandinavian metal finds in England. Kershaw contextualises her findings from these materials within the wider context of the period, in order to support new theories on the overarching settlement of the Scandinavians.

Chapter one begins with a short historiography of the period, in order to contextualise the uses of Scandinavian jewellery into existing scholarship on Scandinavian settlement in England. This chapter highlights the lack of archaeological evidence used in many previous

studies on the Scandinavian settlement and cultural identity in England. Kershaw addresses this gap in scholarship by exploring metal finds, which have increased in exceptional numbers since metal-detecting has grown in popularity and become more widespread in England. Kershaw outlines her project's own constraints by acknowledging that although she seeks a national approach to the finds, there is a strong bias towards the Northern and Eastern areas that covers the ninth and tenth century Danelaw. This is far from deliberate as the majority of finds have been unearthed from the Danelaw area which is shown as a focal point of Scandinavian activity. Kershaw moves on to clearly define the two key styles of jewellery that she will examine: a Scandinavian-style, which imitates the jewellery found in Scandinavia, and an Anglo-Scandinavian style, which keeps the essence of a Scandinavian style but with Old English elements creating a hybrid style. In doing so, Kershaw explains her approach to the evidence, before moving on to evaluate previous studies of Scandinavian-style jewellery. The author presents a well-rounded assessment of the existing academic work, alongside fair criticism of each of the previously used scholarly methods to explain her own choice of approach. The last section of this chapter addresses the various issues that are associated with the use of metal-detector finds, including the problems of inconsistent recording and possible lack of reporting. This is a well thought out section, addressing the issues she faced during the study and possible criticisms of her use of the unregulated practice of metal-detecting, which provides much of the material in this study.

The second chapter explains Kershaw's methodology for identifying jewellery styles and highlights the five features she uses to differentiate between Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery. These features are brooch type, pin fittings, attachment loops, artistic content, and metal composition of embellishment. The differences in these features are clearly charted between the two kinds of jewellery in Table 2.1 (p. 21). This taxonomy forms a comprehensive system for the identification of Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery, with a clear discussion and a handful of illustrations of the different styles and variations in a reader-friendly way, making the classification process largely accessible.

In chapter three, Kershaw puts her methodology into practice as she consults over 500 brooches and pendants. She describes seven main styles with their many variations, which are summarised in Table 3.1 (p. 43). Each style is considered in terms of date, shape, pin-fittings or attachments, style, and distribution. Giving individual attention to Lozenge brooches, variations of Convex disc brooches, Trefoil brooches, Oval brooches, Equal-armed brooches, Pendants, Ringerike-style and Urnes-style brooches, Kershaw creates a

comprehensive guide to the various forms of jewellery examined within the book. This is a hefty chapter, which exceeds the length of any other, because of the sheer number of examined finds that are included and the work's highly technical approach. The chapter serves as a valuable source for anyone studying Scandinavian-style or Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery, with detailed photographs and illustrations that demonstrate the range of different brooches and pendants found in England during the Viking period. These images are accompanied by clear maps, which show the distribution of finds from each category, in both England and Scandinavia. Kershaw's comparison and evaluations of these distributions finds a distinct connection between the Danelaw region and Viking-Age Denmark, and an impressive variety of Scandinavian-style jewellery that was available in England.

Having introduced the reader to the brooches and pendants, Kershaw turns her attention in the remaining chapters to deciphering the distribution patterns, wearers' identities, cultural significance, and the possible correlation between these finds and female Scandinavians. Chapter four focuses on the production of both Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian styles of jewellery. Here, the author argues that most Scandinavian-style pieces were probably produced in Scandinavia before being imported into England. In contrast, the Anglo-Scandinavian styles are of English origin, and Kershaw provides distribution maps that demonstrate clusters around likely manufacturing hubs, including Norwich and York. Much of this evidence comes from examining the metals used in the jewellery's production, with brass being a clear indicator of Scandinavian origin, due to its wide availability in the region and scarcity in England. Kershaw then presents evidence of Anglo-Scandinavian style jewellery being produced in England by arguing in favour of the use of moulds in the manufacturing of Anglo-Scandinavian style reproductions made from existing jewellery. However, she is cautious when discussing purely Scandinavian-style pieces being manufactured in England, as there is a lack of evidence, which could suggest these were purely imports. Once she establishes the locations for jewellery manufacturing, Kershaw then suggests a chronology for the various styles of jewellery that challenges the previously accepted period of Scandinavia influence. Although this period has often been constrained to the years c. 865-954, when the Danelaw was in effect, Kershaw proposes a flexible timescale of use for this jewellery. This new timescale is summarised in Figure 4.2 (p. 155), with theoretical alterations to existing dating featured in almost every case. Rather than being restricted to the early Viking settlement, Kershaw suggests a much longer period of use for these jewellery styles, with changing trends in styles in Denmark, mirrored in England

following a short delay. This supports strong contact between England and Denmark and the desire to keep connections with the Scandinavian homelands among settlers in England, a desire which appears to extend beyond the end of the Danelaw into the eleventh century.

Kershaw begins chapter five with an insight into the few examples of Scandinavian jewellery with datable contexts found in England, before moving on to an examination of how the previously discussed jewellery in chapter three could have been used with known forms of female dress. Drawing details on the uses of these brooches from their size and construction, especially their pin-fittings, Kershaw seeks to expand our understanding of how these brooches could have been worn during the Viking Age. This analysis includes a divide in the clothing that these brooches were used with. Scandinavian-style brooches, especially oval brooches, had a distinctly practical purposes in both the outer and main garments of women. In contrast, Anglo-Scandinavian brooches lean towards use with outer garments only, such as shawls or mantels. These changes in the use of jewellery depending on style show a level of cultural integration, but not assimilation, that has scarcely been touched upon in previous scholarship. From the pin-fittings and, more specifically, the removal of an additional loop solely found on Scandinavian style brooches, a pattern of changes in the functionality of the jewellery emerges in the Anglo-Scandinavian style. Kershaw suggests that the probable use of these loops was either as a point to suspend strings of beads from, or the more practical role of a chatelaine-style brooch, which was used to keep small tools, such as knives, close to hand. This change in construction was a marked progression away from the design of Scandinavian examples, which have the additional attachment. Kershaw attributes this change to the development of Anglo-Scandinavian style jewellery from Scandinavian-styles with alterations made for use with Old English dress. These jewellery pieces were meant to be worn on Old English clothing, which had no need for the additional loop due to their construction Having investigated the practical uses of the jewellery, Kershaw looks directly at the carriers of this jewellery by focusing briefly on the gendering of jewellery. She establishes that the types of finds discussed were likely to have been constructed for the exclusive use of females. This notion fits well with her next argument, which discusses the role of women as transmitters of cultural identity. Kershaw suggests that cultural identity could have been transmitted via jewellery and the differing styles that appeared. Although Kershaw acknowledges that there is some scope for men as bearers of cultural tradition in ways which do not appear as obviously in archaeological records, such as the adoption of specific styles of personal appearance as in the case of distinctive hairstyles. These physical

distinctions are recorded in literary sources of the time., including a tenth or eleventh century letter where an Old English man is berated for dressing like a Dane with cropped hair and a long fringe (p. 177). The evidence from this study favours women as the main cultural communicators when using ornamental metalwork as a point of reference. Kershaw argues that Scandinavian-style jewellery would have been used to connect Scandinavian migrants to their homelands and would therefore reflect strong connections and interchanges with Scandinavia. On the other hand, Kershaw suggests that Anglo-Scandinavian pieces would have been used to show the blending of cultures during a period of cultural change and transmission. Wearing these Anglo-Scandinavian pieces meant that an individual could still recognise their past heritage or connection to Scandinavia, whilst also demonstrating their new Old English connections. This would be particularly prevalent for second and third-generation settlers, who were distanced from, but still felt connected to Scandinavia.

With her penultimate chapter, Kershaw addresses one of her main, overarching aims: to use this new information on Scandinavian-style jewellery and its distribution across England to change our understanding of the Scandinavian settlement in England. She starts this section with an outline of the main issues associated with mapping metalwork, which include the portability of jewellery, the nature of the finds (which are largely considered as accidental losses), and the obvious modern constraints (many of which were discussed in chapter one regarding metal-detecting). Next Kershaw moves on to look at the site contexts surrounding Scandinavian-style jewellery finds, with burials being in the stark minority, in comparison with both urban and rural finds. The urban finds are less common, and Kershaw explains this discrepancy by including an acknowledgement of the increased likelihood of lost jewellery being found in a metropolitan centre in comparison to the rural settings, where there is a much higher proportion of finds. Kershaw then looks at the distribution of Scandinavian-style finds on both a national and regional level, focusing in on the areas with a high concentration of artefacts. Her national study supports the Danelaw as a boundary of culture, although Kershaw notes there is little evidence in this study from Yorkshire, north of the Humber, despite the fact this is an area commonly known as a centre of Viking activity with particular focus in existing scholarship devoted to the region. On the other hand, her regional study supports different pockets of impact in Norfolk and Lincolnshire, which have not been previously known for their Scandinavian influence. Kershaw examines place-name evidence in comparison her jewellery distribution findings to draw out key anomalies. Firstly, both Yorkshire and the East Midlands have substantial Scandinavian place-name evidence

but limited Scandinavian jewellery. In comparison, the opposite issue can be seen in Lincolnshire and East-Anglia; in previous scholarship, these regions were not considered to have significant Scandinavian impact in terms of place-names, but these regions have a significant number of Scandinavian-style finds. There is a sustained connection between East Anglia and Scandinavia, according to the archaeological evidence, which has not received much attention prior to Kershaw's investigation. Kershaw believes this connection between East Anglia and Scandinavia could be the source of many of the finds, while other discrepancies, such as the lack of finds in Yorkshire are given the possible explanations due to various modern and contemporary limitations, such as the amount of land currently being farmed affecting the availability of metal detectorist. Although Kershaw goes on to suggest that future discoveries could alter this picture further, which is a key reason why an updated addition would be most welcome.

Finally, Kershaw concludes the study with an analysis of her overall findings to explore what these developments mean in the context of Scandinavian influence in England and more specifically the Danelaw. Beginning with an analysis of the frequency and variation of brooch use, with a comparison between Scandinavia as a whole, the sub-region of modern Denmark and England, through which Kershaw demonstrates that a wide range of brooches were transferred to England. The similarities in jewellery usage between the Danelaw in England and Scandinavia, most specifically Viking Age Denmark, is marked. Some types of jewellery did not transfer to England with much success, such as the Jellinge-style disk brooches, although it is relatively rare even in Scandinavia so its appearance in England at all is significant. Even so many other styles found great popularity in England, such as Trefoil brooches, which are more prominent among the English finds. Kershaw argues that jewellery and brooches specifically are significant in showing how cultural markers can be transposed particularly by women, even though the preferences of the time remain inconsistent between countries. Kershaw also addresses the issues surrounding oval brooches, which were uncommon in England, but are of great significance as distinct markers of Scandinavian dress. She explains that their absence could be due to their size and worth, as their value made them much less likely to be lost than the smaller and cheaper brooches, which make up much of the sample. Kershaw continues by addressing the cultural integration of Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery and the limitations of cultural assimilations. Kershaw argues in favour of the transmission of cultural identity rather than assimilation, which has previously been argued for. Kershaw maintains that there is a trend of upholding Scandinavian connections through

jewellery, without the Scandinavian identity being absorbed into a true hybrid with Old English styles and motifs. The last discussion in this chapter focuses on the presence of Scandinavian influence in Norfolk, Lincolnshire, and Suffolk, which throws doubt onto the evidence from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, regarding the areas of Viking settlement. This is a significant point from Kershaw's research that could change scholars' understanding of where, and to what extent, the Scandinavians settled in England. Kershaw ends this chapter and the overall project by drawing together her conclusions from each chapter, and then emphasises the changes that need to be made in the existing geographical and chronological understanding of Scandinavian settlement in England.

There are many merits to Kershaw's work, not least of all is the clear way in which the author tackles such an intricate body of material. Her illustrations and charts are insightful choices as visual aids, which makes understanding the complexities of variations in style and find distribution more comprehensible for those less versed in the subject. A significant point brought forward by Kershaw is her new interpretation of the Scandinavian settlement in England, which highlights areas like Norfolk and Lincolnshire. The other, more controversial point to be taken from this work is the involvement of women during and following the Viking settlement, particularly as cultural communicators. Although Kershaw does not suggest that every woman who wore a Scandinavian-style brooch or pendant would have been of Scandinavian origin, there is a clear argument in favour of widespread migration of Scandinavian women. This argument has previously been refuted in favour of the quick assimilation between male settlers with Old English women, with limited numbers of Scandinavian women journeying to England. There is still much work to be done on this topic, but Kershaw's publication reignites debates over previously accepted interpretations that need to be re-examined.

The positioning and depth of Kershaw's examination of the gendering Viking Age jewellery can be criticised, given her suggestion that the jewellery in focus was worn by females is not addressed until chapter five. This work reads very much as a study of the identity of women, their role as cultural ambassadors, and their involvement in the Scandinavian settlement of England. As such, Kershaw's argument that the jewellery was worn by primarily, if not exclusively females is a pivotal issue. Although Kershaw is likely correct that most, if not all, of these brooches and pendants were worn by women, this theory should have been established earlier in the study and given more attention than is included (p.170-3). It is difficult to find other issues with this work. There are, of course, the limitations

surrounding metal-detector finds, which are a difficult source to exploit given the lack of context, but this issue is addressed to the best of the authors abilities, with controls and cross examination employed to confirm the finds' validity.

Overall, this is a text that can stand the test of time. Despite the ever-evolving evidence resulting from metal-detecting, this reprint in paperback that comes seven years after the original publication will be welcomed by the academic community, as the work gains greater accessibility. Kershaw's techniques to differentiate Scandinavian-style and Anglo-Scandinavian-style jewellery from one another, as well as non-Scandinavian finds, still proves valuable. Similarly, her catalogue of finds from chapter three is a significant resource when researching the Scandinavian jewellery found in England, whilst many of her insights still prove vital in the continued investigation into Scandinavian settlement in England. At the time of the study's original publication, Kershaw was well-aware of the possibility that new finds could alter her own new model of the Scandinavian settlement. An updated version including the latest finds would be most welcome in future, yet this academic study as it stands, still proves invaluable to anyone studying Scandinavian or Anglo-Scandinavian material culture.

BOOK REVIEW

Cooijmans, Christian. 2020. *Monarchs and Hydrarchs: The Conceptual Development of Viking Activity Across the Frankish Realm (c.750–940)* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge)

Dain Swenson

Scholarship on the Viking Age has to some extent surfed the wave of renewed popular interest in the subject during the last decade. As a result, there has been a growth in academic diversification, in addition to an increase in research output in the field. In the previous century, English-speaking scholarship tended toward an emphasis on the Scandinavian mainland and the westward Norse expansion into the UK, Ireland, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and the short-lived efforts to explore North America. That is not to say that Viking and Norse activity in Central Europe, the Mediterranean, and Eastern Europe has been neglected. However, since the turn of the millennium, scholarship has benefited from a move towards increasing international cooperation and interdisciplinary research. This move has partially resulted in research on the eastern and southern Norse expansion moving from a national level to an international sphere of cooperative research.

Christian Cooijmans' *Monarchs and Hydrarchs* offers an examination of the evolution of the Norse waves of trading, Viking raids, and settlement in the Frankish realm through the creation of a structural sequential model of the intercultural activity between the Franks and the Vikings from the mid-eighth to mid-ninth centuries. Cooijmans draws from multiple spheres of data, including textual sources and archaeological research, to create the sequential model of changes in the Norse-Frankish relations during the Carolingian period. In contrast to the popular image of the opening of the Viking Age beginning in England with a lightning

attack on the Lindisfarne monastery that was unprecedented, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs* weaves through a nuanced and long-term perspective of the causes, reactions, and consequences of Norse attacks against the Franks during the Viking Age. The book is somewhat dependent upon acronyms for the plethora of textual sources and requires frequent backtracks to the acronym list for the unfamiliar reader, though the list of medieval textual sources for the book is robust and serves as an excellent opportunity for the reader to introduce themselves to medieval accounts in Carolingian Frankia. In addition to textual sources, archaeological research is referenced where available, but as the author notes, in comparison to other regions of Europe, the physical evidence of long-term Norse and Viking activity in Frankia is sparse.

The sequential model of hydrarchic activity, or the activity of ship-borne Scandinavians led by chieftains into Frankia, is illustrated by Cooijmans in an abstract manner with geospatial and politico-economic aspects, and with four distinct phases of activity (p. 5). The four phases of the model unfold in chapters two through seven. The terms 'monarch' and 'hydrarch' were not mutually exclusive roles during this period, as the roles were at times interchangeable (p. 34). This sequential model requires a background explanation of the region and parties involved to properly understand and put into perspective the intricacies of the actions and reactions of the Norse and the Franks.

Chapter two, 'The Scandinavian Perspective', lays the foundation for the Viking Age activities of the Norse with an overview of the end of the Iron Age in Scandinavia, and examining the earliest records of Norse kingdoms and the trade and contact that predated the Viking Age plundering of Frankia. This section demonstrates that rather than raiding villages or cities as the Norse came upon them, a pre-existing network of intelligence and familiarity with the region helped to facilitate the later piratic activity of the Vikings in Frankia. Carolingian Frankia was a massive realm, with an estimated 10-20 million people spread out over more than one million square kilometres (p. 67). The administration of such a realm, the intricacies of the laws and the counties, political alliances, and the fragility of stability in Frankia is a complex topic. A degree of familiarity is essential to appreciate conditions that facilitated Viking incursions for such a long period of time. Cooijmans deconstructs these aspects of the Carolingian state in chapter three. With an introduction to the state of Frankia for the reader, chapters four, five and six delve into the textual and archaeological evidence of trade between Scandinavia and Frankia preceding the Viking Age, the exchange of knowledge that the Norse would use to their advantage (p. 91), the Viking phenomenon as it evolved over time, and the eventual decline.

The commencement of regular Viking incursions into Frankia and the Carolingian response to raids into their territory is explored in chapter five. The Norse had ample targets and means to penetrate Frankia in the early stages of the Viking Age. However, even at an early period, the Franks were taking into consideration means to frustrate and deprive incursions into their territory. It is noted in chapter six that hydrarchic activity during this period was not singularly antagonistic towards the Franks. Indeed, the Franks had a far more complex relationship with the Norse even during a period of increasing Viking activity. Frankish elites would employ Norse parties against domestic political rivals as well as other potential Viking raiders (p. 92). This would eventually culminate in the establishment of Norse settlements, particularly Normandy, which would in later centuries exert a far-reaching influence on medieval European events. While Cooijmans's overview of this period for the purposes of the sequential model of hydrarchic activity is fairly comprehensive and detailed, it is heavily reliant upon contemporary written sources and there is little time devoted to discussing any fine details in the archaeological record that demonstrate the trade, violence, or movement of the Norse around Frankia. However, understanding the larger narrative is the more pressing concern of the book for the purposes of illustrating the model of hydrarchic activity through time.

The three case studies for the application of the model are the Lower Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt basin, Seine basin, and Loire basin. The model constructed for the study reflects Norse activity, with phases of the sequential model represented through the changes of activity seen in each area. The author does correctly point out some inconsistencies between case studies, such as the absence of evidence for Franco-Scandinavian trade activity in the Seine and Loire basins (p. 227). There is also unfortunately a missed opportunity to apply the model to an independent scenario such as England or Ireland to observe if activity in areas of the North Sea followed a similar path or experienced a marked difference in the evolution of Norse activity in these regions. However, due to the amount of time dedicated to introducing the dynamics at play between the Franks and the Norse to understand the model, it is understandable that doing so would not allow sufficient space to properly explain the variables at play. This leaves ample room for future applications of this type of sequential model to other regions in the Viking Age.

Monarchs and Hydrarchs is an informative read for the uninitiated in the Viking Age in Frankia, and the development of the model of hydrarchic activity during these centuries establishes a framework with which to observe trends in activity in Franco-Norse relations

during this formative period of both Scandinavia and Frankia. The book gives the reader an excellent overview of the period from multiple perspectives, and a solid introduction to medieval Frankish primary sources. The book may disappoint some archaeologists due to the emphasis on primary accounts, but there is a healthy bibliography of citations which offer excellent additional reading suggestions. The gradual move towards interdisciplinary cooperation within the field of Viking Studies creates a wide audience for the book and many will find something of value to learn.

BOOK REVIEW

Paranormal Encounters in Iceland 1150-1400, 2019. ed. by Ármann Jakobsson and Miriam Mayburd (Berlin: De Gruyter)

Gwendolyne Knight

The anthology *Paranormal Encounters in Iceland 1150-1400*, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Miriam Mayburd, sits at a crossroads of several trends in scholarship. Necessary reassessment of previous scholarship is, in and of itself, not new; in this volume, however, it is intensified by the recent cultural moment calling on medieval scholars to critically assess the methodological and theoretical origins of our respective disciplines. 'The paranormal' has in recent years been a fruitful site of such reassessments and theoretical experiments,[1] and in this volume the editors present 'paranormal experience' as a lens to challenge our views of disciplinary boundaries, scholarly language, and human experience. Nevertheless, the introduction occasionally becomes bogged down by the weight of its own rhetoric — it presupposes a general understanding of the paranormal which is never fully or clearly articulated in the text, thus working against the stated aim of 'emphatically seek[ing] to dismantle the silos of disciplinary overspecialization' (p. 3).

If we are to understand the paranormal as something which upsets and challenges our view of and interaction with what we consider 'normal', then can mythological stories, which take place almost entirely within their own bounded environment and react at best allegorically with the 'normal' world, truly be considered paranormal? I have no good answer to this question, nor am I particularly well aided in attempting to answer it by the introduction, or indeed many of the contributions to this anthology. It is worth considering

what impact the lack of precise definitions has on the reader, particularly in a volume with the express intention of dismantling silos and building bridges between disciplines. As much as the editors want 'the paranormal' to act as a challenging and destabilising concept, the force of deconstruction is somewhat muted without a clear grasp of the initial construct (whether that be a working definition of 'normal' or 'paranormal').[2]

The anthology is comprised of twenty-three chapters, divided into three sections: 'Experiencing the Paranormal', 'Figures of the Paranormal', and 'Literature and the Paranormal'. In this review, I present the major trends that run through each of the sections, highlighting particular merits as well as those articles which best encapsulate the goals of that specific section.

'Experiencing the Paranormal'

The nine articles in this first section bear witness to the range of human experiences that touch and are touched by 'the paranormal'. Ármann Jakobsson and Mayburd state that this grouping 'concerns the framing of the paranormal encounter in the cognitive space of its reader-audience' (p. 5). Ármann Jakobsson himself leads the volume with '"I See Dead People": The Externalization of Paranormal Experience in Medieval Iceland' (pp. 9-20), wherein he advocates for refocusing the scholarly gaze onto the internal experience of the paranormal, i.e., the realm of human consciousness. Many of the other chapters in the section, however, focus less on the projection of an individual's existential crisis, and more on the role of the paranormal in mediating community, as well as individual understanding of and responses to overwhelming experiences or concepts — be these natural (Mayburd; Remein), cosmological (Ásdís Egilsdóttir; Maraschi; Lawing), or less straightforwardly categorically psychosocial (Poilvez; Bienko Eriksen, Heiniger and Ármann Jakobsson).

Easily the most representative of the section's core theme is Marion Poilvez's 'A Troll Did It?: Trauma as a Paranormal State in the *Íslendingasögur*' (pp. 71-88). Poilvez observes that paranormal events in the *Íslendingasögur* and trauma share a challenge to precise definition, yet both are (or in the case of trauma, was initially) characterised by disruption. 'Trolls are defined by what they do,' she writes, 'what they disturb, without letting themselves be caught in a rational category, and trauma functions in the same way' (p. 80). That monstrous metaphors may express personal trauma is clear, but Poilvez points out that cultures can — and do — build and transmit collective traumas, whereby the paranormal has the potential to become a communal way to both express and relate to trauma. Thus, in cases

where a reading of the paranormal in this way is appropriate, it has the potential to express *both* a deeply personal experience or crisis, but also a community's collective interpretation and understanding of trauma.

'Figures of the Paranormal'

This section 'has a stronger focus on paranormal figures and how they feature in the narratives' (p. 5). Although there are only six articles in this section, and despite the specificity of their subject matter, they cover a lot of ground with stimulating and thought-provoking arguments. This particular section raises the question most prominently of what qualifies a figure as 'paranormal'; some of the authors address it, while others focus on the intersection of certain figures and the circumstances of their appearance or disruption. At a narrative level, Andrew McGillivray and Kent Pettit explore the particular connections between different interpretations of 'paranormal' characters (*æsir* in McGillivray's 'Encounters with Hliðskjálf in Old Norse Mythology' (pp. 175–192); reanimated corpses in Pettit's 'The New Faith vs. The Undead: Christmas Showdowns' (pp. 227–244)) and specific places or moments in time. Sandra Ballif Straubhaar follows a similar tack in '"Ok flýgr þat jafnan": Icelandic Figurations of Boðvarr bjarki's Monster' (pp. 193–202) by comparing three iterations of a 'monster's' attack on the feasting location of a Danish king.

The other three papers in this section examine more closely how we define and categorise particular paranormal figures. Arngrímur Vídalin's essay, 'Demons, Muslins, Wrestling Champions: The Semantic History of *Blámenn* from the Twelfth through the Twentieth Century' (pp. 203–226), is a measured and thoughtful analysis of the paranormal elements of the *blámaðr* figure or character. It is, however, also an example of where the grey area between paranormal monstrosity and racial or ethnic Othering could benefit from a more integrated analysis of both elements.[3] As Arngrímur Vídalin observes, *blámaðr* is a complex term which has received a great deal of scholarly attention; nevertheless, this attention has tended to focus on *blámaðr* as a racial descriptor at the expense of the paranormal uses which the term has also had. This chapter is a welcome contribution to that corpus, yet a more critical stance towards the relationship between the categories of 'alterity' and 'monster', and the degree of their overlap in medieval Icelandic literature, would have been desirable.

Precisely this question of monstrosity, and its perceived physicality and essentialism, is taken up by Rebecca Merkelbach in her chapter, '*Dólgr í byggðinni*: Meeting the Social Monster in the Sagas of Icelanders' (pp. 263–277). In an analysis that ties in well with Poilvez's

chapter above, Merkelbach highlights social disruption and community impact as significant factors that condition how a given society or community will judge a potentially monstrous figure. From this analysis emerge two critical observations: first, that the spectrum of what constitutes monstrosity is socially driven, and second, that public opinion is a powerful element in the story-world of the *Íslendingasögur*, which confirms but also potentially confers monstrous status.

Zuzana Stankovitsová takes on the public opinion of scholarship in her chapter, 'Following up on Female *fylgjur*: A Re-Examination of the Concept of Female *fylgjur* in Old Icelandic Literature' (pp. 245–262). Previous scholarship has represented female *fylgjur* as a discrete taxonomic category but, Stankovitsová argues, this category is a phenomenon based in scholarship rather than sources. Indeed, after having discounted the clear references to *fylgjur* who appear as animals, Stankovitsová identifies only two sources which feature female beings called *fylgjur*. Overall, she argues convincingly for the lack of a discrete category of 'female *fylgjur*' in the Middle Ages, emphasising that the sources point towards a fluid and adaptable concept of *fylgjur* — a conclusion which speaks well to the overall thesis of the volume.

'Literature and the Paranormal'

The final section of this anthology 'takes a broader view to consider the literary functions of the paranormal' to reflect their diversity across different genres (p. 5) The eight chapters focus mainly on different genres within saga literature, and their approaches to the range of literary functions that may be borne by 'the paranormal' are indeed diverse. Of particular importance for this theme, as well as for the volume overall, are Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir's chapter, 'A Normal Relationship?: Jarl Hákon and Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr in Icelandic Literary Context' (pp. 295–310), and Martina Ceolin's chapter, 'Paranormal Tendencies in the Sagas: A Discussion about Genre' (pp. 347–366). Ceolin, in particular, is one of the few contributors who includes a working definition of 'the paranormal'. Her chapter contains a thoughtful critique of genre distinctions in saga literature, and demonstrates how the paranormal, which often has been a prominent (and notably pejorative) feature of genre distinctions, can in fact contribute to a more dynamic and descriptive approach to genre than what currently exists. Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir uses the relationship between Jarl Hákon and Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr as a departure point to consider whether what is considered as paranormal by modern audiences would be considered the same way by a medieval one. She thus highlights

the importance of the historical social contexts, and past frames of reference, for an analysis of the paranormal.

Christopher Crocker's 'Even a Henchman can Dream: Dreaming at the Margins in *Brennu-Njáls saga*' (pp. 279-294) and Ingibjörg Eyþórsdóttir's 'Darraðarljóð and Its Context within *Njáls saga*: Sorcery, Vision, *Leizla*?' (pp. 327-346) explore paranormal settings of dreams and visions within and adjacent to *Njáls saga*. Crocker's chapter, the first in the section, sets the stage well for many of the chapters that follow through a consideration of dreams as narrative events which rely on and exploit 'familiar traditions' (p. 290). Ingibjörg Eyþórsdóttir explores the complex relationships between the poem 'Darraðarljóð' and *Njáls saga*, with which it is connected in all manuscript witnesses of the latter. Mythology and an analysis of different kinds of vision literature are particularly important in her chapter. The literary context for space and place and their relationship to the paranormal sit at the centre of Gunnvör S. Karlsdóttir's chapter, 'Priest Ketill's Journey to Rome' (pp. 311-326) — focusing on travel through narrative space — and Shaun F.D. Hughes' chapter, 'Reading the Landscape in *Grettis saga*: Þórhallur, the *meinvættur*, and Glámur' (pp. 367-394) — examining how deeply place-bound the paranormal can potentially be.

The relationship between masculinity and the paranormal is interrogated in the final two contributions to this section: Yoav Tirosh's chapter, 'Trolling Guðmundr: Paranormal Defamation in *Ljósvetninga saga*' (pp. 395-420), and especially in Védís Ragnheiðardóttir's ''Meir af viel en karlmennsku': Monstrous Masculinity in *Viktors saga ok Blávus*' (pp. 421-432). The sexual defamation of Guðmundr *inn ríki*, Tirosh argues, is influenced by the correspondence of Old Norse gender with the paranormal. Paranormal attributes contribute to and enhance the humiliations heaped on Guðmundr by the narrative — and ultimately, Tirosh argues (through impressive, yet occasionally distracting, pop culture reference points), this edge of eeriness and uncanniness invites the audience to question their own human experience. Rounding out the volume, Védis Ragnheiðardóttir could be said to approach the correspondence of monstrosity and masculinity from an alternative perspective: by not following the conventions of masculine-appropriate behaviour, and engaging incorrectly with the paranormal, the protagonists' performance of masculinity turns monstrous. In both cases, the paranormal may provide a strategy for subverting or threatening the normal, but ultimately hegemonic masculinity is strengthened.

Conclusion

In the article 'The Paranormal', Mayburd argues that the concept represented by the term 'the paranormal' at once rehabilitates and expands on 'the supernatural', such that it '[seeks] to recover it from the denigration its synonym 'supernatural' has received', and in its expanded definition can include the 'unexplainable', which is uncanny and unsettling but not, necessarily, supernatural.[4] Such a working definition might have been helpful at the outset of this volume; without a firm departure point in the paranormal (or, indeed, in the normal), what is meant to be disruptive and challenging to the reader runs the risk of edging closer to confusing. Nevertheless, *Paranormal Encounters in Iceland 1150–1400* is a thought-provoking collection with some important contributions to the field of medieval Icelandic literature, and particularly for the burgeoning cross-disciplinary research on the role of 'the paranormal' in medieval literature and society.

Notes

[1] E.g. Ármann Jakobsson. 2013. 'The Taxonomy of the Non-existent: Some Medieval Icelandic Concepts of the Paranormal', *Fabula* 54:3-4, 199-213; Daniel Sävborg. 2016. 'Are the Trolls supernatural?: some Remarks on the Terminology for Strange Beings in Old Norse Literature', Annali. Sezione Germanica N.S. 26:1-2, 119-130; Ármann Jakobsson. 2017. *The Troll Inside You: Paranormal Activity in the Medieval North* (punctum books); Daniel Sävborg and Karen Bek-Pedersen (eds.). 2018. *Supernatural Encounters in Old Norse Literature and Tradition* (Turnhout: Brepols); Rebecca Merkelbach and Gwendolyne Knight (eds.). 2020. *Margins, Monsters, Deviants: Alterities in Old Norse Literature and Culture* (Turnhout: Brepols).

[2] Mayburd addresses some of these concerns in her chapter on 'The Paranormal' in *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*; indeed, it is tempting to suggest that the reader begin with this chapter and Ármann Jakobsson's 'The Taxonomy of the Non-Existent' for a more complete presentation of the editors' departure points in the present volume. See: Miriam Mayburd, 'The Paranormal' in Ármann Jakobsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (eds.). 2017. *The Routledge Research Companion to the Medieval Icelandic Sagas* (London: Routledge), 265-278 (esp. p. 265 and pp. 269-71) and Ármann Jakobsson, 'The Taxonomy'.

[3] See the introduction to Sarah Ahmed. 2000. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality* (London: Routledge), esp. pp. 1-3, as well as Geraldine Heng. 2018. *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), esp. pp. 35-41.

[4] Mayburd, 'The Paranormal', p. 265.

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We are pleased to announce our call for papers for the third volume of *Apardjón Journal for Scandinavian Studies*. We invite both early career and established researchers to submit written work that fall within the journal's scope. We are especially interested in interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies within the field of Viking- and medieval Scandinavia, but will also consider papers from different geographies that are connected to the Norse world. Articles should be written in UK English and not exceed 10,000 words. All submissions are expected to present original, previously unpublished scholarship. We also consider unsolicited book reviews and review requests regarding titles in our field published within the last three years. Please submit your work to our email apardjon@abdn.ac.uk before 1st September 2021. For any queries, do not hesitate to contact the editorial board through our email or social media platforms:

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Volume 2 of *Apardjón* includes three full-length articles. In the first article, 'The Influences of Christianity on East Sámi Burial Customs', Paula Budó i Rosa investigates eastern Sámi burial customs before and after the transition to Christianity (c. 1550–1750). In the following article, *'Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* and Icelandic Identity: The Rewriting of History for a Peripheral European Community', Roberto Luigi Pagani draws new attention to the Icelandic saga *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls* as a fictional product, primarily focusing on the way the saga rewrites and reinterprets the past to suit its contemporary Icelandic audience's needs. In the third and final article, 'Crusades, Cities and Castles: Finland as Sweden's Militarised Borderland c. 1150–1300', Caroline Wilhelmsson examines how Finland was militarised following its conquest by Sweden and emphasises often overlooked aspects of the Nordic Middle Ages.

This volume is accompanied by eight book reviews, conducted by Melissa Ridley Elmes, Amy Jefford Franks, Peggy Gilbert, Gwendolyne Knight, Giulia Mancini, Keith Ruiter, Dain Swenson and Elizabeth J. West, respectively.

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