Crafting Words and Wood: Myth, Carving and *Húsdrápa*

By

Erik Schjeide

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Scandinavian Languages and Literatures

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor John Lindow, Chair
Professor Jonas Wellendorf
Professor Beate Fricke

Fall 2015

Abstract

Crafting Words and Wood: Myth, Carving and *Húsdrápa*

by

Erik Schjeide

Doctor of Philosophy in Scandinavian Languages and Literatures

University of California, Berkeley

Professor John Lindow, Chair

In the poem *Húsdrápa*, ca. 985, Úlfr Uggason described woodcarvings of mythological scenes adorning an Icelandic hall owned by the chieftain Óláfr pái. The performance, of which some verses have been passed down in writing, was an act of referential intermedia, insofar as the art form of skaldic poetry presented with woven words the content of a wood-carved medium that has long since rotted away. Hence, the composition of the poem combined with the carvings created a link that opens up a union between extant literary sources and material culture which contributes to expanding cultural insight. This study draws from a range of sources in order to answer central research questions regarding the appearance and qualities of the missing woodcarvings. Intermedia becomes interdisciplinary in the quest, as archaeological finds of Viking Age and early medieval woodcarvings and iconography help fill the void of otherwise missing artifacts. Old Norse literature provides clues to the mythic cultural values imbued in the wooden iconography. Anthropological and other theories drawn from the liberal arts also apply as legend, myth and art combine to inform cultural meaning. The study reveals that the appearance and function of the woodcarvings merge as they were understood not only aesthetically but also to possess a certain agency. The dissertation is in two parts. The first portion provides background information regarding woodcarving and iconography found in Northern Europe as it refers to poetry, sagas and legends for contextualization. The second portion continues the investigation with an emphasis on Iceland and a close reading of the poem *Húsdrápa*. In these sections a synthesis of saga scenes, skaldic poetry, myth and applicable iconography informs analysis and hypothetical prototypes of the carvings.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Dawn,
who made it possible.
With gratitude for the assistance of
The Department of Scandinavian, University of California, Berkeley,
my Dissertation Committee,
family and friends.
With special thanks to
John Lindow
for his support of my project
and continuing to work with me after his retirement from Berkeley.
In recognition of the skáld Úlfr Uggason
Þetta kvæði er kallat Húsdrápa ok er vel ort.
With appreciation for the woodcarvers of the Viking Age.
In memory of my father
Ole Arne Schjeide

Table of Contents

Page

General Introduction 1

Part 1: Background and contexts of woodcarving and iconography in Scandinavia

Introduction: Qualities of Viking Age woodcarving and iconography 3

1.1: Oseberg burial ship and woodcarvings revisited 6

1.2: Oseberg burial ship pictorial tapestries 30

1.3: Sagas, poetry and Vestfold archaeological sites 51

1.4: Þrándheimr and the earls of Hlaðir 62

1.5: Sigurðr jarl Hákonarson and *Sigurðardrápa* 69

1.6: Hákon jarl inn ríki:

Pre-Christian worship and wooden idols - myths, legends, temples and halls 85

1.7: Conversion ideology, destruction of woodcarvings, remnants seen in stave churches 98

1.8: Conclusion to part one 106

Part 2: Icelandic dwellings, woodcarving, skaldic poetry and *Húsdrápa*

Introduction 113

2.1: The transport of woodcarvings and timber from Norway to Iceland 116

2.2: A Northern Icelandic woodcarving tradition 135

2.3: *Húsdrápa*, quatrain 1:

The craft of skaldic poetry, praise, picture, kennings and mythic origins 151

2.4: *Húsdrápa*, stanza 2 - the contest over a mythic ornament 181

2.5: *Húsdrápa*, strophes 3 - 6 - Þórr's fishing expedition 203

2.6: *Húsdrápa*, strophes 7 - 12 - Baldr's funeral procession 235

2.7: *Þar kømr á til sævar* - Óláfr's *eldhús* 263

References and Bibliography 280

Appendix Figures 299

List of Figures

		Page
Figure 1.	Oseberg ship excavation, September 29, 1904.	299
Figure 2.	Reconstructed Oseberg ship prow.	300
Figure 2.a.	Detail of Oseberg ship *brandr* (stem, prow or "beak" of ship).	301
Figure 2.b.	Sketch of Oseberg ship terminating spiral-head.	302
Figure 2.c.	Detail of reconstructed Oseberg ship prow.	303
Figure 3.	Reconstructed *hǫfðafjǫl*, span board.	304
Figure 3.a.	*Tingl* fragment.	305
Figure 3.b.	Sketch of the uppermost board on the interior stem of the Oseberg ship.	306
Figure 4.	Oseberg ship anthropomorphic figure detail.	307
Figure 5.	Sketch of Oseberg wagon back.	308
Figure 6.	Oseberg wagon front detail.	309
Figure 7.	Oseberg wagon front.	310
Figure 8.	Sketch of Oseberg wagon right side.	311
Figure 9.	Oseberg wagon side - details of engravings within contours of figures.	311
Figure 10.	Oseberg wagon front head post detail.	312
Figure 11.	Oseberg wagon back head post detail.	313
Figure 12.	Oseberg wagon truss detail.	314
Figure 13.	Oseberg *dyrehodestolpe* detail.	315
Figure 14.	Oseberg *rangle*.	316
Figure 15.	Sketch and photo of two *dyrehodestolper* and a *rangle*.	317
Figure 16.	Head and engravings on *dyrehodestolpe* #174.	318
Figure 16.a.	Sketch of engravings on head of the "Carolingian" *dyrehodestolpe*.	319
Figure 16.b.	Sketch of engravings on neck of the "Carolingian" *dyrehodestolpe*.	320
Figure 17.	Head detail showing some of the engravings on *dyrehodestolpe* #174.	321
Figure 17.a.	Sketch of bird patterns on the head and neck of *dyrehodestolpe* #174.	322
Figure 17.b.	Sketch of anthropomorphic figure on the head of *dyrehodestolpe* #174.	323
Figure 18.	The "Fourth" Oseberg sled.	324
Figure 19.	Detail of the "Fourth" Oseberg sled.	325
Figure 20.	Detail of one of *"daarlige sengehestene"*.	326
Figure 21.	Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment "2".	327
Figure 22.	Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment "2" detail.	328
Figure 23.	Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment "1".	329

Figure 24. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “13” prior to splitting. 330
Figure 25. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “7B”. 331
Figure 26. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “4”. 332
Figure 27. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “13B2”. 333
Figure 28. Sketch of a portion of Oseberg tapestry fragment “7A”. 334
Figure 29. *“Den gode sengehesten”*. 335
Figure 30. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “13” after separating. 336
Figure 31. Borre style bridal mounts. 337
Figure 32. Borre style bronze trefoil brooch. 338
Figure 33. Borre style gilded bronze buckle. 339
Figure 34. Bedposts from Oseberg and Gokstad burial sites. 340
Figure 35. View from Lade, looking northwest. 341
Figure 35.a. Sketch and photo of gold bracteate from Mjønes. 342
Figure 35.b. Sketch of Trollhätten bracteate. 343
Figure 35.c. Sketch of Faxe bracteate. 344
Figure 35.d. Sketches and photos of Dalum bracteates. 345
Figure 35.e. Sketches of Rømul bracteates. 346
Figure 36. Urnes style carved panels. 347
Figure 36.a. *Seið Yggr til Rindar* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction. .. 348
Figure 36.b. *Komsk Urðr ór brunni* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction. 349
Figure 36.c. *Sitr Þórr í reiðu* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction. 350
Figure 36.d. *Véltu goð Þjatsa* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction. 351
Figure 36.e. *Vá Gramr til menja* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction. ... 352
Figure 36.f. *Fór Hroptr með Gungni* - hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction. 353
Figure 37. Reconstructed Viking hall at Borg, Lofoten. 354
Figure 38. Reconstruction of the high seat at Borg, and the site of the chieftain’s hall. .. 355
Figure 39. Gold foil found at Borg, Lofoten. 356
Figure 40. Wooden sculpted head in Værnes church. 357
Figure 41. Serpent head at Lom church. 358
Figure 42. Urnes portal. 359
Figure 43. Ulvik portal. 360
Figure 44. Mammen style - Søllested horse collar. 361
Figure 45. Detail of the Gosforth Cross. 362
Figure 46. Heggen weathervane. 363

Figure 47. Detail of Rennebu portal. 364
Figure 48. Óðinn brooch. 365
Figure 49. Column with mask. 366
Figure 50. Bench end from Torpo church in Hallingdal. 367
Figure 51. Hylestad church portal detail. 368
Figure 52. Hypothetical prototype of wood-carved Óðinn mask at Hlaðir ca. 985. 369
Figure 53. The Art Nexus. From Gell 1998, *Art and Agency*. 370
Figure 54. Sketch of Viking Age roof structure. 371
Figure 55. Eyrarland bronze figure. 372
Figure 56. Bjarnastaðahlið panels. 373
Figure 57. Flatatunga panels. 374
Figure 58. Bjarnastaðahlið panel featuring the damned. 375
Figure 59. Bjarnastaðahlið panel depicting St. Mary. 375
Figure 60. Bjarnastaðahlið and Flatatunga panels side by side. 376
Figure 61. Photo of fragments of St. Cuthbert's coffin. 377
Figure 62. Manuscript illuminations. 377
Figure 63. "V-groove" parting tool demonstration. 378
Figure 64. Hypothetical placement of Last Judgement Mural in Hólar Cathedral. 379
Figure 65. Mosaic in the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello. 380
Figure 66. *Teiknibók*, a medieval sketchbook. 381
Figure 67. Möðrufell plank details. 382
Figure 68. Carved stone in Jurby, Isle of Man: possibly Heimdallr with his horn. 383
Figure 69. Ardre VIII picture stone. 384
Figure 70. Bridle ornaments from Broa, Gotland. 385
Figure 71. Carving in antler known as the Sigtuna warrior. 386
Figure 72. Gosforth Cross. St. Mary's Church, Cumbria. 387
Figure 73. Tängelgårda I picture stone. 388
Figure 74. Gaut's Cross at Kirk Michael, Isle of Man. 389
Figure 75. Heimdallr on Gosforth Cross, St. Mary's Church, Cumbria. 390
Figure 76. Loki on Gosforth Cross, St. Mary's Church, Cumbria. 391
Figure 77. Stora Hammars I picture stone. 392
Figure 78. Ardre VIII detail indicating transition of facing figures. 393
Figure 79. Klinte Hunninge I picture stone. 394
Figure 80. Viking Age gold necklace. 395

Figure 81. Hypothetical reconstruction of the woodcarving described in stanza 2. 396
Figure 82. Bronze Age stone carving from Vitlycke. 397
Figure 83. Altuna picture stone. 398
Figure 84. Gosforth fishing slab. 399
Figure 85. Triquetrae on "*Scheteligs slæde*". 400
Figure 86. Hørdum stone. 401
Figure 87. Hørdum stone detail. 402
Figure 88. Ardre VIII detail. 403
Figure 89. Eyrarland image. 404
Figure 90. Walrus ivory figure from Lund. 405
Figure 91. Amber image from Feddet, Denmark. 406
Figure 92. Sketch of bronze image from Chernigov, Ukraine. 407
Figure 93. Whalebone image from Baldursheimur. 408
Figure 94. Runic stone at Norra Åby, Södermanland, Sweden (Sö 86) 409
Figure 95. Þórr's hammer pendants. 410
Figure 96. Freyr miniature. 411
Figure 97. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarving of Þórr's fishing expedition. 412
Figure 98. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarving of Þórr's fishing expedition in situ. 413
Figure 99. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarving of Baldr's funeral procession. 413
Figure 100. Multiple views of the Ledberg picture stone. 414
Figure 101. Stone-carved boar at Maughold, Isle of Man. 415
Figure 102. Carved animals, boars on the Sandulf's Cross, Andreas, Isle of Man. 416
Figure 103. Óðinn with spear, ravens & being attacked by the wolf Fenrir. 417
Figure 104. Ninth century silver Valkyrie pendant. 418
Figure 105. Stone-carved giantess figure from Jurby, Isle of Man. 419
Figure 106. Hunnestad picture stone. 420
Figure 107. Graph showing divisions of seasons in two halves, quarters and months. 421
Figure 108. Gundestrup cauldron detail. 422
Figure 109. Sketch of stone carving at Boghaz-Keui. 422
Figure 110. Limestone tablet depicting Shamash the sun god. 423
Figure 111. Sketch of the iconography on the small Gallehus horn. 424
Figure 112. Foundation plan of the Hrísbrú excavation. 425
Figure 113. Sketch of Viking Age three aisle construction. 426
Figure 114. Stöng foundation excavation. 427

Figure 115. Stöng floor plan. 428
Figure 116. Hofstaðir floor plan showing area of central hall. 428
Figure 117. Hypothetical placement of woodcarvings. 429
Figure 118. Drafting of Oseberg beech chair. 430
Figure 119. Wood-carved chair examples. 431
Figure 120. Silver miniature from Lejre. 432
Figure 121. Hypothetical *ǫndvegi*. 433
Figure 122. View from *óæðra ǫndvegi*. 434
Figure 123. Þingvellir National Park. 435
Figure 124. Blackbird's Studio C in Nashville. 436
Figure 125. Smoke hole at the reconstructed dwelling at Stöng. 437
Figure 126. Possible site for Óláfr's *eldhús* at Hjarðarholt. 438
Figure 127. Stones at a possible site for Óláfr's *eldhús* at Hjarðarholt. 439
Figure 128. Photo of contemporary farm at Hjarðarholt. 440
Figure 129. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarvings looking east. 441
Figure 130. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarvings looking north. 441
Figure 131. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarvings ambling west. 442
Figure 132. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarvings looking west. 442

List of Animations

Animation 1. *Dyrehodestolpe* #174: A shape-shifting simulacrum.
Animation 2. Hypothetical Prototype of Óðinn Mask in Hlaðir ca. 985.
Animation 3. Oseberg prow as a source for woodcarvings described in stanza 2.
Animation 4. Stone carvings as sources for hypothetical patterns on wood frames.
Animation 5. Stone carvings as sources for the depictions of Heimdallr and Loki.
Animation 6. Hypothetical depictions of waves as the nine mothers of Heimdallr.
Animation 7. Details of wood-carved kidney shapes based on the kenning *hafnýra fǫgru*.
Animation 8. Woodcarving of Þórr's fishing expedition as a portal to the landscape.

General Introduction:

A close reading of the events in what is referred to in the transcripts as chapter 29 of *Laxdæla saga* provides few clues to the origin of the carvings described in the poem *Húsdrápa*. Óláfr pái simply announces to his wife Þorgerðr, without giving her any reason, that he intends to go abroad. That summer he buys a ship, sails east to Norway and lands in Hǫrðaland. Óláfr is greeted by a "retired" Viking named Geirmundr, who has settled down and become a follower of Hákon jarl inn ríki. Óláfr spends the winter with Geirmundr; he is well entertained and taken care of. It is only when spring approaches that Óláfr speaks of the purpose of his voyage: it is of the greatest importance that he find a prime selection of timber. Geirmundr responds by telling him that Hákon jarl has the best forest around. According to the saga text, that spring Óláfr requests permission from Hákon jarl to cut lumber, and the favor is granted:

> Óláfr segir jarli, hversu af stózk um ferð hans, - „vil ek þess beiða yðr, herra, at þér létið oss heimila mǫrk yðra at hǫggva húsavið." Jarl svarar: „Ósparat skal þat, þóttú fermir skip þitt af þeim viði, er vér munum gefa þér, því at vér hyggjum, at oss sœki eigi heim hversdagliga slíkir menn af Íslandi." (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 78)
>
> Olaf told the earl the reasons for his voyage. "I would like to request permission to cut lumber in your forest, my lord."
> The earl replied: "It's an honour for me to fill your ship with wood from the forest, as it is not every day we receive guests like you from Iceland." (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 39)

What does it involve to be granted permission to cut wood in the forest? Surely there is more to the story. Óláfr is ready to return to Iceland that summer. The next thing we learn from the saga is that he loads his ship, and at parting the king gives him an inlaid axe. As is usual in sagas, the account of the voyage is very abbreviated given everything that must have taken place during that year. Reading between the lines, there are many questions regarding the acquisition of the lumber. When Óláfr seeks out Hákon jarl what else does he come across at the Hlaðir settlement? What state is the timber in when he sets sail? What else does he bring back with him?

By the following winter, Óláfr has built a new *eldhús*[1], "fire-house" i.e. "hall or sitting room", at Hjarðarholt. Backing up a little, in chapter 24, Óláfr and his wife Þorgerðr had recently married and were living with relatives. Óláfr's foster-father, Þórðr goddi, took ill and died. Óláfr took over the farm at Goddastaðir and soon became an important chieftain. It is mentioned that among his household were three good carpenters, two brothers Án inn hvíti and Án svarti, along with Beinir inn sterki. The saga text states: *þessir váru smiðar Óláfs ok allir hraustir menn* (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 66). "They were Óláfr's (wood) smiths and strong men." To be called *smiðar* could imply that they were very talented, but we learn nothing more about their skills or accomplishments as carpenters or woodcarvers. Óláfr purchased some adjoining land, and using wood from the meager forest and driftwood, the mention of these men indicates they helped him build the first dwelling on the parcel, and he named the farm Hjarðarholt. Following Óláfr's

[1] The 'fire-house', i.e. *the hall* or *parlour*, one of the chief rooms in ancient dwellings, where the fire was kept up, used synonomously with eldaskáli, but opp. to stofa, *the ladies' room* (Cleasby Vigfusson 1969: 125).

return from Norway in chapter 29, with these carpenters still in his household, it is conceivable that they could have, with the rest of the farm laborers, during the course of a few months put together a better hall with the new choice supply of wood. However, the saga text in *Laxdæla saga* adds: *Þat sumar lét Óláfr gera eldhús í Hjarðarholti, meira ok betra en menn hefði fyrr sét*. "That summer Olaf had a fire-hall built at Hjardarholt which was larger and grander than men had ever seen before" (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 79, *Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 39). That is a very strong statement. According to other sagas, during the hundred plus years of settlement up to the time in question many wealthy chieftains had built structures in Iceland, several out of wood imported from Norway. Furthermore, many Icelanders were well-travelled and would have had the opportunity to have seen some of the finest architecture of the period.

The saga writer tells us why the fire-hall was so remarkable: *Váru þar markaðar ágætligar sǫgur á þilviðinum ok svá á ræfrinu; var þat svá vel smíðat, at þá þótti miklu skrautligra, er eigi váru tjǫldin uppi* (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 79). "There were carved excellent tales on the paneling and ceiling; it was so well crafted, that it was thought much more magnificent when the wall hangings were not up." The writer uses two verbs to describe how decorative tales were pictured in Óláfr's *eldhús*. Among other meanings the one used here, *marka*, translates to "mark" or "sketch". The other verb, *skrifa*, translates to "draw" or "paint". However, in this case most scholars and translators concur that *váru markaðar* and *váru skrifaðar* should be taken to mean "were carved", and that woodcarvings illustrated mythic scenes.

Hence, the testimony of *Laxdæla saga* indicates Óláfr's *eldhús* was particularly well crafted, and all the more so because it was decorated with fine woodcarvings as described by Úlfr Uggason in the poem *Húsdrápa*. But what could have been the source of such specialized craftsmanship? In part one of this dissertation, remnants of woodcarvings and iconography from Viking Age Scandinavia are examined, and how the tradition would have shaped the appearance of woodcarvings in the halls of Hákon jarl inn ríki at Hlaðir. Not only would Óláfr have been influenced by what he saw when he arrived there in the late tenth century, but it is quite possible that Óláfr could have acquired the woodcarvings together with the house timbers while he was in Norway. Parallel to the visual attributes, the social relations surrounding the art objects informed by literature, myth and legend are explored in order to provide a background that contextualizes and explains the function and meaning of the woodcarvings in Viking Age culture. In the second part, the focus moves to the legendary diaspora and settlement of Iceland as it relates to woodcarvings and material culture. This is followed by an examination of the woodcarving tradition seen in remains from Iceland and consideration of the possibility that the carpenters at Hjarðarholt not only assembled the hall, but also that they produced the carvings based on models of mythological scenes. Had this been the situation, in view of the amount of time it took for the hall to be completed according to *Laxdæla saga,* and based on archaeological finds, the resulting carvings would have been executed quite differently. The case studies of *Húsdrápa* in part two synthesize the contextual background provided in part one with additional source material from archaeological finds and literature in order to provide analysis and hypothetical reproductions of the woodcarvings lost from the decay of the *eldhús* in Hjarðarholt. An emphasis is placed on the societal relations that inform and are involved with the wood-carved objects depicting myths and the poem describing them. Prior to concluding part two, a look at the woodcarvings as an integral part of the hall presents a synthesis of how the material dwelling and its content reflected the cultural/mythical underpinnings of Old Norse society.

Part 1: Background and contexts of woodcarving and iconography in Scandinavia

Introduction: Qualities of Viking Age woodcarving and iconography

What did the mythic iconographic depictions in Óláfr's hall look like? As a method for fashioning hypothetical models, I use the term "multimodal archaeology" metaphorically as an excavation across time and space which examines layers of extant sources from both literature and material culture. Scholars have conducted analysis and identification of artifactual remains in relation to literary sources since the inception of these fields, and for this study previous observations are referenced when known. For this dissertation, interdisciplinary interpretations are synthesized more specifically to produce hypothetical prototypes of the mythological scenes described by the poem *Húsdrápa*. In part one, examples are presented primarily from the areas of present day Norway; however, the study is expanded in the second part to include applicable sources and iconography from Iceland and all of Northern Europe. Yet, this approach embraces the gaps in the corpus as much as it is inclusive of as many archival remnants that may be discovered. In this sense, a multimodal archaeology is a creative project which animates forms based on static instances - a morphology that does not claim to be definitive yet presents synthesized models based on scholarly research. In addition, this study is not only concerned with the appearance of iconography as it is understood that the inherent qualities of artifacts go hand in hand with form. It is assumed that the woodcarvings are not just decorative art, but they also are imbued with a certain social agency, i.e. the objects influence and interact with people and are thereby relational (Gell 1998, Hedeager 2011, Helmbrecht 2011). Hence, the examination of the Norse Viking Age stylistic depiction of iconography is not merely taxonomic. The integration of comparative anthropology in the investigation helps uncover how the function of mythic representations merges with their appearance (Gell 1998, Helms 1993). When using Old Norse literature the term multimodal is again useful, as extant sources present a range of verisimilitude in regard to historic accuracy. A blend of oral tradition and written record presented by early medieval saga redactors relating the events of the pre-Christian era presents a complex picture of legend, myth and historiography, and each scene must be considered on an individual basis with varying degrees of skepticism. More credence is granted to skaldic poetry as an untainted contemporary source for events and cultural accuracy, and indeed this study would not emerge based on *Laxdæla saga* if it were not for the verses of *Húsdrápa* preserved by Snorri in his *Edda*. Presented in the following pages of part one is the backdrop for a closer look at the poem with due consideration of these multimodal factors.

As arranged by Finnur Jónsson in *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, *Húsdrápa* consists of twelve extant verses (Finnur 1908: 128-30). While the poem is discussed in detail in part two of the dissertation, a brief summary of the mythic content carved on the walls of Óláfr's *eldhús* described by Úlfr is warranted here in order to keep in mind the relevance of the following background information. It is assumed that the reader is familiar with Norse mythology - it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an overall exposition of the sources, but these are available in translation and there are innumerable summaries, guides and commentaries in print. It is not possible to know how many verses may be missing or how Úlfr arranged them. Finnur has chosen the first and last verses as bookends introducing and closing the poem. They refer reflexively to the gift of the mead of poetry used as praise for Óláfr and his hall. Kennings, circumlocutions used as noun substitutions, frequently indicate who or what is

being referenced in the poem (Clunies Ross 2005: 107-10). Hence, it can be determined that stanza two describes a contest between the trickster god Loki and the watchman of the gods, Heimdallr, over a mythic ornament understood to be Freyja's necklace, the *Brísingamen*. The struggle takes place at Singasteinn, arguably a piece of land in the sea. When Snorri describes this scene he adds that they were in the shape of seals (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19). Verses three through six refer to another mythic struggle, this one Þórr's fishing expedition where he hooks Jǫrmungandr, the world serpent, and in this version smashes its head off. Another figure present is the *jǫtunn*, giant, Hymir. Verses seven through eleven describe Baldr's funeral. Several gods and deities are included: Freyr on his golden boar, Óðinn and Heimdallr riding toward the funeral pyre built on Baldr's ship, Valkyries and ravens along with "berserks" and the giantess Hyrrokkin. When Snorri tells the tale he has her mounted on a wolf using vipers for reins. Her magical powers are apparently needed to push out Baldr's ship, Hringhorni, that serves as his pyre. Baldr's wife Nanna dies of grief and is placed on the funeral ship along with Draupnir, a gold ring, and Baldr's horse. Snorri also by name includes Þórr with his hammer Mjǫllnir and the goddesses Frigg and Freyja. *Hrímþursar*, "Rime-giants"[2] and *bergrisar*, "mountain-giants"[3] were there along with a dwarf named Litr (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 46-7). Indeed, by Snorri's mention of the additional Æsir and other deities present, one gets the impression that an entire collection of Norse mythological entities attended and took part in the funeral procession. Since Óðinn's son Baldr was so revered by all beings, one could imagine that a woodcarving of the scene could potentially depict any assortment of mythical Norse deities and creatures along with an array of mythic/numinous objects. Therefore, the appearance and attributes of a broad selection of Viking Age art is considered pertinent to this study and included in the background information provided in the following pages of the dissertation.

In the first sections the background of Norwegian Viking Age woodcarving and iconography from archaeological finds is explored in conjunction with Old Norse primary literary sources found in poetry and the sagas along with secondary source criticism. From the research, it is possible to formulate an idea of how the halls at Hlaðir may have appeared during the residence of Hákon jarl inn ríki. The saga text of *Laxdæla saga* does not delve further into the actual conditions of the lumber or the origins of the carvings. Just who the woodcarvers of Óláfr's *eldhús* were is a mystery, but in his article “Die Húsdrápa von Úlfr Uggason und die bildliche Überlieferung altnordischer Mythen”, Kurt Schier makes an argument that the origin of the mythic content engraved on the panels stem from the area surrounding Hákon jarl’s sphere of influence around Trondheimsfjord (Schier 1976). Following this reasoning, the carved parts of the *eldhús* also may have been acquired by Óláfr pái while he was in Norway. If that was the case, the carvings would have been created with the particular attributes characteristic of the craftsmanship displayed at Hlaðir. The earls of Hlaðir had many court skalds, and examining their verse reveals a lot about the belief system circulating around Trondheimsfjord during the time of Óláfr's visit and also provides clues to the appearance and qualities of the carvings that must have been present. Expanding on Schier, the mythological lineage and connections with the earls of Hlaðir is explored in depth as revealed in poetry and the sagas of the kings. Scholarship involving ideology and right to rule is brought forward with an emphasis on the religious roles of leaders (Steinsland 2011, Nordeide 2011, Schjødt 2010, Bagge, Nordeide 2007, Berend 2007, Skre 1998, Blom 1997, Bagge 1991) plus the function, and appearance of, sacred spaces

[2] Hrím-þursar m. pl. '*Rime-Giants,*' (Cleasby 1969: 286) Also, *frost-giants* (Zoëga 1952)
[3] berg-risi m. '*a hill-giant*' (Cleasby 1969: 60) bergrisar m. pl.

(Sundqvist 2014, Munch 2003, Gunnell 2001). The notion that the carvers had a workshop in the Strinda district and were craftsmen functioning as part of Hákon jarl's court is explored, or it is also possible that Hákon jarl had woodcarvings brought to his halls from some distance away. Since no Norse carvers are specifically mentioned by name during this period in extant sources, a broader look at Norse woodcarving craftsmanship is taken in order to provide a background for the origins and appearance of the woodcarvings (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993, Shetelig 1920, Hall 2007, Rácz 1970, Lidén 1969, Lindholm 1969, Kildal 1961, Kusch 1964). Indeed, there is a void of wood-carved material from Hlaðir during the period in question. Therefore, Norse woodcarvings and other iconographic representations that date prior to and after the late tenth century are studied in order to consider a synthesis of designs. Even though this is not a national study, most of the material presented in the first sections is from within the boundaries of present day Norway - partially to impose some restrictions on the scope of part one, but also due to the extent of the woodcarving tradition located within that geographical area. However, it is evident from archaeological finds that extensive trade exposed crafts persons to far-reaching influences and this factor is taken into consideration (Skre 2011, Storli 2006, Ament 2005). During the discussion of *Húsdrápa* in part two, more iconographic depictions from varying locations around Northern Europe that would have influenced the woodcarvers in question are brought forward in order to provide specific examples related to the mythic representations of the poem.

The first section of part one re-examines the Oseberg excavation and the rich assortment of wood-carved artifacts and tapestries from the ninth century burial ship. Objects from other Viking Age grave mounds and archaeological building sites are also taken into consideration. Craftsmen in the post-conversion era maintained a woodcarving tradition that continued to feature pre-Christian motifs seen on the portals and other furnishings of wooden stave churches dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993, Shetelig 1920, Hall 2007, Hauglid 1976, Rácz 1970, Lidén 1969, Lindholm 1969, Kildal 1961, Kusch 1964). Combined, these remains permit an exposition of craftsmanship, technique and a Norse mode of designs, both aniconic, i.e. patterns or figures that do not represent living forms normally seen in the world, and iconographic, those representing anthropomorphic and recognizable species, designs. Among other factors leadership and sacral rule relate these objects to the halls at Hlaðir, and by the journey of the house timber brought to Iceland by Óláfr, to the formation of the woodcarvings referred to in *Húsdrápa*. Both archaeological finds and multiple Old Norse literary sources indicate that specialized crafts in the Viking Age were understood to mediate sacred qualities (Helmbrecht 2011, Hedeager 2011, Neiß 2009, Storli 2006, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006, Munch 2003, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993, Kildal 1961). *Landnámabók* and the sagas of the Icelanders are an interesting blend of, to varying degrees, historic figures performing legendary deeds in mythic contexts, and material culture, including woodcarvings, are part of the literary devices that present and to some extent reveal, even if in an indirect way, the belief systems of pre-Christian Nordic societies. Often using Snorri as a guide, albeit critically in combination with other sources and scholarship (Nordeide 2011, Bagge, Nordeide 2007, Berend 2007, Skre 1998, Blom 1997, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993, Bagge 1991), *Heimskringla* and other sagas of the kings are used as a chronological pathway in order to map this background information relevant to the contextualization of the appearance and qualities of woodcarvings during the Viking Age in relation to the instances that became manifest in Óláfr's *eldhús* at Hjarðarholt.

1.1 Oseberg burial ship and woodcarvings revisited

Archaeological finds throughout the landscape of present day Norway demonstrate that during the Viking Age there was a rich tradition of production of both everyday objects and ornate luxury goods made by highly skilled craftsmen. However, in most cases these artifacts are limited to metal, stone, glass, antler and other materials that could endure factors that lead to decay (Skre 2011). Fortunately, conditions were favorable enough, along with extensive and careful reconstruction, to preserve a plethora of wood-carved objects found in the Oseberg ship grave mound. On the basis of samples from what appears to be a hastily constructed grave chamber on board the ship, dendrochronology has dated the burial to ca. 834 (Bonde 1993: 581). Although the wood-carved items were made during a range of about 150 to 175 years earlier than the rule of Hákon jarl inn ríki, and they were produced in another part of the land, the woodcarvings provide the best clues and a good starting point for the investigation of wood-carved Norse goods. References are made throughout this dissertation to the applications of these wood-carved objects, the styles and ornament engraved on them, the techniques used and the resulting appearance of the carvings. It seems that in many cases the applied art was crafted with the intent for sacred use and/or purposes of magic (Helmbrecht 2011, Hedeager 2011, Neiß 2009, Storli 2006, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006, Munch 2003, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993, Kildal 1961). The cultural context in which these items were made, namely, the role of craftsmen, their clientele and all of the social relations involved with the objects, are case studies that provide important background for woodcarvings that must have existed in Hlaðir and ultimately for those described in Iceland by Úlfr in his poem *Húsdrápa*.

The ship burial site is located on the Lille Oseberg farm in Vestfold, Norway, a few kilometers north of the town of Tønsberg. (fig. 1) Knut Rom owned the farm in 1903. He dug a test hole into the mound and pulled out some wood-carved pieces. It was later revealed that he was not the first one to disturb the burial site. Grave robbers had at some point entered and removed the precious metals and stones, and in doing so broke up the skeletons of two women. Initial evaluation categorized one as quite old and stricken with arthritis and another younger with very few bones remaining other than a jaw with some teeth, but these views have been challenged. Just who these women were has been a source of debate and will perhaps never be determined. Their identity is generally relevant to this study as an investigation of woodcarving made for those of high status including the royal and aristocratic classes. Of particular interest, however, are their cult/religious roles connected to the use of the carvings. It is assumed that one of the women was a queen and perhaps a priestess (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993). Both of these possibilities are explored here while simultaneously examining some of the artifacts from the find in more detail. Additionally, archaeologists have attempted to identify these women and men covered in other burial mounds nearby using Old Norse literary sources from poetry and the kings' sagas. This approach has been met with varying degrees of skepticism, and in practice the method used by scholars is to point out the potential inadequacies of the information while simultaneously referring to the content (Nordeide 2011, Bagge, Nordeide 2007, Würth 2007, Clunies Ross 2005, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992, Bagge 1991, Jones 1984). With due diligence, this is the approach taken here. In subsequent sections, these sources are reviewed insofar as they can shed light regarding sacral rule of the Ynglings and Hlaðir jarls, and how the practices of rulers may have resulted in woodcarvings engraved in their halls.

A brief overview reveals the breadth of the woodcarvings in the find. The Oseberg burial ship is magnificently carved. (fig. 2) In addition to the forward and aft stems above the waterline, the adjacent parts of the gunwales are engraved. In the interior angles created by the *brandar*, the beaks of the ship, where the gunwales come together, are carved wedges that fill in the gaps along with triangular boards called *tingl*. Further down on the stems a board that spans the *brandar* is also decorated. Much of the top sections of the stems was not preserved and rotted away, but the prow terminated in a serpent head - the spiral had broken off and was able to be recovered (Shetelig 1920). (The stern of the ship has been reproduced to feature a spiral tail.) The ornament on the *brandar* is composed of interlaced serpent-like designs with heads in profile, however, on the triangular boards and the stem span there are some figures seen *en face* with more anthropomorphic shaped bodies. The Oseberg wagon that accompanied the ship is quite useful for this study because on two of the four panels forming the body it features human-like figures in relief that clearly depict some sort of scene. Each corner post of the wagon terminates in a sculpted human-like head, and the likeness of this head is also featured engraved on the front wagon truss. In addition, there are four sleds in the find that are carved with a variety of ornament and have corner posts with sculpted ends. Five animal-head posts, *dyrehodestolper*, of undetermined function were found in the burial. Two were found as a pair in the burial chamber. One had attached to it a set of iron rings that would "jingle" when shaken. It is quite likely that these posts, the ship and vehicles introduced above had a ceremonial purpose (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992, Grieg 1928). In addition, a variety of wooden items for household or farm use found on the ship have carved patterns, as do many "odds and ends" that cannot specifically be identified.

Previous scholarship about the Oseberg burial ship includes a large, five volume set of documentation that covers in detail the ship excavation, the cultural historic aspect of the miscellaneous items that formed a royal residence, the woodcarvings from an art history perspective, the data regarding the botanical and skeletal remains, and the textiles found in the site. The first volume was published in 1917 and the textile volume in 2006, 102 years after the excavation. The woodcarvings of the find were featured in Volume 3, which was published in 1920 and written by Haakon Shetelig. He was present during the excavation led by Swedish archaeologist Gabriel Gustafson, head of the Norwegian *Universitet Oldsaksamling*, in 1904. Shetelig asserted, as did other scholars of his time, that it must be Queen Ása, the mother of Hálfdan svarti and grandmother of Haraldr hárfagri, in the grave. He also imagined that no one matched her love for art, and that the articles were certainly made in Norway, if not on the farm: *Vi ser hun har elsket disse pragtfulde dekorative ting, og den eneste naturlige vei hun hadde til at øke sin samling, var at holde kunstnere i arbeide for sig*. (Shetelig 1920: 3). "We see she has loved these magnificent decorative things, and the only genuine way she had to increase her collection, was to have artists in her employment." Through meticulous study he ascertained that there were several craftsmen, and they were not all contemporaries or of equal skill. He asserted that several woodcarvers worked together over a phase of time, and during that period, some were exceptional and each influenced the others to varying degrees. His main goal was to delineate, within the discipline of art history, the developments made over the course of time in the style of the ornament and its production. He noted that the surface patterns appeared to have been learned and inherited. These common patterns created a connection between all the pieces in the find and pointed to a joint workshop or school of carving. He dubbed this school *Vestfoldskolen* after the geographical location. Shetelig went on to look in further detail at the

influence of personality within the school. Namely, in his opinion the woodcarvers were artists, not merely mechanical craftsmen. This volume was organized around the principle that the woodcarvings may be grouped into categories according to the technique and style employed by each artist determined by comparisons of form and composition (Shetelig 1920: 5-6).

While there are no extant carvings from Hlaðir and the Þrándheimr *fjǫrðr* area to examine in such detail, the Oseberg find and Shetelig's work are particularly important in support of the idea that artists of such high caliber existed, that they to some extent worked collaboratively, and if not in joint workshops they at least influenced one another to a visible degree. The idea of a queen as patron of the arts for art's sake is certainly debatable. Shetelig does not often consider the possible cult purposes of the carvings, nor that aspect of the woodcarvers' ability to manifest a religious/cult instrument or relate a mythic narrative. His purpose is art historic, and by judging the carvings solely on their artistic merit from a twentieth century perspective, he often does certain woodcarvers and their products little justice.

Shetelig identified as many as ten different woodcarvers. His use of terms like *Akademiker* and *Barokmesteren* in labeling the craftsmen gives away his early twentieth century orientation and evaluation of the work. He frequently stated his opinion that an artist was copying another object without really understanding it. He was quite emphatic at times with his opinions in judgment of the quality of the work by using derogatory terms such as *de daarlige senghestene*[4], and he often belittled the competence of some of the artists (Shetelig 1920: 52-3). By positioning himself knowing more about the art and its production than those who executed it, Shetelig's approach is dated and scarcely emic. However, his work with the artifacts was exhaustive, and his most valuable contributions stem from his keen eye for sorting out the details in the complex patterns seen in the ornament and distinguishing similarities and differences between the vast array of carvings in the find. These observations are helpful in identifying characteristics seen in the iconography, and anyone subsequently working with analysis of the woodcarvings must be very indebted to his scrutiny and catalog.

Published in 1992, *Osebergdronningens grav: vår arkeologiske nasjonalskatt i nytt lys*, contains more recent scholarship with the intent to present the history of the find, a summary of its contents and questions regarding the identity of the "Oseberg queen". Three contributors focus on their area of expertise: Arne Christiansen presents the events surrounding the excavation, the artifacts and a summary of Shetelig's work with the woodcarvings. Anne Stine Ingstad presents the textiles in the find, and based on her interpretations of the motifs seen in the tapestries and woodcarvings she offers her arguments as to who the women were in the burial ship. Bjørn Myhre presents a summary of the literature referred to by archaeologists when they attempt to identify the burial mounds in Vestfold, and he cites the doubt of some scholars regarding the reliability of using medieval literary sources for the purpose of connecting certain rulers to the grave occupants. This text is useful for contextualizing the significance of the Oseberg woodcarvings and textiles. Namely, there is a likelihood that the objects were used for ritual purposes, and the iconography can inform us about Norse belief systems in conjunction with cult activity.

[4] the bad "bed horses" is an awkward literal translation, better: the headboard rails that terminate in poorly executed carved horse heads.

More current scholarship focuses on the burial event and sheds new light on the ages of the women when they died. Dendrochronology indicates that the grave chamber was built the summer of 834 (Bonde 1993). How long the grave had been open has been debated, and the most recent conclusions tend to verify the initial proposal that the site was prepared rather quickly during late summer/early fall and the actual covering of the mound was that fall (Nordeide 2011). The dating of the skeletal remains has been revisited with results that indicate the younger woman in the grave was not 20 - 30 years old as originally determined. The excellent condition of her teeth, which misled earlier forensics, was apparently not due to youth but the type of food she ate and because she cleaned them with a metal pick. By examining the root growth of her teeth, however, her age when she died is now considered to be quite a bit older, 50 - 55 years. The skeleton remains of the other woman have been consistently dated to about 60 -70 years or even older (Houlk 2006). A re-evaluation of the dating of the age of death of the women in the chamber does not provide final answers for their identity because it cannot be decisively determined which historic persons would have terminated their lives at the time of the burial. The focus in this dissertation is less concerned with linking historic rulers with specific artifacts, rather, more emphasis is placed on the representation of myth and legend in Old Norse literature referenced and expressed through material culture. Exactly who the people in the burial(s) were is less important than the social role they would have fulfilled. This issue and their identity are further addressed below, but first a more detailed description and survey of the relevant woodcarvings and their significance.

Oseberg style and ornament

Most striking about the appearance of the Oseberg burial ship woodcarvings are the swarming, intertwined elongated band-like bodies with terminating heads, limbs and tendrils. These patterns developed in many stages from what is referred to as Germanic *Tierornamentik*, an animal ornament style influenced by Late-Roman models dating from the Migration period and established in Scandinavia around the second half of the fifth century. Also called the Merovingian, or Vendel styles, the so-called animal style developed into a particular Nordic taste, and countless artifacts demonstrate a continuum of ornament through both time, several hundred years, and of widespread appearance throughout Northern Europe (Ament 2005). While some of the features discussed below are unique to the find, perhaps what warrants the recognition of a particular Oseberg style is the application of a range of *Tierornamentik* features seen elsewhere in other media, but here on a wide variety of wood-carved artifacts.

Some of the ornament is referred to as zoomorphic, i.e. having or representing animal forms or gods of animal form. Indeed, the figures feature animal, serpent-like heads when seen in profile. On the art objects it is also possible to recognize, albeit highly stylized, beaks indicating bird heads, wings and limbs. Art historians and archaeologists tend to make a clear distinction between these figures and the later influx of vegetative scroll designs from the European continent during post-conversion (Helmbrecht 2011, Hedeager 2011, Neiß 2009, Storli 2006, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006, Wilson 2005, 1966, Ament 2005, Munch 2003, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993, Kildal 1961). However, it is also possible to observe in Nordic pre-Christian art, through the abstraction of extremities forming vine-like shapes, a botanic element in the designs. Therefore, the term *biomorphic* could be more appropriate in describing certain figures (although

not in the sense of the modern art movement by the same name.) When it is deemed appropriate, the definition used here is: having or representing biological forms or gods of biological form.

Methods for interpretation of Viking Age iconography vary from restraint due to concerns for lack of any certain evidence (Ament 2005, Wilson 2005) to deductive theories based on contextual analysis. Common to the approach used in this study are, once again, identifying potential mythic figures and scenes based on literary sources. References by scholars are frequently made comparing intricate forms of skaldic poetry and the complexity of Viking Age designs (Lie 1982, Domeij 2006, Hedeager 2011, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006, Helmbrecht 2011, Kristoffersen 2010, Neiß 2009, Wicker 2003). Also important, as is emphasized here, is the relationship between the art object and the iconography that is applied to the item (Helmbrecht 2011). More specifically, ornament should be interpreted in context with the possible functions of the illustrated object. Problematic factors include the potential arbitrary nature of the sign across time and space. The same image may mean something quite different to different cultures based on particular conventions (Refrew 1991). While certain prototypes may have served for an adaptation, e.g. from Late-Roman influencing the Germanic, the resulting representation certainly took on new semantic qualities reflecting the resident societal worldview (Helmbrecht 2011). *Tierornamentik* became established as a distinctive Nordic style. In Scandinavia, iconography would fit different religious outlooks in pre-Christian and post-conversion contexts. Otherwise, there appears to have been a certain amount of cultural consistency in Viking Age Scandinavian society, so temporally and spatially there are degrees of variation in iconic significance. Where no literary sources are of aid in interpretation, cognitive archaeology, in particular for this study an archaeology of religion, is helpful in identifying cult and ritual activities and the symbols that accompany these practices. For example, artifacts may be identified as having sacred qualities based on features of the locations in which they have been found. Some of these include distinct terrain, special fixtures seen in architectural excavations and the redundancy and abundance of certain goods at a site. Sacrificial and votive remains may indicate that the practice of reverence of a deity took place. (Renfrew 1991). Anthropological studies, both local to the Nordic region and comparative, provide clues to interpretations of Viking Age iconography (Hastrup 1985, Gell 1998, Helms 1993). In particular, an anthropological theory of art provides insight into how other cultures perceive decorative and figurative designs which may be applied to the relational qualities of Nordic woodcarvings (Gell 1998). While this is not an exhaustive list, these and other methods and the scholars who have applied them are cited and further employed in this study.

Frequently seen on the Oseberg wood-carved artifacts are "gripping beasts" - creatures that are linked by grasping each other, themselves and the borders of the areas that contain them. These figures are seen on a variety of Nordic artifacts primarily dating from the ninth and tenth centuries (Helmbrecht 2011). However, this common feature engraved on the abundance of woodcarvings quantitatively links the gripping beast to the Oseberg style. When seen in profile, the faces of the figures are serpent-like or animal in form along with zoomorphic/biomorphic bodies. When seen *en face,* the heads are often human-like, yet the figures retain a variety of body shapes - ranging from quite abstract biomorphic or animal to anthropomorphic. As a result, some scholars have interpreted these figures as being in a state of shape-shifting and have associated them with the Norse gods capable of the feat. In addition, it has been argued with varying opinions that the gripping beast and interwoven patterns were intended to possess

magical qualities, such as the apotropaic function of "binding" malevolent forces or their use as a spell-"binding" affect against enemies as aid in battle (Hedeager 2011, Neiß 2009, Roy 2009, Domeij 2006, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006, Helmbrecht 2011). These quite evident observations and additional interpretations are expanded upon in the examination of the Oseberg carvings below. Indeed, the designs provide the impression of being inspired by, and growing out of, worldly forms and morphing into idealized "other-worldly" entities. Such a hybrid suggests they were intended as threshold beings occupying the liminal space between the material and spirit worlds. These intuitive impressions also receive scholarly support based on work done in comparative anthropology.

Alfred Gell proposed an anthropological theory of art that shifts the emphasis from a study of aesthetics to the influence of objects as participants in social relations. His work includes the psychological effect of patterns and perception in regard to decorative art, and art involving religious practices, including representative art and idolatry. (Although Gell acknowledges that idolatry has been used as a pejorative word, he prefers to use the term in a neutral manner rather than resorting to a vague or misleading circumlocution (Gell 1998: 96)). Central to his thesis is the argument that art objects as indices are social agents, and he provides the following definition:

> Agency is attributable to those persons (and things, see below) who/which are seen as initiating causal sequences of a particular type, that is, events caused by acts of mind or will or intention, rather than the mere concatenation of physical events. (Gell 1998: 16)

Gell argues that the "other" in a social relationship does not need to be a "human being". Part of the agency exhibited by art objects is due to the will or intention that people project onto "things". Hence, artifacts may be considered "secondary" rather than "primary" agents, but through social interaction objects nevertheless directly influence events. This "objectification" is manifested through complex relations between artist, prototype and recipient. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to present all the convincing arguments that Gell uses to build his claim, but when applicable, examples are brought to the fore that help clarify both his theory and provide support for the ideas presented in the following pages.

Interpretation of the wood-carved Oseberg ship

The Oseberg ship in parts and whole is an excellent example of art and agency. The vessel was not extremely seaworthy, so it was certainly not used in battle or for longer voyages. It was more likely put into operation for short trips around Vík, the waters of present day Oslo fjord. Given its ornate appearance, it is assumed that it was implemented for ceremonial purposes prior to use as a burial ship (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992). In that case, the carved figures, if they were to have had any influence, were not likely placed there to assist in victories by intimidating enemies. As Arne Christiansen points to in other carved artifacts, the figures may have had an apotropaic function, i.e. having the power to ward off evil or destructive powers (1992, see also Helmbrecht 2011, Roy 2009, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006). By means of comparison, a closer look leads to additional possibilities. For example, consider the first thing people would see as the ship approached the shore. The spiral dragon head would dominate the

view followed by the "gripping beast" patterns on the beaks of the ship, *brandar,* that extend up the stems of both the bow and stern of the vessel. Even if the Viking Age populace were familiar with this type of vessel, the ornate ship must have struck them with a sense of awe. It is interesting to compare Trobriand canoe prow-boards in this instance. The boards are richly carved and painted, and they are used to gain psychological advantage in Kula trading expeditions. They are the first thing seen when a fleet arrives, and their purpose is to demoralize and weaken the position of their trading partners during bargaining. The efficacy of the boards is due to the magical properties they are understood to embody (Gell 1998: 69, 1999). Gell refers to this social affect as "captivation" because the superior display of artistic agency creates an inequality between the producers and the spectators. But how is this effect visually produced?

In the case of the intricately woven "gripping beast" carvings on the stem of the Oseberg ship, one reason for a similar captivation can be explained by the effect of the pattern. (fig. 2.a.) At this juncture one might consider if the carvings featured on the *brandr* are iconic or aniconic. The combination of figures results in both qualities - the serpent-like forms, even though they do not resemble any certain biological organism are not lifeless geometric shapes, yet the linear repetition of the theriomophic (of animal form, especially of a deity) or biomorphic figures produces an, albeit not entirely symmetrical, patterned arrangement. Essentially, the factors inherent to patterns produce "salient visual properties" through repetition and symmetry of parts that lend them the appearance of being animated as a whole. The effect is mesmerizing as the eye gets lost while following particularly complex pattern arrangements. This observation is an explanation for how the apotropaic use of patterns may be understood, such as "protective devices, defensive screens or obstacles impeding passage" (Gell 1998: 83). The enemy, or a supernatural demon is "bound" by the web of the design by being lost in the complexity of the design (see also Helmbrecht 2011, Roy 2009, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006). Yet, for the Oseberg ship, if indeed a queen with priestess-like standing (see below) were sailing ashore, it is unlikely the carvings would be needed to ward off evil. Rather, the mesmerizing effect might be used conversely, more similarly to the Tobriand prow intended to demoralize the trading partner, in this case to attract, subordinate and impress upon the populace the elevated stature of the queen within the vessel.

The overall animated effect of the ship is perhaps most significantly achieved by the serpent-like terminating head of the stem. (fig. 2.b.) *Landnámabók* indicates that the sculpted wooden heads adorning some Viking Age vessels had a supernatural effect:

> Þat var upphaf hinna heiðnu laga, at menn skyldu eigi hafa hǫfuðskip í haf, en ef þeir hefði, þá skyldi þeir af taka hǫfuð, áðr þeir kœmi í landsýn, ok sigla eigi at landi með gapandi hǫfðum eða gínandi trjónum, svá at landvættir fælisk við. (1986 : 313)
>
> That was in the beginning of the heathen laws, that men should not have "head-ships" (i.e. *dreki*: a ship of war bearing a "dragon's" head as an ornament on the prow) upon the ocean, but if they did, then they should take off the head, before they came in sight of land, and not sail to land with a gaping head or gaping snout, such that the "land-wights" became frightened.

Indeed, the heads were the most salient features of ships adorned with them and must have given the impression of the vessels as gigantic, powerful beasts. In the case of warships, the heads were likely intended to demoralize and frighten the enemy, and this could affect everyone including warriors or even preternatural beings such as "land wight" spirits. However, for a ceremonial ship this would hardly be the intention, and the spiral head must have had some other significance. Here, some of Gell's observations of the nature of art and idolatry are pertinent. As representations, idols may be understood as a part to a whole and therefore form a relation to the agency of a deity. While in practice some idols may be "aniconic", such as a stone or plain piece of wood, of primary focus in idolatry are anthropomorphic or biomorphic figures. Initially his discussion of a "distributed person" includes mimesis and sorcery, volt sorcery and sympathetic along with contact magic. These aspects, most likely familiar to the reader, are discussed further below, but in regard to the ship, and more specifically the terminating serpent heads, practices of mimesis lead to a philosophical discussion. To this means, Gell cites the Epicurean theory of "flying simulacra" and the philosophical doctrine of emanations presented by Lucretius, who explained the existence of idols stemming from layers that peel off the surfaces of things. Lucretius provided examples of physical shedding, such as skins of snakes, and reasoned by analogy that a thin image must emanate from all things off their surfaces. It followed, according to this doctrine, that people are able to see objects due to the simulacra discharged and flying outwards striking the eyes, and hence we feel them with our senses (Gell 1998: 105). What interests Gell is how this understanding of perception that allows access to things through their image is comparable to the reception of some physical part of them. Before considering the relationship between the appearance of the Oseberg ship, its serpent heads, and how these objects may have been perceived, some more current philosophical views are relevant.

In his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram develops many of his ideas based on the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. As Abram expresses it, the mind is not a separate self from the biological vehicle it resides in, but both are unified as a sentient subject. The body is necessary for experiencing the world comprised of other subjects. This definition of body is not the objectified mechanical body of medical science, but an integrated, sensuous, experiencing being with a permeable interactive membrane (Abram 1996: 46). Particularly relevant to this study are Merleau-Ponty's writings about sensorial perception. In particular, Abram cites Merleau-Ponty's remarks about synaesthesia: the overlap and entwining of the senses. Our vision, hearing, and abilities to smell, taste and touch merge in various ways as we move our attention and focus on various elements in our surroundings. He describes perception as reciprocity – a dialog of the senses between the animal body and the living landscape. Neither the perceiver nor the perceived is passive in the relationship. If there were no entities to regard in such a way, there would be no experience. Conversely, with such an awareness of the impact of the environment and by having an intimate dialog with it, things are perceived as alive and animated. Within the experience of synaesthesia there is a primary layer that precedes the division of the senses, where a certain crossover may occur. Hence, in a dialog with our surroundings we may experience "hearing" a rock or being "touched" by a tree. Framed in such a way there is a stress on relationship, and how we relate has a profound impact on our surroundings and ourselves (Abram 1996: 59–62). Merleau-Ponty writes:

> This formulation is literally meaningless if vision is defined by the visual quale, and the sound by the acoustic quale. But it rests with us to word our definition in

> such a way as to provide it with a meaning, since the sight of sounds and the hearing of colours exist as phenomena. Nor are these even exceptional phenomena. Synaesthetic perception is the rule, and we are unaware of it only because scientific knowledge shifts the centre of gravity of experience, so that we have unlearned how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel, in order to deduce, from our bodily organization and the world as the physicist conceives it, what we are to see, hear and feel (Merleau-Ponty 2006: 266).

In view of this synaesthetic mode of perception, the term "idol worship" and the pejorative connotation it implies is really a misnomer, and what actually occurs is more like a relationship with an object in which the intersubjectivity that is experienced is a form of social interaction. This is brought to the fore not to assert any certain religious world-view, rather, in order to frame the cultural context of the Oseberg woodcarvings. It is quite possible that for the pre-Christian, pre-industrialized peoples during the Viking Age as part of daily life this type of merging with the "other" was an active part of consciousness.

An example provided by Gell regarding the Hindu worship of images helps tie these thoughts together. *Darshan* is a particular type of blessing consisting of a "gift of appearance" obtained by a god. It is conveyed through the eyes, and it is imagined as a material transfer. It is very much a two-way street involving the "taking" by the recipient, yet the gaze directed by the god transmits the blessing. Touch is emphasized, and an analogy is presented between seeing and the use of a stick by the blind. In this practice, a tactile form of agency is exchanged through an intersubjective physical bridge. However, the eyes are highlighted as orifices that channel the union. An "image-as-mirror" effect takes place where the devotee sees the god seeing him, so therefore the object/index sees. That is, the worshipper sees himself as the object seen by the god, and the cycle of seeing and being seen reinforces the experience of engaging with an animated "other" (Gell 1998: 116-21).

With this in mind, let us return to the serpent head of the Oseberg ship. (fig. 2b) The top of the stem terminates in a dominating spiral form, which as previously mentioned would be the salient feature of the ship as it approached land. In the case of this Viking ship, it is not a fierce-looking "dragon" head at all. The spiral is sparsely covered in symmetrical s-shaped incisions that resemble scales on a snake. A narrow engraved band separates the body of the spiral form from the roughly circular, relatively small head in the terminating center of the spiral. From afar, the circular center resembles a single eye. From a closer view of the remains of the partially rotted wood on the center circle, it is possible to detect two, round and simple in shape, but very captivating eyes on what is clearly intended as a face of the creature. The only embellishment consists of flame shaped engravings extending above each eye giving the impression of sockets or lids. It is interesting to consider the choice of motif. The serpent features the type of snake skin that would be shed - a very literal representation of the emanating type of animation from an object as described by Lucretius. In addition, the eyes situated in the center of the spiral may be considered the loci of the ship. They beckon the observer to consider it a living entity and serve both as a mirror in the intersubjective exchange of the person onshore and the ship, and as a portal to the interiority of the vessel.

When regarding a person or art as an object of social agency, it is assumed that the external qualities exhibited reflect some sort of inner mental workings or psyche. While a human being or representational object through its appearance may fulfill every external expectation of consciousness, it is not possible to tangibly represent the states of internal thoughts, mind or soul. Nevertheless, when a stone or piece of wood is manipulated to exhibit eyes, mouth, etc. these orifices may be seen to allow access to interiority, i.e. the "invisible mind". In regard to the agency of the art object, one of Gell's arguments is "that the indexical form of the mind/body contrast, is primordially spatial and concentric: the mind is 'internal' enclosed, surrounded, by something (the body) that is non-mind." These ideas point to an art object as an ark, an external vessel which contains "a locus of agency" (Gell 1998: 126-31). The material and sacral presence of the Oseberg ship dovetails nicely with Gell's observations. Particularly enticing is the notion that there are multiple layers of openings betwixt and between interior and exterior states materially represented by the art object in the form of wood-carved orifices seen in the iconography.

The woodcarvings on the vessel may be viewed as openings transposing interiority/exteriority from the smallest details, the microcosmic, to the macrocosm of its hull suggesting a sacred whole and the presence of a social agent. Taking another look at the carvings on the *brandr*, this time as primarily representational art, the serpent-like bodies are covered with tiny chip-carved rhombic or brick-like patterns that are likely intended to represent scales. (fig. 2.a.) The patterns both metonymically and visually animate the figures. As described above, scales, periodically sloughed from the body, represent emanations. The layers that make up the skin may be viewed as concentric layers not only shedding but also as multiple strata that lead inward. The contours of the chip-carving additionally create thousands of minute physical orifices offering entry to the figures as parts of the whole. The interwoven bodies have heads terminating on necks that often duplicate the spiral dominating the top of the stem. Hence, they appear to be the same type of creature in miniature, albeit with elongated snouts and tendril extensions. The eyes on the heads beckon engagement, but these figures feature two heart-shaped openings, neither of which seem derived from a body seen in nature, that are salient and central to the design. These orifices are located where the upper and lower limbs branch out - perhaps indicating bird or dragon-like wings that separate out from the breast and the groin areas of the figures. Nevertheless, these openings as carved are encapsulated by the surrounding body and are apertures. The upper orifice is located in the chest cavity, which is interesting in relation to the meaning of the Old Norse word *hugr*, or mind, as the term additionally is interpreted as mood, heart, temper and feeling[5]. It seems the Norse concept of consciousness is not bound to the brain but also encompasses the breast (in regard to heart and feeling) as a location for sentience. In the carving, tendrils weave in and out of the chest orifice creating a three dimensional effect akin to a conduit leading in and out, and hence through and to the *hugr* of the art object. As these figures interweaving clutch themselves, each other and "climb" up the stem of the ship, the neck of the preceding one wraps under and its head appears in the center of the lower orifice of the one above. This lower cavity is in the reproductive area of the body and bears a resemblance to a womb. The repetition leads to an overall effect of consciousness and

[5] hugr, m. (...) *mind*, with the notion of thought, answering to Germ. *gedanke*; (...) II. denoting *mood, heart, temper, feeling, affection*; (...) 2. in plur. personified, almost like fylgja or hamingja, q. v., a person's ill-will or good-will being fancied as wandering abroad and pursuing their object; (Cleasby 1969: 290-91). For more analysis regarding *hugr* and Norse animal art, see: Hedeager 2011, Helmbrecht 2011, Kristoffersen 2010, Roy 2009, et al.

regeneration - certainly aiding to the creation of an animated entity and simultaneously allowing access to its non-figurative essence, or "mind". Reaching the top of the stem the carvings meet and spiral inward to the aforementioned eye(s) that centrally synthesize the overall affect of being led inward to the entity of the ark/ship.

As the terminating stem is not a three-dimensional sculpture in its shape as a figurehead at the prow of the ship, examining the bow as a set of planes is helpful. (fig. 2.c.) Seen at a distance from the docking area sailing straight towards shore not much of the carving would be apparent. As the vessel came closer and veered to land, the carving along the stem would become oriented perpendicular and gained full visibility. Aligned parallel at the shore, the serpent-head terminating spiral would come in full view from the side. Notably, the carvings along the stem depict the faces of the figures in profile. At roughly a quarter turn and from the point of view onboard the ship, the faces of the figures carved on the interior of the stem are portrayed *en face*.

In his study, Shetelig was primarily concerned with identifying the Oseberg woodcarving artists and the styles used in their work. He detected, due to consistency of execution, that all the carvings on the prow were made by the artist he calls "Skibets Mester", "the Ship's Master". In the carving on the prow seen from inside the vessel, Shetelig observed that the artist added a feature that he identified as lion's heads: highly stylized versions influenced from abroad by the Carolingian style, and the result was a blending of the two motifs. This hybrid is most evidenced by the lowest of the carved boards fitted to the interior of the stem. (fig. 3) As Shetelig described it, this piece spans the rising gunwales at approximately the height of the head of the *stýrimaðr*, skipper, and he therefore refers to it as a *hǫfðafjǫl*, literally "headboard" (Shetelig 1920: 17-25). The board features two figures comprised of bodies that closely resemble the ones on the *brandr*, including the heart-shaped orifices with tendrils weaving in, out and around as stylized limbs. However, instead of serpent-like heads as seen in profile, their faces are turned toward the viewer. With their rather flat features the engraved eyes, nose and frowning mouths on these heads could represent stylized animals, men or anything in between. Shetelig may be correct about the Carolingian stylistic influence, but this hybrid begs additional interpretation.

Further up, there are two carved wedge shaped boards that fill the gap at the top of the stem inside where the *brandar* meet. The lower of the two is of an elongated triangular shape and referred to as a *tingl*. (fig. 3.a.) On it, the figures continue to bear similarity to the serpent-like shapes that are engraved on the outside-facing stems and gunwales of the ship, but they clearly take on a more anthropomorphic appearance. While it is difficult to reconcile the relatively flat faces viewed from the front on the *tingl* with the elongated serpent heads seen on the *brandr* in profile, it may nevertheless be considered that these figures are adaptations of the same motif turned ninety degrees in relation to the angle as they are situated on the stem and *hǫfðafjǫl*. Again, the figures grasp one another as "clutching beasts", and the surfaces of the bodies feature the rhombic chip-carved patterns. Additionally, the slender waists exhibited by the figures point to a distinct comparison. However, their limbs are fuller than the serpent-like shapes and are more clearly identifiable as arms and legs. There are no upper and lower body orifices. Instead these areas are accentuated with crossing creases above where the breasts, and below where the thighs, meet, forming a more "realistic" looking body.

The uppermost board that fills the gap on the inside of the prow is quite narrow. (fig. 3.b.) There is room, however, for three carved figures aligned vertically each above the other. The resemblance to the ones on the *tingl* below is obvious, yet they continue to morph. The lowest of the three features a most human-like body as it grips its arms and legs with its hands and feet. Above "him" the figure more resembles a "merman", however, as its legs have merged into an aquatic-life-like tail. He continues to have an anthropomorphic upper body with chest and arms, as does the uppermost figure whose face looks even more human than the rest. Clearly, as the eye moves upward, a gradual but radical transformation has taken place in the morphology of the figures. The effect not only creates a sense of animation, but it also strongly suggests shape-shifting.[6] This must be why elsewhere it has been speculated that the figures represent the trickster Loki, who is known from Norse mythology to have taken on the *hamr*, shape, of numerous animals. Snorri told us that other gods were also known to *skipta hǫmum*, change one's shape(s), and engage in *hamfarir*, travels in the shape of an animal - in particular Óðinn. Snorri states in *Ynglingasaga*:

> Óðinn skipti hǫmum. Lá þá búkrinn sem sofinn eða dauðr, en hann var þá fugl eða dýr, fiskr eða ormr ok fór á einni svipstund á fjarlæg lǫnd at sinum ørendum eða annarra manna. Þat kunni hann enn at gera með orðum einum at sløkkva eld ok kyrra sjá ok snúa vindum hverja leið, er hann vildi, ok hann átti skip, er Skíðblaðnir hét, er hann fór á yfir hǫf stór, en þat mátti vefja saman sem dúk. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 18).

> Óðinn changed shapes. Then his body lay as if it was asleep or dead, while he was a bird or an animal, a fish or a snake, and travelled in an instant to distant lands on his own or other people's business. He also knew how to put out fire or calm the sea or turn the winds in any direction he wished with words alone, and he owned a ship called Skíðblaðnir, on which he sailed over high seas, but it could be folded together like a cloth. (*Heimskringla* I 2011:10)

It seems Óðinn could take on any living form. Two out of the list: *fugl*, bird and *ormr*, snake or serpent, are stylistically depicted in one form or another on most of the Oseberg carvings. It is interesting that Óðinn possessed a ship that was also able to change shape because the discussion here is how the qualities of this quite material Oseberg ship allowed it to engage as an animated social agent with mythological underpinnings. Namely, the woodcarvings on the exterior of the vessel invited the observer to contemplate the mysterious occupant of its interior. The word *hamr* is also associated with skin. For example, in Cleasby Vigfusson *vals-hamr* is translated as a falcon's skin. Being able to change one's "skin" certainly brings up the question of identity and what self may reside inside (Hyde 1998: 81-84). This harkens to the discussion above regarding the shedding of the skin and the layers of concentricity associated with interiority and exteriority. With shape-shifting, however, the sloughed layer of *hamr* is not molded from the one below it and therefore adds complexity to the mystery of perception and consciousness contained within the external form. Deification may be represented through the transformation of the figure. The woodcarving cannot denote the mind, it can only allude to the concentric layers of an elusive interior soul (Gell 1998). One way to achieve access to such a

[6] A great deal has been written about shape-shifting in relation to Norse animal art. See, as examples: Hedeager 2011, Helmbrecht 2011, Kristoffersen 2010, Roy 2009, Neiß 2007, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006.

mystic interiority is through the animation of sequential figures that change shape and create the appearance of consciousness within a god as art object.

Through certain similarities of the carved figures a link is represented between the inside and outside of the vessel. Just as the woodcarvings on the outside of the ship create an opening to its interiority, the carvings on the inside seem to create a conduit outward. The shape-shifting entities inside appear intermediary between animal and man, and their placement gazing upon the deck of the ship betrays a special purpose. They grasp themselves and each other forming complex patterns in a spellbinding fashion. Yet, as the eyes sweep down, the anthropomorphic figures on top morph into the more abstract serpent-like creatures on the exterior. The heart shaped orifices and the large, round eyes which are the salient features of the faces carved on the *hǫfðafjǫl* suggest the presence of a portal oriented from the inside of the ship with the intention to allow emanations to flow inward and outward through the exterior of the prow. From the smallest details to the most salient features, combined, the carvings serve to animate the entire vessel as an object of art. In regard to the agency of an art object, it may contain a void that is filled by an invisible "mind" imagined by the viewer, and in this case it may also be intended as the occupant of the ship. The anthropomorphic figures as gods may have been intended as a portal to the queen/priestess, possibly understood as a goddess incarnate, that occupied the vessel during life and as a burial ship after death. This idea is explored further in section 1.2 in conjunction with Ingstad's ideas regarding the iconography featured on the Oseberg tapestries (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992).

Analysis of the Oseberg ship helps lay the groundwork for the examination of the woodcarvings described in the poem *Húsdrápa* in several ways. A comparative anthropological theory of art applied to the vessel as an object of social agency introduced here is mapped onto Óláfr's *eldhús* in part two of the dissertation with additional examples. Albeit in a slightly different manner, the notions of interior/exterior and concentricity applied to the ship above are familiar to Norse culture and mythology in terms of landscape and dwellings. For example, anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup has written about both concepts using the model of the Icelandic farmstead (Hastrup 1985: 60). The carvings of myths adorning the walls and incorporated into the structure of the Icelandic farmhouse may be understood to affect and influence the events in the lives of the occupants and audience in the abode. The carvings on the ship most applicable to *Húsdrápa* are the anthropomorphic figures in various stages of morphology seen on the upper wedge shaped pieces of the stem. (fig. 4) They assist in the synthesis of possible prototypes depicting Norse deities, including Óðinn and Loki as shape-shifters but also other gods, such as Heimdallr. Specifically, when considering the appearance of Loki and Heimdallr in stanza two of the poem, Snorri relates that they were *í sela líkjum*, in the shapes of seals (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19). The merman-like figures carved on the uppermost wedge of the stem have lower bodies that vividly resemble seals in a state of transformation. Even if these figures were not intended as a scene from this specific myth, they provide tangible clues to the iconographic depiction of the gods in action as referred to by Snorri and stanza two of *Húsdrápa*.

The wood-carved wagon

The Oseberg ship contained a plethora of other richly carved objects that were placed in it for the burial. Among the find were several vehicles for use on land, including one with wheels,

the Oseberg wagon. The wagon is a cart constructed in a manner that the axles support trusses which in turn cradle an open box. There is little doubt that this was a ceremonial wagon. As Christiansen points out, the understructure was built in such a way that the trusses were in a fixed position and would not pivot to allow the wagon to turn. That would eliminate any practical purpose for travel of any distance or even around the farm. Furthermore, the terrain in Norway allowed little use for a wagon as transport - while there were likely established routes for travel on horseback it is less likely there were any suitable "roads." Most land travel with goods took place during the winter on frozen water and snow using sleds (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 119, Eisenschmidt 2006). There are numerous possibilities for ritual use of the wagon. As examples, the wagon could have been used in processions to carry persons of high status, idols, sacrificial offerings, or as in its last function to transport the dead to their burial mound. The additional possibilities are further explored in section 1.2 in conjunction with the Oseberg tapestries.

Shetelig found the carvings on the wagon the most unusual among the find, and he believed it was a copy of a succession of copies dating back through the generations, but again with the addition of the Carolingian element. Rather than a unique creation amidst other styles, he concluded therefore it was not a "pure" copy from an older style, but the product of a mixture of influences "misunderstood" by the woodcarver(s) that makes it difficult to categorize (Shetelig 1920: 46). The back of the wagon body is covered with creatures that have bodies quite different than those on the ship described above. (fig. 5) However, their faces bear some resemblance when viewed *en face*. Indeed, particularly from the front the ears, nose and mouth resemble a stylized cat. However, in profile the heads appear more as an abstract serpent-like beast less related to the feline family. The bodies have front and back legs, and the front are like human arms. Many touch their faces, and Ingstad has suggested they appear to be crying for the deceased (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992). Perhaps these gestures indicate more a fear for their well-being, as they are depicted situated in a hostile environment. The figures to the left have *ormar*, or snakes covering them. As the eye moves to the right the snakes become less frequent and zigzag and other dynamic shapes are incised on the surface of the bodies. To the far right there are some smaller creatures that may be the same "species." This arrangement could not be accidental, and read from right to left, it seems to signify a trajectory in the "life" of these creatures.

The impression of animation in the rather swarming group of figures is further exemplified by the carvings on the front and one of the sides of the wagon body. Among the carved figures on the front there is a man being attacked by snakes, which Shetelig, et. al. speculated represents the scene of Gunnar in the snake pit as related in the *Poetic Edda* and *Vǫlsunga saga* (Shetelig 1920: 27). However, the other elements in the depiction on the wagon do not really fit the legend as we know it from extant sources. For example, there is no musical string instrument depicted - a substantial part of the story - and an otherwise unknown four-legged creature is biting the man in addition to the snakes. (fig. 6) While the scene may relate some unknown version of the tale, it could also convey a different lost saga.

Examining the representational figures, the scene depicts preternatural activity in addition to a potential narrative. The man is looking in profile to the right, as is a remarkably human-like looking creature that is arranged practically as his double. Another creature that is a bit more animal-like is being gripped by and gripping the "double." There are essentially two types of

heads atop these creatures - one resembles in varying degrees a human profile, the other has long gaping jaws. The further away from the human figure that is being devoured the more abstract the head. (fig. 7) One interpretation is these figures in their fluctuating gradations of morphology represent death and an impetus of moving into the spirit world. The figure that doubles the man being killed could be intended as his *fylgja*, following, or intermediary spirit-double between the physical world and the unknown world occupied by the dead[7]. *Fylgjur* are mentioned in the Icelandic family sagas as soul-doubles, and sometimes appear in dreams, or to those who have "second sight" or are dying. The peripheral, long-jawed and more abstract creatures may represent the occupants of the "other-world" or perhaps the ancestors of the deceased in their spirit forms. The same interpretation applies to the scene on the right, long side of the wagon. (fig. 8) The depiction may relate to some unknown saga, but consider the transition from the central human figures outward. A warrior stands with sword drawn in the one hand, while the other hand holds the reins of a horse. A woman on the left who holds the arm with the warrior's sword is being gripped by a long-jawed creature that turns in the other direction biting one of the more human-like creatures, which mirrors the woman. This could be her *fylgja* or a similarly perceived spirit guide "assisting" in her demise. Likewise, the warrior is holding the reins of the horse on his right, and the warrior on the horse is being gripped by an ape-like (Shetelig refers to it as a dog, but it has a straight forehead to nose) creature that may be his *fylgja*. That creature is gripping another long-nosed one with its hind feet, and that long-nosed one the horse's tail. It appears the horse and rider are both being pulled into the other world, i.e. death, where the surrounding serpents reside. Perhaps those serpents are not intended as demons but depict a chain of ancestry in an otherwise unknowable realm.

The human figures on the Oseberg cart appear to be in the process of being pulled into the "other world" which must also be inhabited by other kinsmen who have died. One of the claims of this dissertation is the woodcarvings depicting myths during the Viking Age are inspired by and intend to convey ancestral descent. The symbolism depicted on the wagon indicates the cultural importance of maintaining communication with primeval beings, and hence a link to cosmological origins. There are many examples of the weight given to ancestry in Old Norse literature. To name a few: Óðinn receiving wisdom from his maternal grandfather in *Rúnatal*; poems that count back generations to mythical origins, for example *Hyndluljóð* and the counting of genealogy to substantiate descent, including two relating to this study - *Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal*; there are many sagas that introduce family lines as stemming from mythical/legendary figures. In sagas and poems heroes sit on and go into mounds of ancestors to gain power. In terms of archaeology, rock carvings from the earliest times, grave mounds that dot the landscape, people such as the Oseberg queen and other elaborate burials with their material identities beside them all allude to respect and awe of those who have lived before.

Many of the thoughts above regarding the decorative art featured on the Oseberg ship apply to the wagon, but with different details and perhaps to different means. Engraved within the bodies of the figures, in addition to the more uniform rhombic chip-carving patterns seen on the ship, are snakes, wild zigzags, knots that form ring-chains and other very dynamic shapes. All of these parts of the whole serve to animate the creatures, as do the sometimes symmetrical but more often thronging arrangements of each figure in relation to the other. In particular, the

[7] For a study about the concept and use of the term *fylgja*, see Mundal 1974. For more about *fylgjur* and animal art, see: Roy 2008, Kristoffersen 2010, Hedeager 2011, Helmbrecht 2011.

thighs and legs on many of the figures serve as examples of how this object of art exhibits the ability to perform the influence of transporting the viewer to the interior of the cart. They are engraved with incisions forming layers of oblong concentric circles following the contours of the limbs. The innermost layer is located at the pivot point of the thigh sockets. This center that essentially remains fixed during actual motion and activity not only catches the eye but may be seen to function as an orifice that allows the spectator access inside. Unlike the animation of the ship, however, the theme of death surrounding the cart body implies that the inside is not occupied by something living - rather the layers leading to the "other" consciousness of interiority peel away into the realm of the "other" world. Such depictions are suitable for a wagon transporting the deceased. Based on the engravings on the body of the cart, one can imagine that it was previously used for other morbid occasions such as transporting slaughtered sacrificial beasts to *blót* rituals or other high status people to their burial mounds. The final use for the wagon may well have been to carry the two women at Oseberg to their burial site - with the exception of its present function as a display at the Viking Ship museum on Bygdøy, Oslo.

In terms of representational art, Shetelig provides a detailed description of the human figures. Their clothes, belts, hair and jewelry all are highlighted with incisions within their body contours. (fig. 9) One reason he claims that the wagon stands outside a style historic comparison for early Viking Age decorative art is the narrative aspect of the primitive, but natural depictions of the figures (Shetelig 1920: 31-2). However, there are human figures and narratives depicted on the Gotland picture stones and carved stones from Northern England and the Isle of Man, so there are many comparisons, some of them from the same time period[8]. In the following sections the human-like figures on stones from Scandinavia and the North Atlantic will be used as additional sources. Each description of the details seen in the selected iconography is important as a reference to graph hypothetical compilations of wood-carved scenes in relation to the late tenth century and the poem *Húsdrápa*.

Other features of interest for this study are the trusses that wrap around and support the body of the wagon. Each of the four ends terminates as posts with carved three-dimensional sculpted heads. The two trusses are different, but the same "type" of carved head is seen on each end of the same truss, i.e. in pairs. The front truss, and hence heads, are of beech, and the back is made of oak. The ones in front are frequently pictured and have stylized characteristics. (figure 10) As Shetelig describes them, although stylistically the same, they vary considerably in expression - one looks stern and scary, the other more like a jolly old man. Round eyes contain an inner round contour line engraved in them, the eye indentations below the brows continue as a solid curve down to form the nose. A full width moustache forms the upper lip of an open mouth with teeth. The chin consists of vertical lines engraved to represent a beard. Ears are represented by small holes. A cap or helmet covers the head, and hair or mail extends down on the back of the neck. The back truss of oak has two, more natural looking heads with protruding noses, ears, a closed mouth, distinct eyebrows, hair and a moustache that is engraved to resemble natural hair. (fig. 11) Shetelig rarely interprets the art work, but here he imagines that these carved heads, with their differences, must represent either other-worldly beings or saga figures (Shetelig 1920: 38-40). It is not possible to determine whether each stylistic pair represents the same being with different countenances or if they are all to be understood as individuals. Certainly their positions

[8] For Gotland picture stones, see: Helmbrecht 2011, Nylén 1988, Lindquist 1941, Hedeager 2011.
For Insular stone carvings, see: Kopár 2012, Bailey 1980, Cubbon 1996, Collingwood 1927, Kermode 1907.

as terminating sculptures on the trusses supporting the wagon casement invite a mediating role in the agency of the overall art object. They also provide excellent examples for models of Viking Age renderings of the heads of gods when contemplating the appearance of the carved scenes described in *Húsdrápa*. The heads present a range of style and mood to draw from.

In the vast majority of cases, extant Norse woodcarvings from the Oseberg find and the medieval period are in relief. However, on the wagon there are also simpler, "v-groove" carved faces on the front truss that are like sketch-forms of the fully sculpted heads that terminate the trusses. (fig. 12) These resemblances are also found on the under support of the wagon, as well as the ends of tent poles found on the ship. These simpler, incised outlines of the same facial features as the sculpted heads are of particular interest in comparison to woodcarvings found in Iceland dated to shortly after the Viking Age. As referenced below in the section about the Northern Icelandic tradition of woodcarving, the panels found in Flatatunga and Bjarnastaðahlið are carved using the same technique. Parallel reasoning leads one to consider that the "v-groove" outlines seen in Northern Iceland are also renderings based on models, whether three-dimensional, in relief or some form of a sketch. This scenario is explored further in the discussion below covering the Icelandic woodcarving tradition in relation to the execution of the carvings described in *Húsdrápa*.

The wood-carved *dyrehodestolper* - "animal head posts"

Carved instruments that were possibly used for ritual ceremonies, five free-standing *dyrehodestolper*, animal head posts, found in the excavation are of particular interest. (fig. 13) There is no apparent functional purpose for the posts such as parts of a vehicle, furnishings or household items. All of the *dyrehodestolper* are three dimensional sculpted bowed pieces of wood with long necks terminating in animal heads with gaping mouths and teeth. Shetelig identified them as stylized lions in some cases, and dogs in others. In the cat category one might consider the goddess Freyja's cats, or as a mythical dog, Garmr, but the carved animal head posts appear to have been intended as zoomorphic inspired blends forming mythological, preternatural beasts not mentioned in any extant literary sources. In any case, the rather fierce appearance of expression on the creatures suggests an apotropaic or guardian function. Therefore, it warrants consideration of the ornament variations from a cult/religious perspective. Adorning each of the posts are additional complex patterns of interwoven biomorphic motifs. It looks as if the surface engravings on an animal-head post represent multiple entities associated with the one. What is important for this study is the likely purpose for the *dyrehodestolper* and their overall appearance in relation to function, and additionally, the particulars of the posts and their individually crafted details as inscribed intent of the artists that made them. In regard to the former, it is interesting that two of them, named by the curators as *dyrehodestolpe #174* and the *karolingiske dyrehodestolpe*, were found in the grave chamber containing the bodies of the women. In Volume 2 of *Osebergfundet*, it is worth quoting Sigurd Grieg at length:

> Hvortil de her beskrevne fem dyrehodestolper har været anvendt, vet vi ikke. Men til belysning av spørsmaalet om deres anvendelse tjener fundforholdene for dyrehodestolpe 174 og den karolingiske dyrehodestolpe. De fandtes ved siden av hinanden i gravkammerets sydøstre hjørne. Deres indbyrdes stilling fremgaar av fotografiet bind I fig 21 og av en tegning i SCHETELIGS skissebok som er gjengit i

bind I fig. 22. Som denne viser, laa det nær dyrehodene ogsaa en *rangle*[9] og en *krok* av *jern*, som var forbundet ved to *tauger*, hvorav i alle fald det ene gik gjennem kjæften paa den ene dyrehodestolpe. Taugene var henholdsvis 1,72 og 1,75 m lange. Det ene av dem var litt spinklere end det andet (GUSTAFSONS dagbok). Hele denne eiendommelige placering av disse dyrehodestolper synes at tyde paa at de har hat en *magisk* anvendelse, og det samme viser deres utseende med de eiendommelige hoder i øvre ende. Stolpene er sikkert ikke laget bare som kunst. De skafter som alle stolpene er utstyrt med, viser ogsaa at de ikke har været fæstet til andre gjenstander eller til bygningsdele, men at de maa ha været bestemt til at bæres. Det kan da tænkes at de kan ha været benyttet ved religiøse optog av en eller anden art. Til sammenligning kan vi minde om de processioner som er fremstillet paa billedteppene i Osebergfundet, og som vel er av religiøs karakter. (Grieg 1928: 65-66)

For what purpose the "animal head posts" had been utilized, we do not know. But the circumstances in the find of the "animal head post 174" and the "Carolingian animal head post" serve to inform the question of their use. They were found next to each other in the southeast corner of the grave chamber. Their initial position is shown in the photograph in volume I fig. 21 and in a drawing in Shetelig's sketchbook which is reproduced in volume I fig. 22. As this shows, a *rangle* and an iron hook lay near the animal head posts, which were connected with two ropes, where at least one went through the jaw of one of the posts. The ropes were 1.72 and 1.75 meters long. One of them was a little more slender than the other (Gustafson's journal). The entire peculiar placing of these animal head posts seems to point to that they have had a magical application, and the same applies to their appearance with the strange heads on the upper ends. The posts are surely not made just as art. The shafts which all the posts are equipped with also show that they were not fastened to other objects or to parts of buildings, but they must have been designed to carry. It can then be imagined that they were used in a religious procession of one or another kind. In comparison we can recall the processions that are represented on the tapestries in the Oseberg find, and are certainly of religious character.

As quoted above, bound to one of the *dyrehodestolpe* was a *rangle*, an iron shaft strung with rings. (fig. 14) There were several *rangler* found on the burial ship, and two of them feature inlaid patterns of precious metal. Just as the wooden posts were likely ceremonial, it has been speculated that the jingling sound these objects create when shaken was perceived as having some sort of religious or magical function. The objects found tied together serve to reinforce both suppositions. Since the *dyrehodestolper* do not appear to have been fastened to anything or serve any other practical function, it is thought that they were carried in processions (Hall 2007: 25, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992, Jones 1984: 339). However, the *dyrehodestolper* could have been used for any type of ritual function, much like a mystically charged wand or staff.

[9] rangle: 1) rattle (toy) 2) archeol. device of large and small rings fastened together used as sleigh bells. Translation: Einar Haugen.

Possible applications include initiations or healings. Here, the placement inside the entrance to the grave chamber indicates that in combination with the *rangle* the *stolper* had some sort of magical ability to assist in or provide an opening to the "other world" where the dead reside. (fig. 15)

Something to consider is the magical function of these posts not only seen as singular sculptural forms, but also in combination with the details of the carvings engraved on the surfaces - what is the connection between the depictions of the intertwined figures carved in relief on the larger three-dimensional sculpted head? There must be a relationship rather than the case of an arbitrary application of decorative art to these sculptural pieces. Clearly, the overall heads, their details, and the creatures that weave in and out of the surfaces of the heads and necks are not accidental in their manifestation. (fig. 16) Additionally, the magic that these pieces were meant to entail would not have been superficially applied. The cult leader who wielded them may have been seen to have the power in his or her possession, but the woodcarver must be considered a "magician" as well. The craftsman procured the material out of nature and not only engraved biomorphic figures in the grain but also in essence brought them to "life" with patterns, which animated the overall sculpted entity[10]. In turn, the *hofgyðja*, priestess, invoked the agent she held in her hand in order to conjure the objective of the ritual.

While Shetelig was concerned with identifying the *dyrehodestolper* from his proposed art historic progression of styles and judging each for their aesthetic/technical merit, for this study his descriptions of the ornament are useful for additional reflection. It is more appropriate to refer to his volume rather than repeating all of his observations in detail, however, there are some particularly relevant features. Shetelig has provided sketches that unwrap and reveal intricacies in the patterns that are otherwise difficult to determine. Each of the *stolper* surfaces is covered with varying amounts of the commonly referred to zoomorphic figures, some of which have already been described above. He, and other art historians echoing his conclusions (Wilson 1966), identify the smaller engravings as stylized four-footed animals and birds. These are highly stylized bodies with limbs, and sometimes wings, which extend into lobes and tendrils, and they terminate with varying cat or bird-like heads. The bodies are intricately intertwined - some are quite extended yet others form small clusters. Common to the other Oseberg carvings described above, they often grip themselves, each other or the frames that "contain" them. Kildal describes this art form as:

> *en mysterie-kunst med en hemmelig appell, en ren religiøs-magisk* billedskrift med bud til samtidens mennesker, den skulle gi vern og sikkerhet i en utrygg tilværelse hvor skjebnegudinnen spinner sine tråder, og hvor gudene kjemper som mennesker. *Dyreornamentikken blir bindeleddet mellom tilværelsens ukjente makter og jordmennesket* (Kildal 1961: 20).
>
> *a mystical-art with a secret appeal, a pure religious-magical* figurative language with appeal to the contemporary population, it was intended to provide protection and security in an uncertain existence where the goddess of fate spins her threads,

[10] See among others Helmbrecht 2011, Helms 1993. The societal/mythic role of the craftsman as "magician" is discussed further below.

and where the gods fight as humans. *The animal ornament became the connecting link between unknown forces of and earthly existence*.

While this position is a romantic view, by studying the art prevalent in Scandinavia through the Viking Age one certainly gets a sense that the interwoven forms contain mystical symbolism. As discussed above, objects featuring "bound" animal bands may have been considered apotropaic intended to render malevolent forces harmless by making them inaccessible, repellent or impermeable (Hedeager 2011, Helmbrecht 2011, Roy 2009, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006, Gell 1998). In addition, one could argue that the smaller, intertwined theriomorphic beings carved on the *dyrehodestolper* were intended to bind, contain but also potentially release the power of the larger sculpted beast, and the engravings on the instrument, when invoked, opened up its spiritual powers and made accessible the numinous. In the hands of a priest or priestess the *dyrehodestolper* could have served as liminal instruments that provided a two-way street between worlds.

However, perhaps their purpose in the burial chamber was intended both to protect and aid the dead in accessing the "other world." Some additional comparative examples from Gell help support this idea. It is apparent that the complex patterns carved on the animal heads play with repetition, symmetry, translation, rotation and reflection in such a complex way that they may induce a mind-trap and hence serve an apotropaic function. Taking this notion a step further, Gell introduces the Cretan labyrinth and other mazes, such as ones that appears on a large, ca. five ton stone next to the entrance of the passage-grave at Newgrange, Ireland, as examples which share the similarity that they may be understood to lead to the underworld. Parallels in Scandinavia of mazes exist with local names referring to "Troy Town" presumably because the walls of the ancient city were reputedly designed such that invaders would get lost. The "meander" pattern is not technically a maze in that it does not contain any dead-end entryways, but it does present the obstacle of the longest distance possible to reach the central destination. Furthermore, the pattern may be added to quite simply by replication of its parts, with the potential of infinitely bewildering "arrival." Seen throughout India, some people have tattooed on their bodies maze-like *kolam* threshold designs. These *kolam* are intended to serve as a "map" when the person dies that leads them to the land of the dead. It also serves an apotropaic function, for when the deceased meets Yama, the god of death, he will not devour the person. Yama is prevented because it is not possible for him to solve the puzzle presented by the tattoo. The sand-drawings of the Malakula serve the same purpose of assistance in reaching the land of the dead, albeit in a slightly different way. The complex patterns are memorized, so when the deceased reaches the threshold, like a key she can replicate part of the pattern that is missing and gain entry (Gell 1998: 84-94).

These sacral functions fit quite well with what can be observed in the *dyrehodestolper*. Even though the art objects bear overall similarities, each *dyrehodestolpe* is quite unique in its combination of head and coverage of decoration on its neck. As it is applicable in the context of tools assisting the dead, a closer look at the two found bound together in the grave chamber is warranted. Ingstad presents the theory that the queen/priestess in the burial was understood to be the goddess Freyja incarnate (see more below). The heads and the patterns on the *dyrehodestolper* seem to support this idea. One of the *dyrehodestolper* in the chamber was referred to as the "Carolingian" by Shetelig due to the use of what he identified as the lion motif

derived from that style. While the terminating head is quite stylized, it is not possible to determine if it is of feline, canine or some other inspiration, but the ornament covering the head and neck are arguably densely clustered patterns of stylized cats. These smaller cats are present at every orifice of the larger head, including one that appears protruding through the jaw into the mouth. (fig. 16.a.) Hence, these openings could have been understood to serve as a conduit between the larger sculpted head and the cat patterns. The cats are totally interwoven with their limbs gripping each other, and their faces are seen from multiple angles, primarily from the front and above. The densely arranged pattern is indeed mesmerizing. According to Snorri, the goddess Freyja used cats for transportation. In *Gylfaginning* it states: *En er hon ferr, þá ekr hon kǫttum tveim ok sitr í reið*, "And when she travels she drives two cats and sits in a chariot" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 25, *Edda* 1995: 24), and at Baldr's funeral Freyja apparently rides on her cats, *kǫttum sínum*. Snorri also informs us that Freyja brought the practice of *seiðr* to the gods, which from descriptions in Old Norse literature resembles the trance used by shamans to travel outside their bodies. Perhaps in life the priestess meditated with this art object and it facilitated such a process, which has been described as the body appearing lifeless while the soul journeys. (See citation above from *Ynglingasaga* regarding Óðinn and this practice: *Lá þá búkrinn sem sofinn eða dauðr* (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 18)). In death, the cat patterns could have been intended as "vehicles" to the realm of the dead. The clusters of cats within ringed divisions indeed resemble a maze. In several spots the claws grip each other to form a triskelion (fig. 16.b.) - the primary feature of the maze-like patterns on the stone at the entrance of the Newgrange tomb. Similarly, following the connection between each gripping beast with the eye suspends reaching a final destination. The intricately interwoven designs may have been intended as a map to the "other world." As the *kolam* confound Yama, perhaps the patterns were intended to serve as a puzzle that guaranteed passage to *Hel*, one of the Norse pre-Christian abodes of the dead. Snorri informs us of the bridge guarded by Móðguðr over the river Gjǫll, which separates the world of the living from the world of the deceased.

The other *dyrehodestolpe* in the grave chamber, referred to as number 174, has a head that appears intended as a lion or cat. (fig. 17) Covering the sides of the face and neck are what Shetelig identified as stylized birds. This identification must be primarily based on the heads seen in profile that feature beaks. There are no broad wings to indicate birds, rather the extended bodies and limbs resemble the ones seen on the figures on the *brandr* of the ship, but they are even more intricately woven. Some areas feature the same heart-shaped orifices formed by the divisions of bodies wrapping over and under each other. One of these apertures is between the ear and gaping mouth, which together with the eyes and nostrils form a concentration of openings beckoning entrance onto the sculpted head and neck. Every surface is carved with minute engraved details including rhombic patterns and alternating square tile shapes created by the rotation of incised lines. The vine-like biomorphic bodies of the birds are also covered with tiny patterns that resemble filigree, all of which form additional openings and texture animating the head and the figures on it. Atop the sculpted "lion" head is an anthropomorphic figure very similar to one described above on the wedge shaped board on the top inside of the stem of the Oseberg ship. (fig. 17.b.) It gazes up *en face* as it clutches its feet, and in addition, it features some of the smaller details of the birds including two extensions on the top of its head and the smaller chip carvings. The figure gives the impression of being in a state of transformation between a human-like body and the birds. Quite helpful is a sketch provided by Shetelig of the patterns that wrap around the head seen in a flat plane. (fig. 17.a.) It shows two bird heads with

their necks wrapped around each other. One head is upside down in relation to the other. The extended bodies are arranged almost symmetrically to each side. In order to map one onto the other it is necessary to first rotate one 180 degrees to allow the heads to align, and then a vertical flip allows for the bodies to roughly match. The result is a spiral rotation that adds to the appearance of an animated vortex in the pattern. (Animation 1) The birds and the inclusion of the shape-shifting figure harkens back to the notion that it may be a priestess of Freyja in the grave chamber. Snorri informs us that Freyja possesses a *valshamr*, a falcon shape or "skin." Under coercion from the gods, Loki borrows the *valshamr* to retrieve the goddess Iðunn from captivity:

> En er hann varð hræddr þá kvazk hann mundu sœk<j>a eptir Iðunni í Jǫtunheima ef Freyja vill ljá honum valshams er hon á. Ok er hann fær valshaminn flýgr hann norðr í Jǫtunheima ok kemr einn dag til Þjaza jǫtuns. (*Skáldskaparmál* I. 1998: 2)
>
> Being filled with terror, he said he would go in search of Idunn in Giantland if Freyia would lend him a falcon shape of hers. And when he got the falcon shape he flew north to Giantland and arrived one day at giant Thiassi's; (*Edda* 1995: 60)

The impression is that the falcon shape involves shape shifting, and that not only Loki but also Freyja, as possessor of the suit and knowledgeable of *seiðr*, has the ability to take on the form of a falcon and travel at will. Once again, the comparison of the shamanic journey where the practitioner remains behind *sem sofinn eða dauðr*, as "sleeping or dead", also implies that the trance state involved was understood to resemble death. In life, this *dyrehodestolpe* may have assisted the priestess in her shamanic wanderings, and when deceased, it also could have been understood to facilitate her journey to the land of the dead.

While there are no loose carved sculptures with such potential powers as the *dyrehodestolper* specifically mentioned in *Laxdæla saga* or implied by the poem *Húsdrápa*, examining the agency of these art objects is nevertheless relevant to this study. As in the case of the stem of the Oseberg ship, the recurrent use of the anthropomorphic figures that appear to be in a state of transformation particularly applies to the second stanza of the poem, where in the scene described by Snorri, Loki and Heimdallr take on the shape of seals. The use of bird ornamentation in this context reinforces the possibility that indeed it is a shape-shifting deity and even perhaps Loki depicted on the ship and *dyrehodestolpe* #174. The models for the carvings in Óláfr's *eldhús* would have additional influences, and therefore it is unlikely they would look quite like those seen at Oseberg in the ninth century, but these human-like figures provide clues to the appearance of the Æsir gods carved on the walls. Additionally, (partially due to the prose versions of the tales related by Snorri) while the scenes described in the poem may be imagined to appear to be depicted with realism, they would have likely included components such as the abstract shapes seen at Oseberg in order to convey the myths. In *Laxdæla saga*, Óláfr is not portrayed as a *blótmaðr*, one who sacrifices to the gods, yet the application of mythical wood-carved scenes in his *salr*, "hall", suggests that in addition to housing daily activities it was also considered a sacred space. The ritual presence of wood-carved items would not have been limited to an Oseberg queen/priestess. These arguments are built throughout the dissertation and the sacral qualities of the woodcarvings and Norse dwellings are examined closely in part two.

Additional applications and craftsmanship

The carving on three of the sleds in the find feature many of the same elements as those described on the ship and wagon, but they include additional layers of geometric shapes. (fig. 18) These grids both isolate and contain the ornament but also form a border for the biomorphic shapes to breech with their limbs and tendrils. According to Shetelig, the framework that is introduced marks a major change introduced by the younger Oseberg school of carvers. Inspired by foreign influences, perhaps the models were chests made from several pieces using a frame and panel construction, but at Oseberg the divisions were carved into a large, single, flat board. These sections divide the surface into smaller areas into which the otherwise confusing throng of ornament is confined into smaller fields. (fig. 19) The gridwork on the sleds may indicate a gradual progression moving from a more swarming application of shapes covering large areas to divisions forming enclosures suitable for containing iconographic "scenes" such as those described during the late tenth century in the poem *Húsdrápa*. Following the reasoning of this argument, the intertwined biomorphic shapes may have gradually become adapted to form borders. As presented at the end of the first part of the dissertation, this "medallion" presentation of scenes became fully realized as seen in extant woodcarvings created after the conversion to Christianity (see discussion of stave churches in section 1.7 below). However, the grids on the sleds may provide a hint for the architectural application of woodcarvings during the Viking Age - something that is otherwise absent in the Oseberg find because the ship, wagon and sleds are vehicles, and the other recovered items are mostly utensils. The grave chamber on the deck of the ship was hastily, and in comparison with the rest of the items, crudely constructed, so there were no carvings embedded on the burial "house" aboard the ship. The buildings on the farm where the queen resided, however, likely had woodcarvings incorporated on the walls, posts, rafters and other building elements. Some of these parts form natural divisions, such as lumber fashioned to make benches for seating and wainscoting, and if narratives were represented, it would be expected that they could have been engraved on the panels as part of the interior framework of the structures.

The descriptions provided in this section of the Oseberg wood-carved ornament is by no means intended to be exhaustive. For example, the sculpted animal heads that terminate at the corners of the sleds provide additional models for consideration, and they are as richly carved with patterns as the *dyrehodestolper* described above. The sled pulls are carved with incredible details. Bed frames that feature "horse heads" are intricately engraved. The carvings discussed and some of these additional items are brought to the fore when pertinent for further exposition in subsequent chapters.

In regard to technique, unless the carvings are three-dimensional and sculptural, they are predominantly in relief. The depth of relief of the carvings in the Oseberg find varies depending on the size of the surfaces and details, but the backgrounds are considerably recessed, usually at least 1 cm but sometimes as deep as 2 cm or more. This allows for a certain rounded plasticity and layering of the interwoven shapes. Special tools were needed to make the carvings. When a copy was made of one of the more complicated "animal-head posts" by Jørgen Eriksen, he demonstrated that to achieve the relief an assortment of *hugjern* and *gravjern*, chisels and gouges, was needed (Shetelig 1920). Otherwise, in the opinion of Shetelig, a knife could achieve most of the carving details. The varying surface decorations were indeed likely created with a knife because they are very narrow "chip" incisions made by reciprocating cuts. However, the metal

workers of the time were certainly capable of fashioning specialty iron tools, and the woodcarver could collaborate with the smith regarding practical tools for his work.

Nearly all the surfaces of the carvings feature some sort of ornamental geometric pattern of engraved hatching. (fig. 20) As seen in the next section, this is a connection with the textiles in the find; i.e. the tapestries and weavings that also made use of geometric shapes with the use of the weaving pattern. As described above, amidst the intertwined "gripping beasts" of abstract ribbon bodied animal shapes inspired by earlier Merovingian/Vendel designs, the woodcarvings in the Oseberg style include some more distinct looking anthropomorphic figures. The ornaments focused on here from the find include albeit undefined scenes including figures resembling men and women that may be considered as precursors in style, composition and techniques to those that would later depict myths known from 10th century poems. The evidence from Oseberg adds substance to the existence of wood-carved narrative scenes such as those described in *Húsdrápa* and otherwise only known from literature.

Of further importance, careful scrutiny by Shetelig of the carvings from Oseberg has revealed that there were several artists with exceptional skill involved in the production of the work. It is quite likely they worked together as an artel, either on the farm or nearby, as Shetelig's term *Vestfoldskole* implies. They were certainly specialists, not generalists. There would have been large investments of time in the making of the items. Therefore, it was likely in some form of collaboration with those who came in possession of their work, i.e. some of the pieces were made to order. The function and some general descriptions may have been dictated by the "client", but the intricate carved details were the creation of the expert artisan. Along with the technical ability, there must have been knowledge of the numinous qualities of the designs as revealed by the incredible detail of the intricate patterns and the apparent agency the objects were seen to embody[11]. Kildal writes: *Lærer vi tidens billedskrift å kjenne, forstår vi at diktningen, mytene og kvadene var ett med tidens billedkunst* (Kildal 1961: 23). "As we learn to recognize the figurative language, we understand that the literary work, myths and poems were in unison with the pictorial art". The making of these items also placed the craftsman in an "other" category in addition to artist (Eliade 1956, Hedeager 2011, Gell 1998, Helms 1993). Just as the metal smith may have been seen as an alchemist, the woodcarver also possessed mystic abilities. The topic of mythic craftsmen is further explored in part two. The social status of the artisans is uncertain, but it is tempting to think of them as free men who could enter into agreements for their services[12]. The situation and carved contents of the burial ship indicate that the craftsmen would have been in the employ of an aristocratic patronage that could afford such items and a clientele that saw value in the carved objects for their mystical power and how they enhanced their prestige and political positioning. The latter as to how social status relates to the wood-carved objects and *Húsdrápa* is explored extensively below, but first a look at some of the other items found on the burial ship with the two women at Oseberg.

[11] See also Helmbrecht 2011: 45; more generally Hedeager 2011, Gell 1998.
[12] For societal conditions regarding craftspersons around Kaupangr and Vestfold in the ninth century see Skre 2011, 2007; and, trade in a broader northern European geographical area and timespan Lebecq 2007.

1.2. Oseberg burial ship pictorial tapestries

The importance of the Oseberg find is of course not limited to the woodcarvings. Two sites in Scandinavia have produced large groups of textiles from the Viking Age. In Sweden, Birka was an important central place of international commerce from ca. 800 - 950. Costly textiles have been unearthed in graves there which originated from Byzantium via Russia, and others that were brought north from, for example, trading towns of the Rhine. Some, such as silk strips with incorporated gold and silver wire, were likely from the Orient. Similar imports were found in Oseberg, but in smaller amounts. However, while Birka and other smaller finds also indicate a native Scandinavian art form, the pictorial tapestries from Oseberg truly reveal a refined Nordic textile art (Geijer 1979: 244-48). Numerous remnants from the burial ship in the form of pictorial weavings, *billedvev*, provide excellent examples of early Viking Age iconography. Bjørn Hougen (2006), Ingstad, Christiansen in multiple texts and Sofie Krafft (1956) to name a few, have documented and described these tapestries in detail, and they are the topic of the last volume published about *Osebergfunnet*. Many of the remains are so badly decayed that they are not "readable", but a few were in good enough condition when excavated, at least as fragments, to have been recorded as sketches by Krafft and others, which are very useful for analysis of the iconography (Krafft 1956, Hougen 2006, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992). Of particular interest are the narrow weavings which correspond to the Old Norse word *refill*: tapestry, most likely used as wall hangings. They are quite narrow - between 16 and 23 cm. As a result, the scenes on them "may be considered in the style of a minimalist" (Geijer 1979: 246). The lengths are impossible to determine but apparently would have corresponded to the capacity of the looms (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992).

Reflar are widely attested in the sagas, including *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. In that instance *reflar* play a role in the feud between two households, but more important for this study is the ceremonial use indicated by the saga: *Þorgrímr ætlaði at hafa haustboð at vetrnóttum ok fagna vetri ok blóta Frey (...)* "Thorgrim decided to give an autumn feast on the eve of the winter season, and to welcome winter and make a sacrifice to Frey, (...)" (*Gísla saga Súrssonar* 1943: 50, *Saga of Gisli* 1963: 21) and:

> Þá er þeir Þorgrímr bjuggusk um ok skyldu tjalda húsin, en boðsmanna var þangat ván um kveldit, þá mælti Þorgrímr við Þorkel: „Vel kœmi oss nú reflarnir þeir inir góðu, er Vésteinn vildi gefa þér; þœtti mér sem þar væri langt í milli, hvárt þú hefðir þá með ǫllu eða hefðir þú þá aldri, ok vilda ek nú, at þú létir sœkja þá.“ (*Gísla saga Súrssonar* 1943: 50-1)

> When Thorgrim and his people were making preparations, and were ready to hang the hall with tapestries, and the guests were expected that evening, then Thorgrim spoke to Thorkell: "What we need here are the fine hangings that Vestein wanted to give you. It seems to me that there is a great difference between owning them outright and never using them at all; and now I want you to have them sent for." (*Saga of Gisli* 1963: 21)

Note that in conjunction with a sacrificial feast the hall is being prepared by hanging tapestries. While *Gísla saga* often reads more like a precursor to the murder mystery novel rather

than a historical account, there is no need to discard the cultural clues. These elements related by the saga text may be understood to indicate that in addition to making the room more festive, pre-Christian Icelandic living quarters were transformed to a sacred space at least in part with the decoration of the *reflar*. Recall that in *Laxdæla saga* it states: *Váru þar markaðar ágætligar sǫgur á þilviðinum ok svá á ræfrinu; var þat svá vel smiðat, at þá þótti miklu skrautligra, er eigi váru tjǫldin uppi*. (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 79) "There were carved excellent tales on the paneling and ceiling; it was so well crafted that they thought it was much more magnificent, when the tapestries were not up". The noun *tjald*, for which one meaning is tent, is also a synonym for *refill*. Hence, there is a correlation between the carvings depicting myths and the tapestries that would normally have covered them during rites. It can be argued that the art objects, in addition to sharing the same space of application, served a similar sacral function even though the carvings were a permanent installation. Given the substantial amount of iconography on the Oseberg *reflar*, this warrants further investigation.

In regard to non-representational art, the craftsmanship in Viking Age metalworking and woodcarving appear to share similar styles and development of motifs, while the tapestries feature many different scenes and figures. That may be the case involving *Tierornamentik*, however, not necessarily the more anthropomorphic shapes and representative motifs seen in the carvings. Hougen noted the human figures and the wood-carved engravings on their clothes bear some similarity with their woven counterparts. He also provides some comparisons in the iconography seen in the textiles with other media. For example, shapes of the human figures and their apparel are similar to those seen on some gold foils and other metal objects. He also points to some similarities between the tapestries and what is seen on Gotland picture stones[13] (Hougen 2006). There may not be many resemblances of the tapestries to the gripping beast style woodcarvings of the Oseberg grave find, but that does not take into account missing wood-carved architectural features from the era which may have been more representational. Even though there are obvious material differences of fabric and wood grain, it is quite possible that scenes similar to those depicted on the tapestries were also engraved on the walls of buildings. Much of the iconography on the Oseberg wagon, for example the panels featuring biomorphic creatures, is difficult for modern viewers to "read." By the same token, the mythological scenes described by Úlfr in *Húsdrápa* may have shared a certain degree of interwoven "illegibility" with his use of poetic diction, but Hougen also speaks of vivid, identifiable elements - such as Valkyries and ravens, which are arguably also present on the tapestries. The fact that the tapestries are some 150 years older than the poem does not lessen the likelihood that more recognizable iconography was rendered as woodcarving, as testified by the anthropomorphic figures on the wagon. All of these factors indicate that the tapestries are potential prototypes for missing woodcarvings of the Viking Age.

On all of the tapestries there are men and women of various sizes. Clearly some are intended to stand out as extraordinary. The figures have varying dress, so as Gabriel Gustafson, who led the restoration, observed, all social classes appear to be present (Krafft 1956: 18). It is consistent that what appear to be women of high status wear dresses shaped so two triangles meet the ground. Men are typically depicted with pants or kirtles and exposed legs. They may carry spears and/or shields. Horses and birds are abundant. There is scarcely a void in the

[13] For Gotland picture stones, see: Helmbrecht 2011, Nylén 1988, Lindquist 1941, Hedeager 2011.
For Insular stone carvings, see: Kopár 2012, Bailey 1980, Cubbon 1996, Collingwood 1927, Kermode 1907.

ornament as spears, swastikas and other symbols fill the spaces. These were likely not placed incidentally as a decorative pattern and have some symbolic meaning. Borders are filled with geometric zigzag and diamond shaped patterns, but sometimes there are some more organic shapes that separate the "scenes" (Krafft 1956). The weave of warp and weft adds a texture along with the intricate patterns that fill the surfaces of the figures, which were outlined with contrasting colored threads so they would stand out. The *reflar* are covered with these motifs arranged horizontally in rows, usually with motion from right to left. Hougen understood the rows to be a primitive attempt at perspective (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 85). It can also be argued that the intent was to achieve a pattern effect covering the flat surface. However, the remnants do appear to feature "scenes" rather than simply repeated motifs. The objects vary in size in order to add emphasis (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992). Additionally, as Krafft notes, each element, whether it be man, woman, horse or wagon, is unique in dress and adornment (Krafft 1956).

Hougen conducted an art historic analysis of the pieces, and his written detailed descriptions along with photos and drawings of the fragments are included in the last volume of *Osebergfunnet* (Hougen 2006). In her study, Helmbrecht refers to the textile fragments as she places them in categories according to the motifs of the iconography (Helmbrecht 2011). Krafft worked closely with Gustafson, professor and manager of the *Universitetets Oldsaksamling* in Christiania, during the initial stages of restoration. The tapestries were crushed together, and the colors quickly faded as the fragments were carefully separated. The pieces were photographed at the time, but they do not reveal much detail in available publications. Fortunately, using light to her advantage, Krafft made watercolors and sketches of the textiles as they were split, and these are referred to in the following descriptions. She published her own book with commentary about the images on the *reflar* and she relates some of Gustafson's interpretations (Krafft 1956). Gustafson and Krafft understood the weavings to be scenes from the Oseberg queen's life. Ingstad proposed a *religionhistorisk* analysis, i.e. an evaluation grounded in the discipline history of religion. The main thrust of Ingstad's thesis is that one of the women may have indeed been a queen, but she also argues that one or both of them were religious cult leaders. In particular, she presents several arguments that the queen was understood to be an incarnation of the goddess Freyja (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992). These sources are examined in the following pages, and it does appear, as emphasized above regarding the wood-carved objects and the overall impression of the burial, that one or both of the women in the grave served some cult religious function. Indeed, made in a time when the possibility that the worldview may not have distinguished a goddess much differently than her human representative makes this aspect of the iconography on the tapestries particularly interesting.[14]

Interpretation of the fragments 1 and 2, and the significance of the wagons

Some of the pictorial tapestries were found sandwiched on the floorboards of the crushed, crudely constructed grave chamber on the ship, and they appear to have been used to line the interior ceiling. This application would not have been unlike hanging of tapestries for ritual events. Two fragments that were found on the floor apparently belong together. Krafft noted that there is no repetition among the collection of many images they feature (Krafft 1956: 19). Those

[14] While the possibility of an incarnate "god" or "goddess" cannot be ruled out, in Old Norse literature examples of worship usually involve ancestors rather than the living: see Schjødt 2010 for his discussion of sacral kingship.

who have written about the excavation concur that the two fragments, and possibly a third, together depict a procession scene. Therefore, it is useful to consider the elements in relationship to representations of mythical processions that may have existed in woodcarvings. The motion is from right to left, as seen in most of the tapestries (Krafft 1956: 25). This could be due to the technique involved in working the loom, and/or also may have been a common way of reading pictorial representations. The fibers making up the warp are strands fixed to the loom, and the fibers that cross through, the weft, using a shuttle, back and forth, gradually build the fabric. However, the direction of movement would depend on how the weaver oriented herself to the project and whether she wove the action moving toward or away from her. Here, two of the fragments are described from what may have been the "destination" of the procession, left to right.

In the *refill* fragment referred to as number 2, the direction moves toward a salient figure in the uppermost left corner of the fragments, who in comparison with the other figures is an oversized man. (fig. 21) Krafft recalls that Gustafson thought he was a deity or giant, and the scene may depict a pilgrimage to him (Kraft 1956: 18). Ingstad saw him as a shaman. In the one hand she believed he holds a sword, in the other it is unclear - she thought it might be a *bissel* "bridle" and another sword. Krafft also thought the "giant" is holding a sword in both hands, and she pointed out a number of objects hanging from his arms, such as rings, and a zig-zag shaped object, which she determined is a magical symbol. Hougen described the man as unique among the images of men. In addition, he noted that the figure is holding a sword not by the hilt but by the blade. Also, he saw two, possibly three oval rings dangling from, most clearly, his left arm (Hougen 2006: 23). Based on a vignette drawn by Krafft, the "giant" man is seen in detail. (fig. 22) He holds in his left hand a sword with the tip down at what appears to be just below the hilt - perhaps it is sheathed. From his left arm the rings dangle - rather than a bridle, these look like they may be intended to depict a *rangle*[15]. In the "giant" figure's right hand he is holding a boomerang shaped instrument in the middle of what is seen of it, understood as a sword by Hougen, Ingstad and Krafft. Another of the double ring objects appears to be connected to the shaft just below his grip. The top of the bowed shaft looks like it has two ringed coils around it. It is uncertain if the shaft terminates there or actually extended beyond the fragment. Due to her study, Krafft would be the most familiar with the depiction, but the bowed shaft could be perceived as an animal-head post, *dyrehodestolpe*, rather than a sword. In addition, the other swords depicted on the tapestries are straight. It indeed appears that the man is holding and surrounded by cultic instruments and thereby plays some ritual role. This fits known instances of depictions of the Æsir gods. Þórr is identifiable by his hammer, Óðinn with his spear and Heimdallr holding a horn[16]. These objects are associated with magical qualities while they simultaneously make the deity recognizable.

The overall scene on fragments 1 and 2 is crowded with people, horses and wagons. Gustafson and Krafft believed the carts were meant to contain sacrificial objects and covered with beautiful tapestries. Gustafson's impression was the procession involves healing with sacrificial offerings that were being brought to a *blót*, or ceremony, led by the figure holding the magical objects (Krafft 1956: 18). Ingstad thought they were intended to depict wagons carrying

[15] As described above and shown in figure 14.
[16] See part two. Depictions are, for example, on carved stones on the Isle of Man and Northumbria. See also: Kopár 2012, Bailey 1980, Cubbon 1996, Collingwood 1927, Kermode 1907.

the likenesses of deities, and she has written a detailed analysis of the procession. All of the figures are in movement towards the figure whom she took to be a shaman. In the middle in front a man rides on a white horse. She believed his prominent size indicates that he is a king. Two birds fly over that man, a third large bird flies up over a man who is walking in front of the horse, and a fourth flies down behind the mount. It is not possible to determine what type of birds they are, but reinforcing the idea that he is a king, she imagined they are likely falcons or hawks (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 234). She cited sources that refer to men of high status hunting with these birds of prey, hence, they would symbolize royalty. Ingstad speculated it may be a depiction of Guðrøðr veiðikonungr (the hunting king) as a potential user of falcons. He is the only rider in the procession (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 237). The two birds depicted also bring to mind Huginn and Muninn, Óðinn's ravens (Lindow 2001: 186). However, as recorded by Krafft, the birds are a light shade, and Ingstad argues two darker ones may be hovering around a different representation of Óðinn on the adjoining fragment 1 (see below).

Below and beside the white horse is another one covered with a patterned caparison, and it pulls a wagon. The significance of the wagons in fragments 1 and 2 has been the focus of much attention, and each of the scholars referred to here has pointed to the account about Nerthus by the first century Roman historian Tacitus in his description of the northern European tribes in *Germania*. As it is a basis for interpretation, it is worth quoting at length:

> Contra Langobardos paucitas nobilitat: plurimis ac valentissimis nationibus cincti non per obsequium, sed proeliis ac periclitando tuti sunt. Reudigni deinde et Aviones et Anglii et Varini et Eudoses et Suardones et Nuithones fluminibus aut silvis muniuntur. Nec quicquam notabile in singulis, nisi quod in commune Nerthum, id est Terram matrem, colunt eamque intervenire rebus hominum, invehi populis arbitrantur. Est in insula Oceani castum nemus, dicatumque in eo vehiculum, veste contectum; attingere uni sacerdoti concessum. Is adesse penetrali deam intellegit vectamque bubus feminis multa cum veneratione prosequitur. Laeti tunc dies, festa loca, quaecumque adventu hospitioque dignatur. Non bella ineunt, non arma sumunt; clausum omne ferrum; pax et quies tunc tantum nota, tunc tantum amata, donec idem sacerdos satiatam conversatione mortalium deam templo reddat. Mox vehiculum et vestes et, si credere velis, numen ipsum secreto lacu abluitur. Servi ministrant, quos statim idem lacus haurit. Arcanus hinc terror sanctaque ignorantia, quid sit illud, quod tantum perituri vident. (Tacitus 2012: 38)

> The Langobardi, by contrast, are distinguished by the fewness of their numbers. Ringed round as they are by many mighty peoples, they find safety not in obsequiousness but in battle and its perils. After them come the Reudigni, Aviones, Anglii, Varini, Eudoses, Suarini and Nuitones, behind their ramparts of rivers and woods. There is nothing noteworthy about these peoples individually, but they are distinguished by a common worship of Nerthus, or Mother Earth. They believe that she interests herself in human affairs and rides among their peoples. In an island of the Ocean stands a sacred grove, and in the grove a consecrated cart, draped with a cloth, which none but the priest may touch. The priest perceives the presence of the goddess in this holy of holies and attends her,

> in deepest reverence, as her cart is drawn by heifers. Then follow days of rejoicing and merry-making in every place that she deigns to visit and be entertained. No one goes to war, no one takes up arms; every object of iron is locked away; then, and only then, are peace and quiet known and loved, until the priest again restores the goddess to her temple, when she has had her fill of human company. After that, the cart, the cloth and, if you care to believe it, the goddess herself are washed clean in a secluded lake. This service is performed by slaves who are immediately afterwards drowned in the lake. Thus mystery begets terror and a pious reluctance to ask what that sight can be that only those doomed to die may see. (Tacitus 2009: 53-54)

The key concepts for further investigation are the later Viking Age associations of a wagon for transportation of a deity/idol, ritual worship and/or sacrifice. In fragments 1 and 2 a horse pulls a wagon with two persons. The one (and possibly the second) appears to be a woman. Gustafson interpreted one of these women as the queen, as did Ingstad. It is fitting that she would ride alongside the possible depiction of a king mounted on his horse. While Ingstad repeatedly suggested the tapestries point to the goddess Freyja, Hougen and others have referred to a passage from *Þáttr af Ögmundi dytt ok Gunnari helming* in *Flateyjarbók* that describes how Freyr and his priestess drove about the "village" in a wagon, and that it resembles the account of Nerthus (Hougen 2006: 117). In the *þáttr* it seems that the likeness of Freyr was to some degree animated as *... suo miogh (var) magnat likneski Freys at fiandinn talade vid menn ór skurgodinu...* "- and so much power had been gained by Frey's statue that the devil used to speak to people out of the mouth of the idol, ... " (*Flateyjarbók* 1860: 337, *Tale of Ogmund Bash* 1997: 320). In addition, his priestess was also his wife. They travelled together to winter feasts: *Lidr nu at þeirri stundu er þau buazst hæman ok skylldu þau Freyr ok kona hans sitia j uagnne en þionustumenn þeirra skylldu ganga firir*. "Now it came to the time that they set out from home, and Frey and his wife were to sit in a cart while their retainers walked in front" (*Flateyjarbók* 1860: 338, *Tale of Ogmund Bash* 1997: 320). Hougen noted that it is difficult to accurately discern the gender of the two figures sitting in the front wagon. Even if they are both intended as women, this did not dissuade him from suggesting the procession may be representative of a Freyr cult (Hougen 2006: 117). Indeed, the overtly Christian account that essentially spoofs the god and his followers may point to an earlier ritual practice that is depicted in the tapestry (see also Helmbrecht 2011: 87, Davidson 1988: 116-17). There is also an account about an otherwise unattested god Lýtir (except perhaps in placenames) in *Hauks þáttr hábrókar* in *Flateyjarbók*. Eiríkr konungr wished to consult with the god: *sidan lętr hann aka .ij. uognum til stadarins þar sem hann blotade þat god er Lytir het. var sa sidr at uagnninn skyllde standa um nott ok kom hann til vm morgininn* (*Flateyjarbók* 1860: 579-80). "he (Eiríkr) later had a wagon driven to the place where he sacrificed to the god called Lýtir. It was the custom that the wagon would stay there overnight and he would come to it in the morning." After two nights, Lýtir still had not come to the wagon as summoned, so Eiríkr sacrificed even more. The third night the god arrived and was brought on the wagon to the king's hall (*Flateyjarbók* 1860: 580). These accounts lend credence to the idea that the procession depicted on the fragments 1 and 2 represents the transport of one or more idols in a ritual context.

Since at least two of the wagons in the procession are covered, and possibly a third which is not entirely visible, Ingstad reasoned that they are concealing something of a religious nature.

She referred to the account by Tacitus and noted how the idol was draped in cloth. Hence, while Hougen focused on the foremost open wagon in the context of Freyr, Ingstad referred to the rest of the covered wagons as carrying the veiled likenesses of multiple other gods. On the adjoining fragment number 1 (which forms the segment to the right of fragment 2), below one of these horses a man walks with a staff in his hand. (fig. 23) Surrounding the wagon there are arrays of swastika symbols and serpent-like signs along with a spear. Both Ingstad and Krafft interpreted the swastika as representing peace, wellness and luck. The spear can signify a phallus or fertility symbol. Therefore, Ingstad posited this particular wagon is likely concealing a fertility god - Freyr or Njǫrðr. She argued that it is likely Njǫrðr and mentioned an episode in *Heimskringla*, where Hákon the good is forced to drink to Njǫrðr at a *blót* at Mære (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 238) She must be confusing the sources here. In the Íslenzk Fornrit edition, Snorri relates that Hákon is coerced into eating horse meat at Mære, but there appears to be no mention of a toast to a specific god there (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 172). However, Snorri does write about a *Njarðar full*, toast to Njǫrðr, at Hlaðir in the context of a *blót* there, as discussed below (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 168). Ingstad provided an additional argument that at this later date Njǫrðr was a seafaring and trade-persons' god (citation needed, however). She noted that Vestfold was on major sea trade routes and possibly he was worshiped around Oseberg during the Viking period. The medieval church there was dedicated to St. Botolv - saint of the same trades - and the tendency was to replace the attributes of a heathen god with a saint (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 239).

To the rear of this carriage the front of another horse is visible. It has a harness on its neck, and it pulls a wagon - there are two wheels behind the horse, but it is not possible to detect what the wagon looks like or if it is covered. The horse has a spear under its neck, apparently hanging from the bridle. Ingstad mentioned that a spear stands for bravery and was the special weapon of Óðinn. She is, of course, referring to his spear, Gungnir. A black bird resembling the ones on the other fragment flies over the horse. A similar one appears below its belly. Ingstad reasoned these are ravens and concluded the wagon must carry the likeness of Óðinn (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 238). There is evidence elsewhere that two ravens identify the god; namely, a carved stone on the Isle of Man shows Óðinn with his spear and ravens while being swallowed by the Fenris wolf (fig. 103).

Ingstad believed that the wagon pulled by the red horse above on fragment 1 contains the likeness of the goddess Freyja. She wrote that the color red stands for love, sexual excitement, etc. associated with the goddess. The tail of the horse is knotted, which Ingstad posited symbolizes binding love. Many women are depicted on picture stones, small silver pieces and gold foil plates with "knots" in their hair. It must have been a common hair style, but, she suggested these women also represent the goddess Freyja. Likewise, she argued that the figure on the picture stone from Tjängvide, Gotland, who advances with a horn of mead, may be Freyja or a Valkyrie welcoming a fallen warrior to the realm of the dead. There are indeed many depictions of women with drinking horns from the Viking Age in Scandinavia, but this association does not appear to fit her arguments regarding the wagon in the scene because such a horn is absent. Another man with a spear stands under the groin or the red horse. Since the spear is a phallic symbol, she argued this also is an indication that the wagon conceals the image of Freyja, the fertility goddess (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 239). However, spears appear around all of the horses, and it is a common symbol.

While Ingstad's idea that the wagons contain the likenesses of deities is substantial, not all of her arguments are very convincing. The analogy of Nerthus (later, Njǫrðr) in tow for the ritual of assuring the fertility of the fields is enticing, but other than perhaps the ravens, there is scant evidence on the tapestries connecting the wagons to specific gods or goddesses as she claimed. As cited above, Hougen and Helmbrecht concur that it is possible the wagons in the procession were intended as carrying the likenesses of gods, but if that is the case it is difficult to argue specifically which ones. Additional magical instruments and certain animals are associated with the Æsir, and one might expect to see more of those symbols if the gods and goddesses were indeed represented. Her descriptions draw attention to the overall motifs, however, and this is a valuable contribution.

Clearly there is a relationship between wagons and the earthly transport of the likenesses of gods, but Snorri also refers to the *reið, kerra* and *vagn* as the mythic mode of transportation for the Norse pantheon. The best known of these is Þórr and his goats: *Tanngnjóstr ok Tanngrisnir; ok reið þá er hann ekr, en hafrarnir draga reiðna. Því er hann kallaðr Ǫkuþórr.* "Tanngniost and Tanngrisnir, and a chariot that he drives in, and the goats draw the chariot. From this he is known as Oku-Thor" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 23, *Edda* 1995: 22). In the poem *Sigurðardrápa*, Kormákr simply states: *Sitr Þórr í reiðum* "Þórr sits in his wagon" - (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 84, see detailed discussion below section 1.5). A tale seems to tie the identity of Þórr to his chariot and goats because he leaves them behind when disguised as a young man (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 44). Freyja also has a wagon: *En er hon ferr, þá ekr hon kǫttum tveim ok sitr í reið.* "And when she travels she drives two cats and sits in a chariot" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 25, *Edda* 1995: 24). Freyr, according to Snorri, joins Baldr's procession *í kerru með gelti þeim er Gullinbursti heitir eða Slíðrugtanni.* "... in a chariot with a boar called Gullinbursti or Slidrugtanni" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 47, *Edda* 1995: 50). However, in *Húsdrápa* Úlfr makes it sound like he is riding his boar (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19, *Edda* 1995: 75). In *Skáldskaparmál,* Snorri mentions a kenning for Njǫrðr is *vagna guð* in Codex Regius (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 18, cf. 137). That would be fitting, as Njǫrðr is associated with Nerthus, which would support the idea that likenesses of the gods would be drawn about in wagons within a ritual context. Not only gods and goddesses are associated with wagons or chariots, as the heavenly bodies are also: *Þá tók Alfǫðr Nótt ok Dag son hennar ok gaf þeim tvá hesta ok tvær kerrur ok setti þau upp á himin at þau skulu ríða á hverjum tveim dægrum umhverfis jǫrðina.* "Then All-father took Night and her son Day and gave them two horses and two chariots and set them up in the sky so that they have to ride around the earth every twenty-four hours" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 13, *Edda* 1995: 14).

The mythic associations with wagons are plentiful. However, if Gustafson was correct that the tapestries focus on scenes from the queen's life, perhaps the episode shown here was some other event than transport of some form of the gods. The scene could represent a ritual procession to serve any number of purposes, healing, such as he suggested, or initiation, accession, a wedding, fertility or as presented here, a funeral. It seems funeral processions were not an uncommon practice during the Viking Age. This notion has etymological support, as terms including *leiði* and *leiða* reinforce the idea that a corpse was brought in a procession to a grave mound or funeral pyre (Falk 1913: 10).

Metal remains of carts from graves that had a similar contour to the Oseberg wagon have been found in graves of primarily high status women in Denmark and northern Germany (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 119). Judith Jesch also presents statistics demonstrating the tendency for prominent women to be buried in or with carts or wagons (Jesch 1991: 9-38). The legend of Brynhildr supports the idea of such a practice. In the introduction to the poem *Helreið Brynhildar* it states:

> Eptir dauða Brynhildar vóro gor bál tvau, annat Sigurði, oc brann þat fyrr, enn Brynhildr var á ǫðro brend, oc var hon í reið, þeiri er guðvefiom var tiolduð. Svá er sagt, at Brynhildr óc með reiðinni á helveg oc fór um tún, þar er gýgr noccor bió. (*Edda* 1983: 219)
>
> After Brynhild's death two pyres were made, the other one was for Sigurd, and that was kindled first, and Brynhild was burnt in the second one, and she was in a wagon draped with costly woven tapestries. It is said that Brynhild drove the wagon along the road to hell and went past a settlement, where a certain giantess lived. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 192)

When she banters with the giantess she recites this verse, which confirms that she is en route in her wagon:

> 'Ec mun segia þér, svinn, ór reiðo,
> vitlaussi mioc, ef þic vita lystir,
> hvé gorðo mic Giúca arfar
> ástalausa oc eiðrofa. (*Edda* 1983: 220)
>
> 'I must tell you, I, the wise lady in the wagon,
> you very stupid woman, if you wish to know,
> how the heirs of Giuki treated me,
> deprived me of love, and violated their oaths. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 193)

While the Oseberg queen was buried in a chamber on the ship, it makes sense that she was transported to the burial in the wagon which in the final case remained with her. Likewise, it seems that transport of the dead to their grave or cremation site would be a common use for a ceremonial wagon, and it is reasonable to propose such a scene is conveyed on the tapestry fragments 1 and 2. Since there were at least three wagons depicted, they could have been transporting the corpses of some high status kinsmen en route to their burial mounds or pyre. Correspondingly, as a mythic depiction, the wagons could have been intended as transportation, analogous to Brynhildr, from the grave to the world of the dead.

To summarize the importance of the Oseberg wagon depictions for this study, it seems there were few practical uses for such vehicles in the landscape. It has been noted in section 1.1 that the fixed wheel axles of the actual unearthed wagon indicate it featured little maneuverability. Additionally, much of the terrain in Norway would not allow for the use of wagon transportation. Rather, such carts have been interpreted for ritual use (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992, Eisenschmidt 2006). The procession scene provides this impression, and it

is remarkable given the suggested lack of importance for practical use that there are as many as three carts depicted on the tapestries. While the morbid carved motifs on the wooden Oseberg wagon support the notion that the vehicle could have been used to cart sacrificial offerings, there is little in the extant literature to suggest this. The account by Tacitus has been cited, along with similar scenarios presented in sagas, that indicate wagons were used to move idols through the countryside. Perhaps this tradition inspired the legend told by Saxo in Book VI of *Gesta Danorum*, where he mentions how the Danes long "carried" the deceased king Fróði around Denmark, presumably in a wagon (Davidson 1980). While carting cloaked offerings, idols or dead heroes for exhibition are all possibilities, the use of the wagons to a) move aristocrats such as the queen short distances for ceremonious purposes, and b) as vehicles to transport the dead to their grave mounds and sometimes to serve as a burial vessel, are suggested here as the most reasonable solution to the puzzling iconography. All of the uses proposed are cases of ritual acts, but on tapestry fragments 1 and 2 the use of the wagons seems to present a funeral procession. The legendary ritual aspect creates an indirect link to the mythic gods. It is argued extensively elsewhere in this dissertation that the Æsir clan were understood as the ancestors of the elite. It is suitable that the deceased were transported and buried in their wagons as these were the vehicles of individual gods and goddesses and indeed some elements of the mythological cosmos. While the depictions on the pictorial tapestries were likely those of humans, the legendary aspects of the scenes indicate a mystic conveyance - one that may be transferred to an imagined iconography of the Æsir on now missing woodcarvings.

Some attributes of the woven wagon structure, such as the quartered wheels with diamond hubs, may be used as a generic model for depictions. If one were to follow Snorri's version, Freyr arrived at Baldr's funeral drawn by his boar. What is clearly a chariot-like seat with rhombic patterns on the front wagon could be used for a prototype of Freyr's *reið*. As mentioned above, Snorri and Kormákr provided descriptions of Þórr driving a cart or chariot. There are accounts of both gods and goddesses being pulled by various creatures. While wagons were predominantly used for female graves, and ships for the final resting place of males, that does not preclude a ritual custom of male corpses transported on wagons to their pyre. Snorri told: *Hestr Baldrs var leiddr á bálit með ǫllu reiði*. "Baldr's horse was led on to the pyre with all its harness" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 47, *Edda* 1995: 50). Cleasby Vigfusson also translates *reiði* as "harness" (Cleasby Vigfusson 1969: 490). As opposed to a saddle, upon which one rides a horse, a harness is rigging to pull a vehicle behind a horse. The wagons in tapestries 1 and 2, with their potentially morbid cargo illustrated with cart body and two rounded layers of coverings, may serve as models for a possible mode of transportation for Baldr's corpse to the point where the Æsir carried him onto his funeral ship. Therefore, in view of Snorri and Úlfr's descriptions, one might expect to see at least one wagon in a depiction of Baldr's funeral procession, in particular the one used to transport Baldr in proximity of his ship (see section 2.6). To enhance and animate the scene, the nearby swastikas, three and four leaf interlaced shapes and other symbols may indicate motion, sound and unseen energies transmitted by the wagons and the larger ritual activity. As such, along with the Gotland Picture Stones, the Oseberg tapestries provide the best clues to how wagons commonly appeared in Viking Age iconography. In part two of this dissertation, the iconography and ritual aspect of this procession scene is further explored in regard to the movement toward Baldr's funeral pyre described in *Húsdrápa*. Rites of passage, including funerals, are a theme revisited by crafts persons as they present

imagery in order to convey their tales[17], and Baldr's procession may have been illustrated in a similar manner: anthropomorphized deities on horses, in (mythic) wagons and walking solemnly in rows, in his case, posed towards Baldr's funeral ship. Additionally, the shapes of the figures, their mode of dress, the horses and their caparisons, the birds and other symbols may be compared and synthesized with other iconography to arrive at prototypes for wood-carved scenes.

Additional iconography on tapestry fragments

One of the things that lends fascination to the tapestries is their current condition. Over time they were smashed together in curious folds, so one fragment contains many "scenes" that are not perpendicular but stretch out at odd angles in relation to each other, such as on what is referred to as fragment 13, prior to splitting. (fig. 24) Krafft's sketch shows a large woman dressed in a full length skirt with a broad embroidered belt. Her top is tightly fitted and a lighter color. Her face shows no details, but she has a two-pronged headdress. She leans against a dark horse with her left arm on the girth and the right reaching up to its mane. A fold obscures the head of the horse. A woman, identifiable by her long hair, and as Krafft has indicated, a dress that ends in two triangles, stands behind her and above the horse. Between the hind legs of the horse is another figure shown from the waist up. To the left of the woman with the horse there is a border with a crisscross pattern that may represent animal or serpent heads. At an intentional angle of approximately 45˚ at least two women stand below on a slope in a subordinate position and look up facing toward the extraordinary woman. A fold obscures the rest of the content of this sloping section. On this fold, perpendicular to the rest is a row of seven figures of particular interest, as they each raise their arms above their heads in a similar fashion. Krafft calls them "adorantes" (Krafft 1956: 24). It is difficult to discern the original layout of all these figures, but the overall impression is certainly that the woman by the horse is being revered. Ingstad claimed she must be Freyja (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 241). It does appear that she represents a deity or human with numinous qualities. While Freyja is not mentioned in extant stanzas of the poem *Húsdrápa*, she is among those listed by Snorri attending Baldr's funeral as are Valkyries and a powerful giantess, so any representations of worshipped and/or mythic women are of interest for this study. The overall figure, styles of dress, hair and (here absent) facial features may be synthesized with depictions of women from multiple sources to arrive at prototypes for missing woodcarvings.

Fragment "7B", as drawn by Krafft, depicts a very interesting human-shaped figure in a bird costume. (fig. 25) Hougen identifies similarities in the bird head with other ornament from the Vendel style in Salin's category Style II (Hougen 2006: 52). The icon brings to mind Snorri's mention of Freyja's falcon suit. The figure stands between what appears to be a structure with a roof featuring a terminating "dragon head" and the hind end of a horse. These are surrounded by mysterious geometrical shapes, which likely have some symbolic meaning. Hougen recognized a similarity between the dragon head and some seen on the Gotland picture stones (Hougen 2006: 51). Citing the resemblance to later stave churches Ingstad believed roofs depicted in the scenes with dragon heads indicate that they must be parts of sacred buildings (Christiansen, Ingstad,

[17] There are numerous possible candidates for ritual scenes, including those interpreted as entering Valhǫll, such as the Gotland picture stones Ardre VIII or Tjängvide I. The Överhogdal tapestry 1127 features a long procession of horses, albeit without wagons. Tapestry 1129, however, features a wagon, as does the Alskog, Kirche picture stone 486. (See Helmbrecht 2011: 72, 88)

Myhre 1992: 245-46). Indeed, the resemblance of the roof to the dragonhead here and elsewhere in the tapestries demonstrates that such building ornament pre-dates the stave churches and may be associated with pre-Christian structures in a ritual context. Ingstad imagined the fragment must depict Freyja and the same king as riding the horse in fragment 2, with some fertility event happening there (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 246). This piece is not described by Krafft. The rest of the fragment is obscured, and in Krafft's sketch there is no clear depiction of a king. However, Hougen does identify a couple of figures with rather "formless" heads (Hougen 2006). The central, anthropomorphic figure with the bird costume surrounded by the aniconic symbols harkens to the shape shifting theme presented above seen in the Oseberg woodcarvings. Hence, the ritual context of the scene in "7B" may involve *seiðr*, the practice associated with such mythic transformation accomplished by Freyja and the Æsir.

Ingstad's theory that the queen buried at Oseberg could have been considered an incarnation of Freyja (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 254) may seem far-fetched given there is little in Old Norse literature to suggest such beliefs. However, there are examples from other cultures to draw from. In his examination of idolatry, Gell refers to a study by Michael Allen of such cases of living goddesses. *Kumaripuja* is a practice in India of worshiping a goddess in the form of a young virgin girl. In particular, among the Newars of the Katmandu valley the girl is a form of the deity Taleju, who in turn is a form of the goddess Durga. (As an interesting aside, just as Snorri tells about Freyja riding or using cats as vehicles, Durga rides on a lion.) Allen describes the ceremony of her installation. The young girl carefully selected for the installation is led into a temple awash with the blood of sacrificial animals. On her own, she must follow a prescribed path to the chief priest. After the initial purification rites, the priest chants a mantra and goes through the motions of removing the girl's past life using a bundle of grasses and other vegetation and rubbing it on certain sensitive body areas as the spirit of the goddess enters her. Additional rites are performed, along with the second phase of consecration which includes wrapping the girl with the dress of Taleju and painting her. Among other features, her eyes are outlined and a third eye is painted on her forehead. What interests Gell is the focus on the relationship between the girl's interior being filled with the goddess and her exterior animation, which can be compared to many examples of art objects used as idols. Frequently these are hollow, and the access to the interior is the carved exterior through the painted eye and other orifices (Gell 1998: 151-53). This concept is referred to above regarding the Oseberg ship as a vessel where the external carvings allowed similar access to the interior occupied by the queen/priestess or incarnate goddess. A parallel observation can be made on fragment "7 B" if indeed the figure depicted is Freyja in her falcon skin. If she was recognized as such, the external skin donned by the living goddess may have served to reinforce her transformation into the deity during ritual occasions. Hence, in combination with a comparative anthropology the many scenes depicting women participating in rites on the tapestries serve to corroborate Ingstad's intuitive stance.

Fragment "4", as drawn by Krafft, shows what remains of an entire width of a *refill* depicting what has been called *den hellige lund,* "the holy grove" - with sacrificed men hanging in trees. (fig. 26) The strip has two borders framing the scene top and bottom, with similar angular patterns that consist of "M" shapes terminating in serpent-like heads. It is quite possible that wood-carved scenes also would be framed by serpent shapes like these in order to set them apart or frame them. Centered in the sketch are a number of vine-like and twisted ribbon-like

trunks and limbs that stretch from the bottom and reach the top - these shapes also terminate in serpent heads. Some resemble horse heads. They appear to be stylized trees with several men in kirtles hanging from them. There are possibly nine or ten hanging, but it is uncertain because part of the image is obscured, and there are other figures not hanging in female attire that are situated to the sides below and above. One, above right, appears to gesture out and upward as in a ritual act facing one of the hanging men. She could also be part of a procession that continues on the other side of the grove on the far left. There, two other women share a similar reverent gesture as they are posed behind a man holding a sword by the sheath or shaft (compare to the so-called shaman on tapestry number 2) (Hougen 2006). On the far right is an oversized animal. Hougen thinks it may be an ox. Ingstad thought it was the same as the horse in fragment 2 pulling the wagon, however, the caparison pattern is different. The large beast of burden enters the scene with two smaller women figures below its head. They appear to be witnessing the event. The back of the horse is missing, but ropes extend backward indicating something was attached behind it. One might draw associations with an absent cart and the sacrificial theme of the tapestry fragment.

This "holy grove" scene, with its potentially nine male sacrificial victims, is reminiscent of Adam of Bremen's description of such an event in Uppsala:

> Sacrificium itaque tale est: ex omni animante, quod masculinum est, novem capita offeruntur, quorum sanguine deos placari mos est. Corpora autem suspenduntur in lucum, qui proximus est templo. Is enim lucus tam sacer est gentilibus, ut singulae arbores eius ex morte vel tabo immolatorum divinae credantur. Ibi etiam canes et equi pendent cum hominibus, quorum corpora mixtim suspensa narravit mihi aliquis christianorum LXXII vidisse. (Schmeidler 1917: 259-60)
>
> The sacrifice is of this nature: of every living thing that is male, they offer nine heads, with the blood of which it is customary to placate gods of this sort. The bodies they hang in the sacred grove that adjoins the temple. Now this grove is so sacred in the eyes of the heathen that each and every tree in it is believed divine because of the death or putrefaction of the victims. Even dogs and horses hang there with men. A Christian told me that he had seen 72 bodies suspended promiscuously.[18] (modified from Adam 2002: 208)

If one does not consider the "horse heads" that terminate on some of the limbs of the trees as sacrificial victims, in the scene on the tapestry only men hang. From extant sources, other interpretations may be applied. Nine hanging men could depict Óðinn hanging nine nights sacrificing himself "to himself" in what seems a preparation for a shamanic-like journey in order to acquire runic charms:

> Veit ec, at ec hecc vindgameiði á
> nætr allar nío,
> geiri undaðr oc gefinn Óðni,
> siálfr siálfom mér,

[18] unmodified: A Christian seventy-two years old told me that he had seen their bodies suspended promiscuously.

á þeim meiði, er mangi veit,
hvers hann af rótom renn. (*Edda* 1983: 40, *Hávamál* 138)

I know that I hung on a windy tree
nine long nights,
wounded with a spear, dedicated to Odin,
myself to myself,
on that tree of which no man knows
from where its roots run. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 34)

As seen on the Oseberg carvings singular surfaces may show several figures in animation, i.e. more than one position in order to relate a narrative, here - nine men, the same number of nights. In the "holy grove" tapestry there is a figure with a spear on the upper far right corner. His feet dangle as do the other hanging men - perhaps "wounded with a spear, dedicated to Odin, myself to myself" (as translated above). Next to him is the previously mentioned female figure who raises her arm. She seems to be making an offering in the shape of a horn, a libation, to another hanging victim. This man has an odd shaped upper torso and head as if he is in a state of transformation. The figure could be interpreted as a liminal gateway to the "other world", and it also harkens to Óðinn getting a drink of the sacred mead when he journeys for the runes:

Fimbullióð nío nam ek af inom frægia syni
Bǫlþors, Bestlo fǫður,
oc ec drycc of gat ins dýra miaðar,
ausinn Óðreri. (*Edda* 1983: 40, *Hávamál* 140)

Nine mighty spells I learnt from the famous son
of Bolthor, Bestla's father,
and I got a drink of the precious mead,
poured from Odrerir. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 34)

The number nine is recurrent in Norse mythology - nine nights, sacrificial victims, the same number of powerful spells. Still, the verse describes the drink poured from the vat Óðrerir rather than specifically offered in a horn, and little else speaks to the myth told in the *Rúnatal* section of *Hávamál* on the tapestry. For example, each hanging man has slightly different attire indicating they are individuals, and it appears that they are not on a single tree, but indeed in a grove. In any case, the associations of hanging on a tree with Óðinn are well attested, such as the *heiti*, appellation(s), Hangagoð and Hangatýr, both referring to "god of the hanged." A *kenning*, circumlocution, for Óðinn is *gálga farmr*, 'cargo of the gallows.' The mythical cosmic ash tree Yggdrasill could have been understood as a compound of the *heiti* Yggr, for Óðinn, and *drasill*, mount: the mount of Óðinn, i.e. a tree also serves as gallows. If indeed the tree tops of the grove were intended to depict horse heads, the metaphor quite figuratively fits the scene. Most importantly, all of these connections with Óðinn that appear on the tapestry provide direct testimony that there was an Æsir cult in Oseberg and these relationships were given expression in material culture.

Among her arguments that Freyja is depicted on most of these fragments, Ingstad proposes that the two women portrayed on the upper left of "the holy grove" have a religious function. Ingstad sees the woman behind the figure who holds a sword in the middle of the blade as a matronly woman with her hands up in prayer. She has her hair in a knot. Ingstad thinks this may be a *hofgyðja*, temple priestess, or some other high standing person associated with the *hof*, temple. She suggests it may be the other woman in the Oseberg grave - a temple servant (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 243). As previously mentioned, a problem with the hair-knot argument is there are many women depicted with their hair in this style, and for that matter, tails of horses, too. Ingstad thought that because all of the sacrificial victims are men, that they must be an offering to Freyja (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 245). However, if one cites Adam of Bremen and the sacrifices at Uppsala, they would more likely be offerings to either Óðinn, Þórr or Freyr, as Freyja is not mentioned:

> Omnibus itaque diis suis attributos habent sacerdotes, qui sacrificia populi offerant. Si pestis et fames imminet, Thor ydolo lybatur, si bellum, Wodani, si nuptiae celebrandae sunt, Fricconi. Solet quoque post novem annos communis omnium Sueoniae provintiarum sollempnitas in Ubsola celebrari. (Schmeidler 1917: 259)
>
> For all their gods there are appointed priests to offer sacrifices for the people. If plague and famine threaten, a libation is poured to the idol Thor; if war, to Wotan; if marriages are to be celebrated, to Frikko. It is customary also to solemnize in Uppsala, at nine year intervals, a general feast of all the provinces of Sweden. (Adam 2002: 207-8)

Adam continues to explain how nine males from the various species, including men, are sacrificed in this "general" feast. Following the description and other examples above, it is more likely that the depicted hung and sacrificed are somehow associated with Óðinn. Ingstad referred to Tacitus writing that the Germans worshiped Nerthus in a holy sacrificial grove, where men were hung in trees. However, Tacitus did not write about men hung in trees in connection with Nerthus. She seems to have been confusing Tacitus with Adam of Bremen. Ingstad believed the sacrificial tree we see on the *refill* fragment may be a depiction of a holy death-wedding, and Freyja the recipient of the sacrifice. She saw a resemblance between the front of the horse with the caparison featured on this fragment as the same horse mentioned on the first fragment, the one that pulls the wagon with the two female figures. She speculated that this implies that this is the same horse and that it is associated with the temple. The problem here is that the caparison has a quite different pattern than the one on the other horse. Under the head of the large horse with the dissimilar meander patterned caparison stands a little lady, and she looks up at a large body that hangs in a tree. Ingstad thought it is likely this woman represents one of the women who sits on the wagon on fragment 1 who are being pulled by the horse in question, however, there is little that the two figures share in regard to outward appearance (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 243-45). While Ingstad's interpretation may be an interesting springboard for discussion, it is more reasonable to point to the analogy of Adam of Bremen's account and observe that the women spectators and participants may serve some ceremonial function in the scene depicted. Indeed, there may be a priestess portrayed, but here the iconography does not necessarily represent Freyja as the recipient of the victims. For this study, this discussion leads to

the consideration of how scenes such as these may point to a certain deity without necessarily depicting the god or goddess - much like the use of a *kenning*, circumlocution, in skaldic poetry, which alludes to a subject without specifically naming it[19]. Here, the associations with Óðinn are so strong there is little doubt that many other Norse mythological scenarios, now lost, were given expression in material culture. Additionally, in the "the holy grove" tapestry the iconographic depictions of the ribbon-like serpents that form the borders and the trunks and limbs of the trees provide excellent samples of the incorporation of biomorphic motifs within the narrative scene. The depictions of the human figures in terms of overall positioning, shape and attire are also helpful for imagining those forms in a wood-carved medium.

Reading commentary about the tapestries, it becomes increasingly apparent that the iconography may be understood in differing ways. On fragment "13B2" as drawn by Krafft, there is a scene with at least two quite different interpretations. (fig. 27) In the front a wagon is depicted with what Ingstad believed is a man. She noted the scene has been interpreted as the Battle of Brávellir where Haraldr hilditǫnn, old and blind, directs the battle from his wagon. According to Ingstad, this battle was supposed to occur between the Danes and Swedes in the 500's. (Other sources include a later range.) She noted that the spears have *styrefjær* "steering-feathers" on the ends for use in warfare instead of as staffs. There are no swastika symbols present here, so Ingstad believed it is really a battle scene (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 245). Hougen also saw the scene as warlike and refers to the Battle of Brávellir. He cited Saxo's description of the battle in his Danish History, Book Eight, Part I in comparison to the composition. He thought a grouping of crossing spear tips may represent the wedge formation used in the battle. Hougen had identified what may depict a battle standard in front and below the group of shield-maidens, and he posited it may be a reference to the standard bearer Visma. (Hougen 2006). Indeed, there are several shield-maidens mentioned in Saxo's account, as there are in *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum*, a fragment of an Icelandic text that contains a detailed description of the battle that somewhat resembles Saxo's. Both texts describe a barrage of arrows in the battle - certainly prevalent in the tapestry fragment. There are some discrepancies, however; if it is King Haraldr depicted on the tapestry in his "chariot" or "wain", where is the horse that pulls it? Krafft reported that Gustafson had a completely different interpretation. He determined that fragment "13B2" depicted the Oseberg cart with the queen in it. A shield partially blocks the person, but apparently there is enough visible for them to have claimed the figure wears a woman's garment featuring the triangular bottoms. Her "bodyguard" stands behind her holding their shields in front of them, but Gustafson understood the spear-like objects behind them as the cross-pieces of the top of a tent where the queen was staying. The way he perceived it, the tent is covered with a striped cloth and has a serrated ornamentation running along the ridge. This interpretation fits the information that tent poles were found in the Oseberg grave along with beds that would knock down. Gustafson thought maybe the queen had the cart alongside her tent, and when the day of some great event came she would have the horses harnessed. She would then be drawn to a place where she could see and be seen. The horses would be unharnessed and she would stand there with sword and shield (Krafft 1956: 22-23).

[19] For analogies of skaldic poetry with Viking art see: Wicker 2003, Lie 1982, Domeij 2006, Hedeager 2011, Hedenstierna-Jonson 2006, Helmbrecht 2011, Kristoffersen 2010, Neiß 2009

Another alternative is the scene depicts a legendary battle other than Brávellir. Two figures on the lower left of "17B2" are human-animal hybrids. The one below is somewhat obscured, but the figure above looks like he has a bear head. These appear to be "berserkers", warriors having assumed the qualities of animals and/or dressed in animal skins. Another figure facing the uppermost "bear" has two long horn shaped appendages stretching up from his head, and he is holding items described by Krafft as an object that resembles a "flash of lightning" (Krafft 1956: 23). It appears that he might be doing something ritualistic or involved with sorcery. The human-bear hybrids bring to mind *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappa hans*, where in the final battle Bǫðvarr sits back in a shamanic trance while he sends his bear-spirit form out into battle against the forces of the sorceress Queen Skuld. Her magic was ineffective until Bǫðvarr was disturbed from his reverie. Then, Skuld turned the battle in her favor by manifesting a magical boar *ok flýgr ǫr at hverju hans burstarhári* "and arrows flew from each of his bristles" (*Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda* I 1891: 80). Helmbrecht also interprets and compares fragment 16 as a battle scene where there is a comparable motif (Helmbrecht 2011: 172). Two sets of human bodies with boar-like countenances encounter similar looking figures with horns holding crossing "rods" that are arranged in a way that betray some magical purpose. However, Hougen notes that these boar-persons appear to be female, and female berserkers are otherwise unknown from Old Norse literature (Hougen 2006: 118). Perhaps this indicates that not only men, but sorceresses such as Skuld could shape-shift and participate in such a foray. Not only animals display such feats of sorcery, while there are examples of other legendary beings who are able to shoot arrows from their fingertips, such as Álfr bjálki in *Qrvar-Odds saga*. In the midst of battle, Oddr cannot see his opponent, but a local man points out Álfr and says, "*... ok er þat til marks um, at hann skýtr ǫr af hverjum fingri, ok hefir mann fyrr hverri*" "... If you want any proof, he's the one shooting an arrow from each of his fingers who kills a man with every one of them" (*Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda* II. 1886: 271, *Arrow Odd* 1970: 97). Some of the rod-shapes held in the fragments do have points like arrows, and they simultaneously seem to represent some kind of sorcery emanating from the hands of the peculiar figures. Even if the scenes on the pictorial tapestries do not perfectly match specific events familiar to us from extant legendary sagas, the iconography demonstrates a relationship between ca. fourteenth century literary accounts of the "fantastic" and imagery seen in material culture dating from the ninth century. Such a correlation suggests that myths and legends involving sorcery and the preternatural circulated as narratives prior to the accounts in texts of tales that were handed down. Although remnants of representational art from the Viking Age are scarce, the Oseberg tapestries demonstrate that detailed mythic scenes were extant - and many of these could very likely have been in the form of woodcarvings. The figures in fragment "13B2" with animal heads and features may serve as potential models. Snorri informs that the giantess Hyrrokkin arrives at Baldr's funeral and alights from her "steed" *en Óðinn kallaði til berserki fjóra at gæta hestins* "and Odin summoned four berserks to look after the mount" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 46, *Edda* 1995: 49). Features seen in the figures on the tapestry could be pictured in an encounter with Hyrrokkin's wolf-steed as carved on the paneling of Óláfr's *eldhús*. Additionally, Snorri informs us that no one else could shove out Baldr's funeral ship: *Þá gekk Hyrrokkin á framstafn nǫkkvans ok hratt fram í fyrsta viðbragði svá at eldr hraut ór hlunnunum ok lǫnd ǫll skulfu* "Then Hyrrokkin went to the prow of the boat and pushed it out with the first touch so that flame flew from the rollers and all lands quaked" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 46, *Edda* 1995: 48). From the description, it seems that more than brute force was involved with launching the

ship, and one can imagine a depiction of the scene from Baldr's funeral procession including a "flash of lightning" nearby.

Continuing with fragment "13B", above the spear tips crossing (or tent ridge) is a staff with four rectangles, and above that a large horseman. A spear under the horse's neck is a repeated pattern and Gustafson thought it was intended so the horses will keep their heads up (Krafft 1956: 23). Additional spears or arrows without any visibly distinct purpose fill in what would otherwise be empty spaces and cover the surface. In front of the horseman are five figures, all references used here concur these are shield-maidens or Valkyries with shields, identified as females by their dresses falling into two triangles. Gustafson and Krafft interpret the entire presentation of this scene as peaceful, with the bodyguards behind the queen and the Valkyries leading a procession (Krafft 1956: 23). It cannot be known for sure whether this is a peaceful scene or a battle, but it does seem to depict some legend with mythic components. For this study, how the shield maidens are illustrated is of particular interest, as Úlfr describes Valkyries being present at Baldr's funeral in *Húsdrápa*. As one might expect, the shield would be the primary iconographic attribute in depicting mythic Valkyries, along with some other, albeit subtle, indications of dress that the figures are indeed women. The shields on this fragment are slightly oval with an inner four-leaf clover frame surrounding an oblong, vertical boss. The shield-maidens also appear with hefty swords held upright.

Fragment "7A" as drawn by Krafft possibly depicts a mixed exterior and interior scene. (fig. 28) On the far left what appears to be a roof structure terminates in a serpent head gapping down at a swastika. Prior to the adoption by Nazi Germany, swastikas were understood to be positive symbols, and they appear in iconography throughout Indo-European history. As Krafft pointed out, the word translates from the Sanskrit "to be good". Davidson theorized the symbol represented Þórr, his hammer Mjǫlnir, but usually dates back to the bronze age as a sun sign. Its presence in many grave sites also indicate it was a funerary symbol (Davidson 1964: 83). Regarding the structure, the swastika may indicate some mystical capacity. The serpents look like they form part of a gable at the end, or perhaps the entryway to a building. Centered and to the right of the building a figure holds a spear, as does one to the side. Hougen thinks these are two men (Hougen 2006: 50), but Ingstad believed they were intended as a woman and man (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 246). Another structure beneath them also terminates in an "animal" head. The scale seems too small to reason that it was intended as another building, and it is the correct height in relation to the two figures to be a seat, bed or some other interior architectural feature. Headboard frames with a similar appearance were found in the burial. (fig. 29) On the far right to the side of the couple is a spear and an oval shaped hole. Ingstad understood these as symbols representing the phallus and vulva, and the fragment depicts a fertility scene in the vicinity of a sacred site (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 246). That seems unlikely as the two are standing holding spears. The figures are framed as if they are situated in a room gazing upon a decorated horizontal band at a height that could, reflexively, portray a *refill*. In any case, the tapestries demonstrate that woodcarvings were incorporated in Viking Age structures. Architecturally, the roof beams with terminating serpent heads show that these features date back at least as far as the early 800's. These carved figures likely had a cult/religious function. Their representation could be indicative of a *hof* "heathen temple", or, as argued in subsequent sections, a dwelling during the Viking Age that would have functioned as both a profane and sacred space.

While all of the tapestries are fascinating, one more is quite relevant for this study. Krafft drew fragment "13" after separating it from one of many layered piles. (fig. 30) Depending on the orientation, to the far right the front of a Viking vessel of the same style of the Oseberg burial ship, with its spiral dragon head, enters the scene. It is also possible to make out three shields along the gunwale and a sail above in diamond shapes with alternating colors. The ship appears to be docked at a sloped landing with a distinct wall featuring diamond shaped panels, a railing, and lined with upright spears. The "dock" levels out and above it are three crossing arches framing women. Perhaps they are there to greet the ship. As aforementioned, the Oseberg ship was not designed to be an ocean going craft but was likely used as a ceremonial vessel. As Gustafson and Krafft observed, this scene could have been an event from the queen's life where she arrived for an important occasion. There is a border above this segment and another scene above it. There are numerous figures, some symbols and possibly a bird. There is a woman bearing a lamp similar to ones seen in fragments 1 and 2. She is facing the scene below. Above and perpendicular to her is what might be a gate and wall - perhaps the enclosure of a settlement or sanctuary and the destination of the queen/priestess. The layout, patterns, figures and style of dress all have relevance for this study. Perhaps more importantly, the ship and dock are useful for imagining a potential rendering of Baldr's funeral pyre.

Textile art and agency

In regard to the tapestries as material culture, it is interesting to consider the structure of woven and embroidered fabric alongside the patterns and depictions sutured into the tapestries. In comparison with wood, and the grain that is built up in annual growth to form a unit, the configuration of textiles is essentially a reverse process. A woodcarver seeks out a suitable piece of material amongst what is already grown as a whole. Cloth is initiated from the fiber itself. While both derive from nature, it is through the human hand that a piece of fabric is created. Whether animal or plant fibers, these are first fashioned from the raw material and spun into continual strands. It is beyond this study to list all the techniques that utilize these strands, and it takes a lot of expertise to fully explain what went into the tapestries in the Oseberg find, but the point here is the "grain" and texture of the fabric is selected during the process. The building up of woven fabric has some interesting theoretical attributes. Lena Elisabeth Norrman presents some analogies between poetics and weaving. In view of performance theory, she likens the oral presentation by a poet to the narrative presented in a tapestry. Both bring about variations based on the expectations and knowledge of the audience. There are aspects of diachrony and synchrony at play, and the woven fabric depicting a scene may be understood as an "instance" of a legend or myth with local color and variation related by the perception of the artist. Norrman likens the technique of weaving to these concepts. Namely, she describes a "narratological system" other than a written one with the terms *loom, warp, weft* and *shuttle*:

> The *loom* and the weaving process constitute the basic framework needed for the narrative to exist. The story or plot can be conceived as the *warp*, vertical threads that act as lines of selection. When warping, the weaver selects what she can include in her web and decides whether the final web will be tight or loose, whether she will mix the material of the warp; that is, what will the final narrative be like? Note, however, that the warp cannot be changed after it has been set up.

> It is the *weft* that offers variation, and the threads can be compared to the synchronic analysis suggested by Nagy. That is, the weft gives the weaver, or narrator, the freedom to ornament the narrative weaving in the way she likes. (Norrman 2005: 144)

A poetic variance occurs during the backward and forward movement of the shuttle. As a performance, the process presents a narrative based on the decisions the weaver makes during the interplay of warp and weft. Similarly, the poet may include or leave out verses or other elements depending on the knowledge or interest of an audience. *Kennings*, circumlocutions, may also be determined by the circumstances of the scene at the poet's recital, or in the case of *Húsdrápa*, the material environment in which the poem is performed.

The mythic norns are also a useful example of temporality and the texture and fiber that goes into the weaving of fabric. However, rather than one that offers variance, the cords twisted by the norns emphasize a determined narrative, as Snorri describes them shaping men's lives. Accordingly, Urðr, Verðandi and Skuld - "happened", "happening" and "will-happen" "twine" and therefore participate and dictate an unfolding process. Although extant texts make no mention of the norns as weavers, it states about them in stanza 3 of *Helgaqviða hundingsbana in fyrri*:

> Snero þær af afli ørlǫgþátto,
> þá er borgir braut í Brálundi;
> þær um greiddo gullin símo
> oc und mána sal miðian festo. (*Edda* 1983: 130)
>
> They twisted very strongly the strand of fate,
> ... in Bralund,
> they prepared the golden thread
> and fastened it in the middle of the moon's hall. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 115)

It is no wonder then, that the norns have been imagined as weavers, and as their projects developed they fixed the component of time into their products. Karen Bek-Pedersen may object to carelessly referring to the norns in this way, but she does take note that the fate-as-textile metaphor exists in Old Norse material (Bek-Pedersen 2011: 156). It follows that this is a nice analogy for the creative process: the destined instance of a narrative is given form. The strands woven together provide a unique textural, tactile representation of the perception of the artist.

The concept of woven fate appears in a rather morbid fashion in the poem *Darraðarljóð*. The collection of stanzas appears in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, set among the many mysterious events surrounding the Battle of Clontarf, which was fought near Dublin on Good Friday in 1014 (*Njal's saga* 1960 cf. 341). During that event a man in Caithness witnessed twelve riders, apparently *dísir* "female deities" in the form of Valkyries, arrive at a woman's dwelling, *dyngja*. As he peered in the window he saw them weaving. Men's heads were used as weights, *harðkléaðr*; the warp and weft, *garn* and *vipta*, were men's intestines, *þarmar*; a sword was used as the beater, *skeið*, and an arrow, *ǫr*, for the shuttle, *hræll*. As they recite the verses, the women weave a web

of battle and death for the warriors. When they finish, they each tear a piece of the "fabric" and ride off. Most of the heroes die in the battle, just as they wove it should be (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 2010: 454-60). The intensity of these verses, with the body parts as material, figuratively emphasizes the ability and use of tapestry to represent the events and lives of people as narratives. Through the tale of death and destiny, the passage also lends agency to the weaver who possesses the magic that allows the sagas, myths and legends to come to life. The poem and episode are good examples of referential intermedia: the weavers and their compositions produce the form of pictorial poetry, and we recognize that substance through the verse and literature.

Additionally, Norrman comments that the perception in weaving is from a female vantage point, and that will influence what is emphasized from any known narrative (Norrman 2005: 159). Valkyries and norns may use the guts of warriors for strands of warp and weft, and queens, priestesses and their maids have a different story to tell with wool and linen. More often rather than a masculine point of view such as scenes of a battle, or the example she uses of Sigurðr slaying Fafnir, the emotional aspects of a legend are the foci, such as the betrayal of Brynhildr in the heroic cycle. In this light, Ingstad's observations that Freyja is a recurring theme on the Oseberg tapestries is well noted. Hence, the gender divide between Viking Age weavers and woodcarvers must be taken into consideration. The emphasis given to the motifs will differ, but certain stylistic elements will still be in common. It is the poet's description of the carvings that help determine what we know of their content, and it is up to the mind's eye of the audience to apply what we observe from extant styles and media in order to fashion a picture of what those carvings looked like.

To summarize the importance of the tapestry fragments for this study, both the iconography and narrative methods presented by the weavers help inform the content and appearance of wood-carved scenes that once existed in Norse, including Icelandic, buildings. Architectural features depicted in the tapestries provide evidence for the incorporation of woodcarving in furnishings and structures of the Viking Age. In some depictions, such as the figure in the bird costume, Freyja may be represented. Other scenes may not directly depict the presence of an Æsir god or goddess, but with due diligence it is possible to arrive at some interpretations worthy of discussion. Just as the Oseberg carvings, the objects imply cult/religious agency as decorative and representational art. The subject matter involves social relations and rites that must have served to invoke the status and power of the priestess/queen. The motifs chosen and their general attributes and arrangement can be visually morphed to an outline suitable for carving. These include horses, birds, wagons, anthropomorphic figures of varying gender and dress, ships, buildings, weapons and other various symbols. The movement in the scene is important to keep in mind. Rather than reading from left to right, it seems pictorial narrations were often told from right to left. For example, this could radically alter an imagined procession to Baldr's funeral pyre. The array of rows seen on fragments 1 and 2 were not likely simply a pattern or a primitive attempt at perspective, and the arrangement of the iconography suggests several possibilities for a narrative and the concepts intended to be expressed. Other fragments also beg interpretation. The positioning, dress and variation of sizes of figures were techniques used to add emphasis. The softness of the fabric, tactile and visual, in comparison with wood is an obvious difference. The two-dimensional aspect of the weavings, even with an additional layer of embroidery to make them "pop out", differs from the high relief seen in most Norse woodcarvings where the depth of shadow play creates an alternate appearance. Although

the tapestries have some remarkably rounded figures, the technique of crossing of warp and weft will arguably allow less fluid curves and plasticity that are more easily achieved with woodcarving. The ornaments within the boundaries of surfaces also have different characteristics. The carver is mindful of the grain of the wood as he uses his knife to produce various hatching and chip patterns. Using sufficient care, there is a certain amount of freedom of direction that will differ from the composition of textiles. The challenge is to imagine the iconography in two quite different media.

1.3 Sagas, poetry and Vestfold archaeological sites

In addition to some descriptions of finds and style development, this section focuses on the social parameters surrounding material culture found in relevant Norse sagas and poetry. Vestfold archaeological finds supply an informative spatial tour in combination with Old Norse literature which provides a quasi-historic temporal framework to explore the agency of patrons, craftsmen and their art objects. The Oseberg burial prompts questions regarding both profane and sacral rule in regard to the distribution and use of woodcarvings. The path of woodcarvings from Oseberg ca. 830 to Hjarðarholt ca. 985 is a huge leap without sufficient cultural background and contextualization. Here it is argued that Hlaðir became the port facilitating the transfer of the wood-carved mythic iconography to Iceland; however, there is some distance between Vestfold and Þrándheimr. Just as there were power centers along the Vík fjord, aristocratic strongholds in strategic locations dotted the coastline of Noregr, Norway, literally the northern way, or route to the north. Of course, ships sailed in both directions not only conducting warfare - the focus of sagas - but also along an established trade route, which led to the distribution of a full spectrum of goods and the possibility for movement of peoples.

The identity of the women found in the Oseberg grave is a subject that could fill more than a chapter (see also discussion above). It is well beyond the scope of this study to cover the issue in all its complexity, but it is important insofar as how the relations and activities of the women might be reflected in the appearance of woodcarvings in Hlaðir a century later. In regard to artifacts, the cultural contexts involving sacral rule help shed light on the agency of the art objects. Additionally, tracing the cultural background for the mythological content of wood-carved objects provides an ontological backdrop for their qualities as participants in social interaction. The factors concerning the identity of the women are, among others, the dating of the burial chamber and the ages of the skeletal remains, in combination with who would have died at that time, at what age and where. While over the last 110 years the former questions have become more precisely answered using dendrochronology and carbon 14 dating, the latter debate over the historic accuracy of the literary source material and uncertainty regarding the life spans of the people in question will likely never allow definite answers (Nordeide 2011, Houlk 2006, Bonde 1993, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992, Jones 1984). Based on Snorri's *Ynglingasaga*, and *Ynglingatal*, attributed to Þjóðólfr af Hvini, early twentieth century archaeologists thought that the many grave mounds stretching along the Oslo fjord in Vestfold contained kings of the Yngling dynasty. In the first years following the Oseberg find few, if any, doubted that the elder woman in the Oseberg ship burial chamber was Ása the daughter of Haraldr inn granrauði, the second queen of Guðrøðr inn gǫfugláti veiðikonungr and mother of Hálfdan Svarti. It fit quite well that Ása, the powerful grandmother of Haraldr inn hárfagri, would be the one entombed in the burial ship, which had become a twentieth century Norwegian national treasure (Christiansen,

Ingstad, Myhre 1992). Later, it was suggested that the remains of the younger of the two, thought to be in her twenties or early thirties, might have been the queen. Her skeleton was badly broken up and the few remaining bones were scattered, perhaps by grave robbers who stripped her of jewelry. More recently, Ingstad suggested the remains of the younger woman may have been Guðrøðr's first queen, Álfhildr dóttir Alfarins konungs ór Álfheimum (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992). However, advanced dating methods show that the younger woman was not as young when she died as previously thought. Her healthy teeth, (which is also a sign that she was of high class), misled earlier scientists. It is now determined that she lived to be approximately 50 - 55 years old (Houlk 2006: 203). The problem is a lack of certain dates, or, for that matter, historically trustworthy records of people who lived prior to the Battle of Svǫlðr (ca. 1000). Based on *Heimskringla*, Norwegian historian Halvdan Koht used a method counting back three generations per century in order to arrive at likely dates of birth and death for the Ynglings. The Icelandic historian Ólafía Einarsdóttir later presented some generally accepted estimates placing people and events 15 years or more further back in time than Koht (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 269). It seems these are at best educated guesses based on what many scholars consider unreliable medieval sources, and we will likely not arrive at a model of consensus that will determine exactly who these women were. Nevertheless, the enormous wealth accompanying them to their graves indicates that they were members of an important aristocratic dynasty. In essence, this section questions: who were these people? Did the literary figures really exist, or were they the figment of a mythological imagination? The answer is probably both - the artifacts testify to an actual status, and the literature points to legendary proportions. Answers to these questions help illuminate our knowledge via culture about the qualities and appearance of missing woodcarvings.

Clusters of mounds in various numbers dot the coastline of Vestfold in intervals of about every twenty kilometers indicating that power centers were spread fairly evenly along the strategic passage through the Vík inlet. In speculation of whom these mounds were raised for, in particular early archaeologists referenced chapters 44 - 49 of *Ynglingasaga* in *Heimskringla*, where Snorri quotes *Ynglingatal* and points to some specific places where mounds were raised over Yngling kings. Even though these accounts are now considered mostly legendary, scholars refer to them with caution in order to form hypotheses (Nordeide 2011, Bagge, Nordeide 2007, Berend 2007, Skre 1998, Blom 1997, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993, Bagge 1991). The position taken here is that with due diligence the king's sagas are useful as a temporal and spatial map for examining the extant material culture. Namely, each situation cited may be considered individually for verisimilitude, and in many cases legendary accounts are helpful in arriving at cultural contextualization. Furthermore, the sagas provide a chronology to follow in order to organize the study. For example, in chapter 44 it states that Hálfdan hvítbeinn ... *eignaðisk mikit af Heiðmǫrk ok Þótn ok Haðaland ok mikit af Vestfold* "... took possession of much of Heiðmǫrk and Þótn and Haðaland along with a large part of Vestfold" (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 75). According to *Ynglingatal*, after he died of sickness they raised a mound for him in Vestfold in Skíringssalr, which was the old name for Tjølling, some 40 kilometers southwest from Oseberg:

(...)
Ok Skæreið
í Skíringssal
of brynjalfs

beinum drúpir. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 76)

And Skæreið
in Skíringssalr[20]
broods over
the bones of the 'mailcoat-elf' [warrior]. (modified from *Heimskringla* I 2011: 43)

In the early 1800's connections were made with the location Skíringssalr and the Viking Age settlement Kaupangr, considered to be one of Norway's first towns and an important trading center. The cartographer and historian Gerhard Munthe noted the excellent harbor and many grave mounds at the location, and he linked the farmland to "Sciringes healh" mentioned in the travel accounts of Ohthere as told to Alfred the Great, king of southern England, in the Old English *Orosius* (Bately 2007). A number of archaeological excavations have been undertaken at the site. The first, in the mid nineteenth century, focused on the grave mounds, but the results proved disappointing. It was not until the 1950's that Charlotte Blindheim uncovered enough evidence to demonstrate that the location was an important trade center in the ninth century (Skre 2007: 150-152). Architect Roar Tollnes joined the excavation and published data regarding 6 houses uncovered in the dig. The buildings were quite different from farm buildings contemporary to the Viking Age, and there was no evidence of any farming conducted in the vicinity. Many weights used for scales were found, indicating trade activity. Important for this study are his comments regarding the many artifacts that indicate an intense amount of craft activity - mostly metalwork in gold, silver, bronze and lead, and there are also remains of textiles. The conditions were poor for preserving any organic materials. Some bone and antler pieces were found and some badly decayed leather. There is also some evidence, however, for woodworking activity other than house building in the excavation as traces of wood chips have been discovered thought to be waste from turned vessels (Tollnes 1992: 112). It seems possible that some of the wood chip debris would have been from woodcarving. Another excavation in 2000-2003 led by Dagfinn Skre helps provide answers about the nature of the craft production and commerce at the settlement. He identified three developments. Initially, sometime around 800, the area was divided into plots. None of these at first had buildings on them, but they all had some craft activity. Buildings were soon erected, and the craft production continued for what appears to be several decades. After the mid-800's there are no remains of buildings, but there is evidence that trade and possibly craft activity continued until the middle of the tenth century. It appears that what developed into a permanent settlement eventually turned into a seasonal market place/crafts center (Skre 2007: 152-154). Given the proximity to what is now known as Oseberg, this is of considerable interest regarding the origin of the woodcarvings in the ship burial. Shetelig surmised that the woodcarvers, about 10 of them, resided at the queen's farm. Even if she were rich and powerful, that would be a considerable addition to her household. She probably died near the mound site, but it is also uncertain how long she resided there. Based on the amount of work that must have been involved with the original carvings, and how long it took modern craftsmen to carve some reproductions, it is estimated that it would have taken decades to produce it all. This is not an all or nothing scenario - perhaps the high-status woman had some carvers living at her estate and some travelled through or had their main residence/workshop in Kaupangr. The dating of the permanent settlement of craftspersons at

[20] Skæreið is a ridge above Skíringssalr.

Skíringssalr matches quite well with the objects dated in the find. Perhaps some or all of the *Vestfoldskole* of woodcarvers dwelled there, but it is impossible to prove or disprove given the lack of organic material remains. Of importance here is the question of mobility of the craftspersons.

The division of lots and the intense craft activity at Kaupangr provide some clues to the social status of the populace in Norway during the mid-900's. The group of craftspersons seems to fall somewhere between thralls and yeomen, landed men. It is uncertain whether they owned the lots they worked on, but from the large number of scales found it appears they conducted their own livelihood. When they did so, they were probably taxed by the local king/chieftain and in return received some protection from marauding Vikings. Skre notes that Danish royalty had control over the area during the time in question - the early ninth century (Skre 2011: 444-48). That certainly complicates the status of the Vestfold chieftain/kings described by Snorri as the Ynglingar. It is interesting that the Oseberg queen/priestess could have exhibited so much wealth as the wife of a petty king, but based on the concentrations of grave mounds approximately every twenty kilometers along the coast of Vestfold, it seems there was enough abundance to sustain a wealthy local aristocracy. Some of the acquired riches may have been gained by raiding abroad, but certainly those less fortunate in the local population were exploited for labor and goods. On the other hand, as craftspeople participated in seasonal markets, it appears they could move about freely. The distribution and diversity of goods found in Kaupangr excavations reveal that a wide variety of craftspersons lived and worked on any given lot for varying durations of time (Skre 2011: 397-403). This lack of distinction is an additional indicator of ranks in social status. The itinerant generalists skilled in crafts made for everyday use may have been engaged as seasonal labor by owners of farms, yet at certain times they were able to ply their independent craft. Perhaps specialists enjoyed more freedom in movement and were self-determining agents who also bartered with aristocratic clients. A woodcarver could easily travel with his tools of trade and use local material resources as a medium. This would lend an aura of mystique to the unfamiliar artisan. The mythic qualities of the craftsman as an "other" is a common theme and is discussed further in part two. Here, however, the argument posited is the specialist woodcarver acted to some degree with independence. The woodcarver could travel to where there was a demand for his art objects. Additionally, there would have been a certain relationship between the carvers and patrons which created an added value of agency imbued in the goods (Helms 1993, Gell 1998).

Moving along in chapter 46 of *Ynglingasaga*, the son of Hálfdan hvítbeinn, Eysteinn konungr, gained control over Vestfold after his father and through marriage. He sailed across Vík on a raid and retreated after his harrying. His opponent chieftain, Skjǫldr, had not been present at the battle, but when he saw Eysteinn's sails in the distance he waved his cloak and blew. Shortly thereafter, Eysteinn was knocked overboard: *Þat var hans bani. Menn hans náðu líkinu. Var þat flutt inn á Borró ok orpinn haugr eptir á rǫðinni út við sjá við Vǫðlu*. "That was his death. His men recovered the corpse. It was taken into Borró and a mound was raised for him out on the ridge by the sea near the Vaðla river" (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 77, *Heimskringla* I 2011: 44). His son, Hálfdan inn mildi ok inn matarilli, according to Snorri and *Ynglingatal*, died of sickness and also had a mound raised over him in Borró.

Just 20 kilometers north of Oseberg, there are numerous grave mounds in what is now Borre National Park. Archaeological excavations have shown that the area was a power center from the Iron Age through the Viking Age from roughly 560-1050. In the 1800's, road workers came across a badly deteriorated ship burial. Subsequent excavations uncovered some artifacts that have given name to the Borre style, c. 850 - c. 950 (Graham-Campbell 2013: 9). Gilt bronze mounts that were found typify the style. (fig. 31) The Borre designs feature sections that contain individual biomorphic ribbon-like quadrupeds that terminate in a mask, sometimes *en face* with a triangular head, but other times in a unique position seen from the side looking back. Those "animals" tend to have a natural shaped neck and body, with spiral hips and limbs with appendages that grip themselves or the borders of the frame they are contained in (Wilson 1966). (fig. 32) Arguably, the origin of these motifs may be seen as a development from those in the Oseberg find. The gripping beast and certain features of the masks, both *en face* and seen looking back from the side, appear on the ship, wagon, sleds and other artifacts where there are theriomorphic shapes. As described above, Shetelig noted a Carolingian influence, and in his description David Wilson notes a possible Anglo-Saxon connection with the masks (Wilson 1966: 90). The pieces often feature a ribbon plait, referred to as a ring chain. These are quite common to the period and are seen on objects dated from the second half of the ninth through the end of the tenth century. (fig. 33) Wilson indicates that the ring-chain is of a completely indigenous origin. As discussed further in subsequent chapters, this feature is seen to have spread throughout the North Atlantic, as it is carved on many stones on the Isle of Man dating from the period of Viking settlement. The longevity and development of this stylistic feature makes it quite likely that the ribbon plaited design was later used to decorate borders on architectural elements, such as wainscoting. For example, narrower boards of carved ringchains would have served the purpose of separating wider panels featuring mythological scenes like those described in *Húsdrápa*.

The Borre style should not be confused with the possibility of mounds covering Hálfdan hvítbeinn or Eysteinn konungr because, if what Snorri writes and *Ynglingatal* is accurate, they would have died long before evidence of this style developed. Depending on how the dates are calculated, their lives would have spanned from the middle of the seventh until possibly around the end of the eighth century, some decades prior to the oldest dated Borre style artifacts. Nevertheless, as a "map" it is interesting to step through what Snorri reports as the Vestfold generations of the Yngling dynasty in relationship to the power centers and material culture from the Viking Age.

The next generation of Ynglings and the marriages of Guðrøðr inn gǫfugláti veiðikonungr have prompted most of the speculation regarding the identity of the women in the Oseberg grave. According to Snorri, his first wife was Álfhildr dóttir Alfarins konungs ór Álfheimum. She died sometime (it is not told when or at what age) after their son, Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr, was born. Then Guðrøðr asked for but was refused Ása dóttir Haralds ins granrauða, so he abducted her and killed her father and brother in the process. Ása and Guðrøðr had a son, Hálfdan. When the baby was only a winter old, in order to avenge her kin, Ása had her *skósveinn*, literally "shoe-boy" meaning servant, murder Guðrøðr when the latter was drunk one night:

(...)
Ok launsigr

enn lómgeði
Ǫsu ǫ´rr
af jǫfri bar,
ok buðlungr
á beði fornum
Stíflusunds
of stunginn vas. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 81)

Word order and translation: And an evil envoy of Ása gained a cheating win against the king, and the prince was stabbed to death on the old bed [river-mouth, ground] of Stíflusund. (modified from *Heimskringla* I 2011: 46)

Ása fully admitted that she whetted the servant to do the deed. Óláfr, the first son of Guðrøðr, was twenty when Guðrøðr was slain, and he took over after his father. Ása is no longer mentioned in *Ynglingasaga*. However, in the first chapter of *Hálfdanar saga svarta*, Snorri informs us that Ása fled with her *vetragamall*, one-year old, to live with her father Haraldr in Agðir. Hálfdan grew up there and got the nickname *svarti* due to his dark hair. He took over the kingdom in Agðir at the age of eighteen and then travelled to meet with his brother Óláfr, who handed over half of Vestfold to his brother. Ása is no longer mentioned.

By quoting these stanzas from *Ynglingatal* and filling in a few of his own details Snorri presented a scenario of the Yngling dynasty dwelling in and having dominance over Vestfold. Scholars are skeptical about the historic accuracy of Snorri's versions of events and suggest he had an ideological/political agenda regarding the lineage and placement of the Ynglings (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992). In addition, other medieval sources do not agree. In *Historia Norwegie* these kings are listed and said to have ruled *in montanis*, and Vestfold, a coastal area, is never mentioned (*Historia Norwegie* 2003: 80). It is not necessary for the purposes of this dissertation to fully enter this debate. Using Snorri and additional sources as a springboard for analysis, it is less important exactly who the aristocrats in question were than it is their social function, the craftspersons who worked for them and the appearance and purpose of the artifacts that surrounded them. There is no doubt that the women in the Oseberg burial ship were of high status. Some additional information helps determine their function.

In 1916, the new leader of the *Universitet Oldsaksamling* in Christiania, Anton Brøgger, suggested that Ása had followed her son back to Vestfold and was later buried in the Oseberg ship. He thought she was the elder of the two women, ca. 60-70 years old and the younger 30 - 40. He reasoned that etymologically the farm name Oseberg could be taken as the genitive Ásu-berg. Brøgger thought she may have lived until 840-50, which matched what was then believed to be the date of the ship-burial. This hypothesis was widely accepted for several decades, in spite of some counter-arguments. For example, it was also speculated that the queen could be the younger woman. Mentioned above, Ingstad argued that indeed the younger woman was probably the queen, but that she was likely the first wife of Guðrøðr, Álfhildr dóttir Alfarins konungs ór Álfheimum. Ingstad reasoned that Álfhildr would have died ca. 848. Apparently, even though her theory was published in 1992, she must have written about it prior to dendrochronology dated the burial to 834. Both skeletal remains seem unlikely candidates for Ása or Álfhildr based on their potential life spans, but Ingstad's theory about Álfhildr is worth describing. Her

hypothesis is that even if she was a queen there appears something more to her position because no other grave approaches the rich amount of goods as Oseberg. (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 229) Ingstad quoted Sophus Bugge's interpretation that Ose represents the genitive plural form of Ás, Ása, and she speculated that the name demonstrates earlier god-worship in the area. The Oseberg mound is topographically in a flat, low-lying area. Nearby, Klokkeråsen is a low hill ridge, named in Christian times, where a medieval church once stood. There are four grave mounds there, which may indicate that in Viking times it was a sacred location. As is the case at many places in Norway, the church that stood there may have been built on a pre-Christian ritual site, and she was tempted to think that this was the original *Æsenes berg*, "hill of the Æsir" (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992: 230). The church property called Kongs-Eik also indicates that this was an important location and king's estate during medieval times. Ingstad thought the current farm Oseberg was part of this property and got its name from what is now Klokkeråsen, where there was a temple.

Regarding Álfhildr, Ingstad called attention to the beginning of the U-version of *Hervarar saga*, quoted here:

> Álfr hét konungr, er réð fyrir Álfheimum; Álfhildr hét dóttir hans. Álfheimar hétu þá milli Gautelfar ok Raumelfar. Eitt haust var gǫrt dísablót mikit hjá Álfi konungi, ok gekk Álfhildr at blótinu; hon var hverri konu fegri, ok allt folk í Álfheimum var fríðara at sjá en annat folk því samtíða. En um nóttina, er hon rauð hǫrginn, nam Starkaðr áludrengr Álfhildi í burt ok hafði hana heim með sér. Álfr konungr hét þá á Þór at leita eptir Álfhildi, ok síðan drap Þórr Starkað ok lét Álfhidi fara heim til fǫður síns ok með henni Grím son Hergríms. (*Saga Heiðreks* 1960: 67 L)
>
> There was a king named Álfr, who ruled over Álfheimar; he had a daughter named Álfhild. In those days the region between the Gautelf and the Raumelf was called Álfheimar. One autumn a great sacrifice to the Dísir was held at the house of King Álf, and Álfhild conducted the rites; she was more beautiful than any other woman, and all the people in Álfheimar were fairer to look on than any others in those days. But during the night, when Álfhild reddened the altar with blood, Starkad Áludreng carried her off, and took her home with him. King Álf called upon Thór to seek for Álfhild, and afterwards Thór slew Starkad and allowed Álfhild to return home to her father, together with Grím, the son of Hergrím. (*Saga Heiðreks* 1960: 67 R).

This transcription is from the mid-seventeenth century paper manuscript R: 715 now housed in the University Library at Uppsala. Due to its date and its status as one of the *fornaldarsǫgur*, it can hardly be considered historically accurate, but the name and region of origin are unmistakably the same as those of the first wife of Guðrøðr as written about by Snorri. Perhaps the saga text of *Hervarar saga* drew from the same legendary memory of mythic origins. Such material is a source of folk belief and hence worthy of discussion. Cleasby Vigfusson defines *álfr* as mythically, elf or fairy - the abode of elves is Álfheimar, fairy land, and their king the god Freyr (the god of light). Further, in a historical sense, the Norse district between the aforementioned rivers was "in the mythical times called Álfheimar, and its inhabitants, Álfar"

(Cleasby Vigfusson 1969: 42). In his monograph on elves, Alaric Hall adds that the epithet of Álfhildr's son, Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr "the álfr of Geirstaðr", has created speculation connecting *álfr* with worship of the dead; i.e. in the twelfth century *Óláfs þáttr Geirstaðaálfs* it states that people sacrificed to him after his death. Hall notes that *álfr* is also a common poetic epithet for men, but also possibly for Freyr, from whom Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr was said to have descended. One of Hall's main arguments is the Scandinavian *álfar* were imagined as supernatural beings and forces to be reckoned with, but nonetheless aligned with the Æsir in opposition to the *jǫtnar* and *dvergar* (Hall 2007: 21-53). If the epithet was intended in this manner, such a mythic status would have made the impression that Óláfr and his mother, Álfhildr dóttir Alfarins konungs ór Álfheimum, were demi-gods imbued with numinous powers. The mystical aspect surrounding the characters and location in *Hervarar saga* suggests a particular legendary cult that practiced *dísablót*, sacrifice to feminine spirits, whose high-ranking female members had a leadership role. The area between the rivers Raumelfr and Gautelfr is directly across the fjord from Vestfold and the Oseberg site. Ingstad theorized that Álfhildr may have sailed across the fjord in the Oseberg ship as part of her dowry, and that once she arrived in Vestfold continued to assume the role of priestess, or cult leader of rituals, for the purpose of assuring fertility in the region (Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1992).

The myth that Álfhildr brought her magical powers with her from Álfheimar enhances the mystery surrounding the identity of the women buried on the Oseberg ship, but the content of the grave alone speaks to the idea that more than royal remains are represented. As previously analyzed, the *dyrehodestolper*, wood-carved designs and motifs seen on the tapestries may all be interpreted as agents of cult activity, or, literally used as ritual instruments. It seems less important to specifically identify the women in the grave than it is to associate their role as both political and spiritual leaders. It is hard to imagine that anyone outside the aristocracy could have enough wealth to support the production of so much art, or that women would have the ability to amass such a fortune without being the wife or beneficiary of a chieftain/king. Based on all of the literary sources, it is through the militaristic activities of men that wealth was accumulated, either through plundering or tribute. Whether or not she was related to an Yngling, it is almost certain the high-status woman was an aristocrat, i.e. at least at one point married to a wealthy chieftain/king who had some dominion in the Vestfold district, and she had a continual source of income sufficient to both run her estate and accumulate the ceremonial items that were found with her. As to the role of the other woman buried with her, it is impossible to say whether she died simultaneously or was somehow put to death to follow her companion. It is certain, however, that she was of high enough status to lay beside the other in similar comfort with down-stuffed mattresses and pillows. There is little to discern between them regarding fragments of costume or other indicators of standing. Ingstad's assertion that she may have been a high ranking cult figure such as a "temple priestess" or assistant in ritual functions seems plausible.

If indeed the Oseberg women were cult leaders, this raises questions regarding the issue of "sacral kingship". The term suggests that the male members of the aristocracy had, in a broader sense, the responsibility as intermediaries with the gods and bringing about good fortune. Along with that would follow leadership roles involved with ritual activity. Ultimately the participation of the male chieftain was likely a necessary component of this concept, but in view of the burial mounds that have been excavated in Vestfold, none compare with the richly ornate artifacts that surrounded the women. The ship burials entombing men in this part of Norway

provide far less indication that they may have been religious leaders. For example, across the fjord near present day Fredrikstad the Tune burial ship was uncovered in 1867, and the trees it was built from were felled ca. 905-10 (Bonde 1993). The vessel was excavated from one of the largest mounds in Norway, so the man it was raised for must have been a very important person. The Tune ship was much more seaworthy than the Oseberg ship, suggesting that it could be used for war. Many items of the grave were missing, but some of his weaponry remained: a sword hilt, two spearheads, a shield boss and possibly the remains of chain mail (Tune Find 2012). The redactors of the king's sagas focus on the war activity of men, and their graves reinforce that as their primary occupation. It seems it was not in the scope of interest of the scribes, who in the twelfth and following centuries focused on the valiant deeds or the less noble betrayals involved with struggles for power, to mention the religious activity led by women to assure domestic prosperity. Similarly, when items of material culture were mentioned those were often fine swords with hilts inlaid with precious metals or other fine weaponry. It is a rarity to read about the woodcarvings or other well made craft items that must of existed in substantial quantities, some of which have subsequently been found.

Sacral kingship in the narrower sense is the view that the ruler is a god himself (Schjødt 2010: 167). As stated above, through her interpretation of the tapestries and the overall layout of the burial, Ingstad suggested that the queen was understood by her contemporaries to be the incarnation of Freyja. The magical quality of the woodcarvings reinforce this idea. It is not necessary to specify a certain goddess in order to appreciate the possibility that the inhabitants of Vestfold believed the woman possessed numinous abilities that made her a deity. There are other legendary accounts of such worship but rarely for the living. Once again, to quote from the beginning of the saga according to the U-redaction of *Hervarar saga*: *Eptir dauða Guðmundar blótuðu menn hann ok kǫlluðu hann goð sitt*. "After the death of Guðmund men made sacrifice to him and called him their god" (*Saga Heiðreks* 1960: 66 L, R).

Jens Peter Schjødt provides an excellent overview of the intent behind the practice of sacrifice. In short, the religious worldview is that there is an "other world" where supernatural beings reside and operate, and that these supernatural beings have some influence over the known, "material" world. Between these two spheres is a liminal place, an area where communication occurs. There must be some being(s) in the "other world" that will listen, and these are the deities that are described by myth. In turn, as a function of ritual, there must be someone in this world who is an intermediary, who speaks and listens in return. Contact between the two worlds must be kept open to assure the well being of the believers, and one means of religious communication pertinent to the Norse pre-Christian religion is gift sacrifice. There are four basic elements involved. A subject, the sacrificer, gives an object, for example a slaughtered animal, to a receiver, the indirect object/deity representing the other world, and the subject expects a return gift. Since the occupants of the other world have inexhaustible means, the return gift will always be of higher value. A king as political/spiritual leader, or arguably in this case a queen, may occupy at least three of these positions. She may be the one offering, be the recipient or object of the sacrifice. In each of these roles she would possess a numinous quality. She has special abilities with which she communicates with or is an actual member of the other world, at least in a ritual setting. Importantly, even though the return gift is expected to be of higher value than the sacrificial gift, the logic behind sacrifice implies that the sacrificial subject, in order to

be of some value to the other world, must be compatible. In other words, the offering must be made sacred or already have some numinous quality (Schjødt 2010: 172-174).

Schjødt provides examples from and dismisses the rejection of medieval literary sources due to Christian bias because, he argues, they must represent some ideas once held, and importantly, because there is substantial evidence from the phenomenology of religion regarding pre-Christian practices and rituals from other cultures that verify such belief systems. The same stance is taken in this dissertation as Snorri and other medieval sources are presented. Here, the ideas of gift-sacrifice may be applied to the Oseberg ship burial. The plethora of objects in the burial indicate that the queen, the one buried with her, or both, would occupy the role of sacrificer on behalf of the cult community. Along with the burial ritual, it appears that many animals, fifteen horses and four dogs, were sacrificed. Following the idea of gift sacrifice, these were not just meant to accompany the women to the other world or somehow facilitate their journey, but they were meant as offerings. There are many cases in archaeological finds and Old Norse literature to verify that horses were sacrificed in other ritual settings, and following the idea that a gift must have meaning to the recipient, it is likely they were considered powerful spiritual entities. Of particular interest for this dissertation, the wood-carved objects and instruments also can be seen as special sacrificial offerings, and the idea that sacrificial gifts must have some numinous quality supports the notion that these objects were considered to have a certain agency and value in both worlds. Combined, the practitioner and the offering reinforce the spiritual power of both subject and object in a reciprocating fashion. One might consider the queen and her companion, along with the rest of the sacred contents of the grave as an offering, and finally, as they remained anchored in the mound, as numinous ancestors, deities, to be sacrificed to in later times to assure the well being of the community.

Again, according to Snorri, Guðrøðr inn gǫfugláti veiðikonungr had sons with each queen. Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr was twenty when Guðrøðr was killed and Hálfdan svarta was one. Óláfr took over the reign after his father. Ása returned to Agðir with her infant and raised him there. When he came of age, Hálfdan demanded half of Vestfold from Óláfr and went on to conquer other territory. In *Ynglingatal*, it states that Óláfr died of a leg problem and lies buried in a mound at Geirstaðir:

> (...)
> unz fótverkr
> við Foldar þrǫm
> vígmiðlung
> of viða skyldi.
> Nú liggr gunndjarfr
> á Geirstǫðum
> herkonungr
> haugi ausinn. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 82)
>
> Word order, translation: (...) until a leg infection did away with the warrior by the shore of (Vest)Fold. Now the "bold-in-battle" "warrior-king" lies in a mound raised at Geirstaðir. (modified from *Heimskringla* I 2011: 46)

There are currently no farms in Vestfold including the name Geir. Most recently it is thought to be the same as Gjerstad, near Tjølling, the area including the former Kaupangr. It has also been speculated that the location could be Gjekstad, a neighboring farm to Gokstad, and that the Viking ship burial excavated there could contain Óláfr's remains. Advances in dating the Gokstad ship and its contents to a burial in 900 and the skeletal remains as a man of 40-45 years old at the time of death rule out that theory (Bonde 1993, Gokstad Finds 2012). The contents of the find, however, are of interest for this study. The artifacts are contemporary with those in Borre that contributed to the name of the style. In some cases the items from the two locations are quite similar, enough so that Shetelig thought the metalwork was produced from the same workshop. In particular, bridal mounts feature the animal figures in profile and the ribbon-plait designs that mark the style. The Gokstad ship does not have the elaborate carvings on the stems as the one at Oseberg, nor are there anywhere near the quantity of artifacts along with it, but there were a few carved items in the burial. Shetelig refers to the carver as "Gokstadmesteren." The carvings resemble and appear to be a development of the Vestfold school designs seen at Oseberg. For example, there are numerous bed posts and tent supports from both finds that terminate with flat heads of animals seen in profile, cut out in contour, and with additional carved details. (fig. 34) The ones from Oseberg are highly stylized with familiar looking crests protruding from the top and fore-heads that resemble the creatures carved on the ship and elsewhere. Although the Gokstad bed and tent animal heads are also stylized, they have some more natural features, such as pointed ears and elongated snouts. The ornament is deliberate in its intent to enhance the eyebrows and hairline (Shetelig 1920: 218). The changes do not detract from the mystical quality of the animal heads, but the features indicate a trend towards a "stylized naturalism" where gradually the bodies and masks became more recognizable as "true-to-life" forms. This observation lends credence to the argument that by the end of the tenth century mythic narratives described by poets which appeared as motifs in woodcarvings and other crafted items such as tapestries would not only have been recognizable by their contemporaries but also increasingly identifiable by modern day readers of surviving verses and prose accounts shared by Snorri.

It is tempting to consider that the carved bed posts served a magical function. Dreaming stands out in the literature as playing a huge part in the narrative. Namely, dreams always come true. While this is a rhetorical device used to foreshadow events, it must have some grounding in the folk belief of the period. Evidently, those who were wise had some prophetic power to dream and foretell the future. In other situations the sage could interpret the dreams of others - often to their chagrin by revealing misfortune (DuBois 1999: 177). Early work in the fields of anthropology, sociology and psychology has been "exploded"; nevertheless, dreaming can be associated with the "other world" inhabited by the gods or the dead simply by its inexplicable presentation of another reality (Tylor 1958: 9, Durkheim 1995: 46-54, Freud 1950: 96). It is argued above that the carved theriomorphic creatures pulling the human figures engraved on the Oseberg wagon represent *fylgjur*, or beings that are intermediaries of death. Perhaps the animal head figures carved on the bed posts from the Viking Age served a similar purpose for the dreamer, and for the living, the magical beds were intended to enhance and facilitate the dreamer's ability to access signs and prophecy. Shamanism is often described as a "death-like" trance that allows the practitioner to access the "other world." The death beds of the occupants of the ship burials may have been intended to provide the liminal threshold needed to cross over and maintain an existence in both "worlds."

Snorri made no mention of magical beds, but he did reference dreams as prophecy. After Hálfdan svarti made considerable gains in territory and established himself as a powerful king, he took for his (second) wife Ragnhildr Sigurðardóttir hjartar, described as a very wise woman of great lineage. It is told that she had great dreams. In the one cited she pulled a thorn from her shirt that transformed into a twig that took root and grew into a tree with limbs that extended beyond the land. Snorri did not offer an interpretation of the dream in that chapter, as it was really not necessary for a familiar audience. Snorri stated next that Hálfdan could not dream. When Hálfdan sought the advice of a wise man, Þorleifr spaki Hǫrða-Kárason, he was told that he should sleep in a pigsty because that worked for him when he wished to know something. In modern sensibility, it seems demeaning to both the dreamer and the dreaming process to be enhanced by the proximity of the filth of pigs, but perhaps there is some additional symbolism at play here. Some magical quality is involved with animals as a catalyst for entering the other "dream" world - arguably the same mystic agency bound in the engraved animal head posts of the Oseberg and Gokstad ship burials. In any case, the technique worked for Hálfdan, and he dreamt his hair was long with all sorts of locks reaching different lengths and of varying beauty. When he asked Þorleifr to interpret the dream, Hálfdan was told that he would be the progenitor of a great line of descendants. In hindsight, all would agree that the finest lock represented the eternal king St. Óláfr. As a rhetorical device, the telling of these two dreams foreshadows the remainder of Snorri's narrative about the kings of Norway. It may be argued that these were learned medieval forms of storytelling inserted into tales describing the Viking Age, yet the links between dreaming, prophecy and fate seem to pre-date the Christian conversion, and the interpretation that the carved bed posts aided the process provides material support for the existence of this cultural belief system. While the motif may be shared with other legends and in other cultures, the dream illustrates a semiotic, visual language comparable to metaphors in poetry, and the imagery provides clues that iconography of the era might represent narratives in a similar manner.

According to Snorri, Hálfdan and Ragnhildr had the son who eventually subdued most of the petty kings in Norway and led the way to power for his kinsmen who follow. It is not the focus of this dissertation to follow the exploits of the kings but rather how iconography, legend and myth were expressed around the legendary figures and provide context for, in one instance, what became exhibited by the wood-carved *eldhús* in Hjarðarholt. Yet, along with the archaeological artifacts examined thus far, it is practical to follow the events and lineage of those rulers, legendary and/or historical, that provide the best clues in a chronological manner. Let it suffice that as Haraldr inn hárfagri Hálfdanarson conquered provinces in Norway, the focus on Vestfold in *Heimskringla* is left behind and turns to when he arrived at Þrándheimr, the area surrounding what in the present day is called Trondheimsfjord, in his quest to control all of Norway.

1.4. Þrándheimr and the earls of Hlaðir

In the following sections, the setting shifts to further up the coast along the "northern way" and the timespan featuring the legendary sacral rule and ascent of the earls who presided there. Both Old Norse literary sources and archaeological finds indicate that an increasingly dominant aristocracy at least partially validated its right to rule through the expression of origin

myths that traced their genealogy to deities (Steinsland 2011, Schjødt 2010, Storli 2006). Some of these activities and claims were recorded in sagas by Christian redactors long after the periods in question, and therefore such views must be viewed critically (Nordeide 2011, Bagge, Nordeide 2007, Berend 2007, Skre 1998, Blom 1997, Christiansen, Ingstad, Myhre 1993, Bagge 1991). However, it would not be in the interest of Snorri and his informants to totally fabricate their testimony, and some elements of social structure and belief systems may be judiciously deduced. Additionally, it can be argued that the poetry that speaks of these mythic relations was contemporary to the society in which it was performed, and art objects that have been uncovered and interpreted date variously to the pre-Christian era. Therefore, all of the available data that leads to what Óláfr pái saw when he was entertained by Hákon jarl inn ríki at Hlaðir ca. 985 is worthy of examination in order to arrive at both cultural and material contextualization of the woodcarvings.

It is largely due to its geographical features that Þrándheimr became a major power center during the Viking Age. Situated in central Norway, it comprised the core of the present day counties of Nord and Sør-Trøndelag. A broad fjord dominates the area, stretching 120 km first inland east from the Norwegian Sea and then turning north parallel to the coastline. Along the inner portions of the fjord are numerous wide valleys separated by forest tracts and mountains. Although less than 4% of this area is cultivated, it makes up 15% of the arable land in Norway (Sognnes 2010). There were inhabitants in the farthest reaches of present day Norway after the warming of the last Ice Age some 10,000 years ago. In the Trondheimsfjord area, rock carvings from the transition period of hunting and gathering to the Bronze Age and agriculture date as far back as the New Stone age, around 3500 BCE, and continued into the Early Iron Age. Motifs included boats, wild horned animals, whales, horses, birds, footprints and some depictions of people. Stages seen in the motifs chosen for the rock carvings illustrate a transition from a hunter/gatherer society to domestication and cultivation of the land. The carvings may have initially marked out territories in competitive areas between transition groups, but also the permanence of the rock carvings indicates that they were consciously passed on through the generations and possibly conveyed mythic origins and symbolism. These narratives allowed for a degree of ongoing ancestral identity, just as grave mounds made an impression on the landscape and were visible to future generations (Sognnes 1999). The rock carvings and their cultural relevance have at least two implications for this study; one, that there seems to have been a long indigenous tradition of expressing myths through iconography in north-central Norway; and two, the influx of change towards an agricultural economy must have come initially from the south and with it a certain reliance for further development and sustainability (Sognnes 1999). This would take the form of ongoing trade and with commerce (not ruling out plunder) and exposure to iconography and the styles of art from other areas in Norway, the rest of Scandinavia and extensive routes abroad (Skre 2011, Lebecq 2007, Storli 2006, Ament 2005, Näsman 2003).

In the middle of Trondheimsfjord, the Frosta peninsula stretches out its arm and in effect creates two basins. By the beginning of the Viking Age these were referred to as the inner and outer districts, each with four "shires" of basically independent farms clustered in regions divided by natural boundaries. These political groupings met at the Frosta "Thing," or assembly, on the tip of this peninsula for legal activities. Archaeological finds are concentrated on the east side of the fjord. This is not surprising because these were among the most fertile areas. The concentrations are located just to the south of Frosta peninsula around Stjørdal and to the north

around Verdal. Most of the graves contain men with their weapons, which suggests that these were early power centers in the larger Trondheimsfjord area. Variances in the richness of the graves indicate that these were also occupied by a ranked warrior class with an aristocracy. An absence of Viking graves with blacksmithing tools indicate that the weapons may have been imported from the south, possibly Kaupangr in Vestfold, or east from Sweden. Grave goods also indicate that there was significant insular trade (or raids) that occurred with the British Isles and Ireland. Some relatively rich graves have been found in areas that are central today. For example, a boat grave mound in Egge, above Steinkjer, included an elaborately decorated sword, an axe, spearheads, the remnants of a shield and some arrowheads. The extent of the items demonstrates that the man was of a prominent warrior class. It is likely that the weapon graves of higher status warriors represent a distribution of chieftains that were linked with each other through marriage and strategic alliances. For the most part there is little evidence from these graves, however, that indicates during the beginning of the Viking Age specific farms were centers for large estates. The leading kinsmen could have resided at several farms or been on the move. Later, after Haraldr hárfagri allegedly conquered the area, these "mobile" power centers in Þrándheimr shifted away from concentration near the Frosta peninsula and a different aristocracy rose to power, which must have competed with former ruling families (Sognnes 2010). In terms of location, the shift was to the mouth of the river Nið and eventually to the nearby farm of Hlaðir. This is the aristocratic seat that Óláfr pái visited in order to acquire lumber to build his hall in Hjarðarholt.

In his 1934 article titled "Lade i Trøndelagen", Th. Petersen writes about the pre-history of the farm *Lade,* Old Norse Hlaðir, farm and estate. One of the earliest archaeological finds in the Strinda district has been found in Hlaðir, the grave of a man from the Bronze Age. Other finds and farm names nearby show that the area had been settled throughout the Iron Age. One farm name, Nardo, is arguably etymologically linked to Njarðarhóll, a rise in the landscape where Njǫrðr would have been worshiped. Petersen states that as a fertility god, Njǫrðr, and hence the cult surrounding him, dates back to the Iron Age, so there is reason to believe this farm held an important position in Strinda prior to the Viking Age. Petersen posits farm names also indicate that additional cult sites were nearby, such as *Elseter*, where he indicates *el* may be an old word for a heathen cult location, and *Onsøi*, an older name for *Odinsvin*. Finds dating as far back as the 400's in a large collection of grave mounds bordering Hlaðir on the old road from these neighboring farms provide additional evidence that prior to the Viking Age it had become an important settlement. A large ring of stones once stood on a flat just north of the farm, perhaps a *hǫrgr*, indicating that this was also a center of cult activity. It is likely that the old farm buildings were in the same location as the current estate. Petersen suggests that a *hof*, or heathen temple building, was an adaptation of the Christian churches seen by traveling Vikings. Assuming it is historically accurate that there was a *hof* on the farm grounds, it was likely in the same spot as the current Lade church. During trenching for a church expansion in 1915 workers came upon a burned layer and underneath that a large quantity of animal bones. Whether or not these were sacrificial animals cannot be known, but they were likely associated either with the *hof* or the old farm (Petersen 1934).

The geographical location of Hlaðir speaks to how the farm became an appropriate residence for those who held power. The property is on a short neck of land forming a hill on the east side of the mouth of the navigable river Nið, and it offers strategic views of considerable

distance in both directions of the Trondheim fjord. (fig. 35) Steep cliffs on each side of the hill protect the area from attack. Directly below, however, is a natural harbor suitable for unloading freight. Although it is questionable how the place name might be derived, it is interesting that one of the meanings of the Old Norse verb *hlaða* is to load, or lade, a ship (Cleasby Vigfusson 1969: 268). There was certainly a relationship between Hlaðir and the peninsula to the west formed by the mouth of the river, which towards the end of the Viking age became the town of Niðaróss and is now the third largest city in Norway, Trondheim. Archaeological evidence shows that area was also settled long before the Viking Age. Around the time that Hlaðir rose to prominence there was a farm there. The natural harbor formed by the mouth of the river allowed for even more access than at Hlaðir, and eventually a *kaupangr*, trading place, took hold and grew into a town (Blom 1997: 24-40). From the sagas it appears, however, that those who initially ruled over and probably taxed the *kaupangr* dwelled at Hlaðir. Again, the topography makes it entirely plausible that the elite would occupy the hill overlooking the budding settlement by the river mouth below and thereby oversee and profit by the activities.

The king's sagas indicate that as part of his strategy, Haraldr hárfagri sought allies among those chieftains who did not resist him. One of these, Hákon Grjótgarðsson, gained considerable stature through his alliance with Haraldr, and he was awarded with the rule over Strinda. Hlaðir was, or soon would become, the prominent farm in the Strinda district, and the kinsmen related to Hákon Grjótgarðsson were the powerful *jarls*, earls, who would eventually inhabit the estate. Prior to becoming the jarls of Hlaðir, it appears members of this powerful family were the jarls of, or rulers over Hálogaland. Norway has a very long coastline. Bordering Trøndelag around the year 1000 the region known as Hálogaland stretched some 600 kilometers north past the Arctic Circle to present day Finnmark. At that time, it would have been the northernmost settlement of the ethnic Norse peoples. There would have been competition over trade with and taxation of other ethnic groups usually referred to as *Finnar* in Old Norse literature further north and east. Archaeological finds show that during the Iron Age *þing*, assembly, sites outside of but near clusters of wealthy farms, dotted the coastline. A discontinuance of these probably neutral meeting grounds in the early 800's indicate that independent warlords became more consolidated by a central power (Storli 2010). Sources are sketchy, but historians and archaeologists have investigated how by this time the kinsmen of the earls of Hálogaland may have started to become dominant in the area during the 700's (Storli 2006: 14, Gunnes 1976: 71). There are two mentions in *Landnámabók* of this lineage stemming from Hálogaland. One is in reference to Ingibjǫrg Hávarsdóttir, Grjótgarðssonar Háleygjajarls (*Landnámabók* 1986: 349). The editor's footnote states that Grjótgarðr Háleygjajarl could be the father of Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson, the ally of Haraldr hárfagri. That Grjótgarðr is also mentioned as the son of Herlaugr in *Hversu Noregr byggðisk*, which traces some of the lineage but does not exactly place them:

> Annarr þeira sona Grjótgarðs var Sigarr, faðir Signýjar, er átti Haraldr Naumdælajarl, faðir Herlaugs, föður Grjótgarðs, föður Hákonar jarls, föður Sigurðar jarls, föður Hákonar Hlaðajarls. (*Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* I 1943)

> Another of the sons of Grjótgarðr was Sigarr, the father of Signý, who married Haraldr Naumdælajarl, the father of Herlaugr, the father of Grjótgarðr, the father of Hákon jarl, the father of Sigurðr jarl, the father of Hákon jarl of Hlaðir.

Naumdælafylki is just south of Hálogaland, and if there is any historic substance to this legendary lineage, Haraldr Naumdælajarl could be the earliest named link in the Hálogaland jarl kinship. Perhaps retaining control over the far north through extended family or loyal agents, the jarls migrated south to Trøndelag, first to the northern district in Naumudalr. Later, however, it appears they took residence at the mouth of Trondheimsfjord. Two references in *Landnámabók* place Grjótgarðr's burial mound on a peninsula on the south side of the opening to the fjord:

> Gunnsteinn berserkjabani, son Bǫlverks blindingatrjónu drap tvá berserki, ok hafði annarr þeira áðr drepit Grjótgarð jarl í Sǫlva fyrir innan Agðanes. (*Landnámabók* 1986: 366)
>
> Gunnsteinn berserkjabani, the son of Bǫlverkr blindingatrjóna killed two berserkers, and one of them before had killed Grjótgarðr jarl at Sǫlvi further in from Agðanes.
>
> (...), Grjótgarðssonar jarls, er Grjótgarðshaugr er við kenndr fyrir sunnan Agðanes, (...) (*Landnámabók* 1986: 65)
>
> (...), the son of Grjótgarðr jarl, who is known by Grjótgarðshaugr further south from Agðanes, (...)

Yrjar is a short distance across the fjord to the north. It appears Hákon made that his base. It states in *Haralds saga ins hárfagra*:

> Þat er sagt, at Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson kom til Haralds konungs útan af Yrjum ok hafði lið mikit til fulltings við Harald konung. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 99)
>
> It is said that Jarl Hákon Grjótgarðsson came to King Haraldr from out in Yrjar bringing a great army in support of King Haraldr. (*Heimskringla* I 2011: 56)

It is well known that a reason given in the sagas for the immigration to Iceland was the tyranny of Haraldr hárfagri, but there are also some instances named in *Landnámabók* referring to *ósáttr*, disagreement, specifically with Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson as a cause for leaving Norway:

> Hann varð ósáttr við Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson ok fór á Yrjar ok dó þar, en Þorsteinn enn hvíti son hans fór til Íslands ok kom skipi sínu í Vápnafjǫrð eptir landnám. (*Landnámabók* 1986: 290)
>
> He became in disagreement with Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson and went to Yrjar and died there, and his son Þorsteinn enn hvíti went to Iceland and his ship arrived in Vápnafjǫrðr after (the period of) settlement.

But those who fled his tyranny were not just people from around Trondheimsfjord, they were also from far north in Hálogaland, which indicates that he retained, in effect, the power to potentially oppress people as Háleygjajarl:

> Loðinn ǫngull hét maðr; hann var fœddr í Ǫngley á Hálogalandi. Hann fór fyrir ofríki Hákonar jarls Grjótgarðssonar til Íslands ok dó í hafi; (...) (*Landnámabók* 1986: 273)
>
> A man was called Loðinn ǫngull; he was raised on Ǫngley in Hálogaland. He traveled to Iceland because of the overbearing of Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson and died in the sea; (...)
>
> Þórir þursasprengir hét maðr; hann var fœddr í Ǫmð á Hálogalandi ok varð missátr við Hákon jarls Grjótgarðssonar ok fór af því til Íslands; (...) (*Landnámabók* 1986: 257)
>
> A man was called Þórir þursasprengir; he was raised in Ǫmð in Hálogaland and became in disagreement with Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson and because of that journeyed to Iceland; (...)

Dwelling at the mouth of Trondheimsfjord at Yrjar was a strategic location that would have enabled Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson to discourage any incursions from chieftains or petty kings from the south and maintain control of the trade and taxation of peoples to the north. Walrus tusks, eiderdown, fine furs and hides were among the exports. Imports included grains, malt and honey for brewing, textiles, tableware, objects of precious metals, riding gear and weapons (Storli 2007: 98). Many of the latter items had designs and patterns that would have contributed to a shared pool of iconography and made an impression on local craftspeople of the north. Art objects would have made their way to Þrándheimr and Hlaðir in return cargo from trading centers in the rest of Scandinavia, England, Ireland and the European continent.

For example, a gold bracteate found on a farm at Mjønes near Bodø demonstrates that Late Roman and Vendel/Merovingian style ornament was familiar to inhabitants as far north as Hálogaland. Its origin is unknown, but the image is familiar as a "C" type bracteate depicting the profile of a large face of a man on a horse. (fig. 35a) The Mjønes bracteate also features a bird (Hauck 2,2 1986: 85-6). While many scholars are skeptical, some concur that the Old Germanic Wotan, Óðinn, is the recurrent theme seen on these "C" type bracteates (Hauck 1978, Wicker 1993: 533). In his multi-volume study, Karl Hauck has also identified other motifs known from Old Germanic myths and Old Norse sources, such as the Trollhätten bracteate (fig. 35b) showing the Fenris wolf devouring the hand of Týr (Hauck 1978: 391) and the "3 gods" motif seen on the Faxe bracteate (fig. 35c), perhaps showing Baldr slain by mistletoe (Hauck 1978: 395). Scholars, such as Nancy Wicker, are willing to entertain that these gods are depicted on some of the bracteates but also consider most of Hauck's claims too broad sweeping and unsubstantiated (Wicker 2012: 163). Arguably used as amulets, the bracteates may have been valued both as jewelry and as a sign that the bearer was of high status. The mythic display may have been intended as an expression of kinship with the gods (Storli 2006: 167-68). Similarly, the display of now missing wood-carved mythic representations motivated by a demonstration of divine lineage is a central claim of this dissertation. The bracteates were originally modeled on Roman medallions from around the fourth and fifth centuries, but soon developed into a Nordic art form (Munksgaard 1978, Wicker 1993). Hundreds of gold bracteates have been found in Scandinavia, but they are relatively rare in northern Norway (Munksgaard 1978: 338-39). However, four of

the "C" type bracteates have been found in graves in the Þrándheimr area surrounding Hlaðir. Two (fig. 35d) were found in Dalum (Hauck 2,2 1986: 19-20), Sparbu, near Mære (Montelius 1869: 31), a reputed pre-Christian cult site (Stephens 1881, Lidén 1969). The other two were found in Rømul (fig. 35e), just south of Hlaðir (Hauck 2,2 1986: 103-4). Also near Mære, a type "M" gold bracteate was found on Inderøy (Montelius 1869: 32). On it, Wicker cites that a scene with a man and woman has been interpreted by Hauck as Baldr's trip to Hel (Wicker 2012: 158). Again, Wicker finds problems with many if not most of Hauck's claims, but it does appear the bracteates were intended as representing more than features of Roman copies - likely they were reinterpreted and given their own spiritual content (Axboe 2007: 151). The production of the gold bracteates considerably pre-dates the Viking Age, and evidently they were no longer made after 550/560 (Axboe 2007: 148). Therefore, the actual appearance of the iconography is perhaps less pertinent for this study than the potential mythic representations and their distribution. The presence of the bracteates in the region around Hlaðir and further north are indicators that broader Scandinavian iconography was familiar to the inhabitants of the area well prior to the Viking Age. If some of the interpretations of mythic motifs are accurate, the bracteates also suggest an Æsir cult that considerably pre-dates skaldic poetry retained in written sources. Both of these observations help to provide a cultural context for now missing woodcarvings that would have featured mythic scenes with iconographic elements seen across the Scandinavian landscape, and to a certain extent, abroad.

There are no major finds in the Þrándheimr area that come close to the Oseberg burial ship in magnitude. No woodcarvings have been found in Hlaðir from the Viking Age. Even with exposure from international trade, it is reasonable to assume that the greatest influences of style and content would be from those areas closest to home. There is nothing in literary sources to suggest that Haraldr hárfagri was a patron of the plastic arts or that he would have brought woodcarvers with him among his fleet when he sailed into Trondheimsfjord. Nevertheless, as archaeological sources reveal, Kaupangr in Vestfold declined from being a settlement to a seasonal marketplace in the late 800's (Skre 2007). Perhaps it was not just for dramatic storytelling that the king's sagas shifted the focus to Hlaðir in the 900's as a major power center. It would seem likely that in turn, craftspersons, including woodcarvers, migrated in that direction to follow the flow of wealth. That is particularly true for specialists who would depend on patrons among aristocracy rather than selling to, or trading their wares with, common folk.

While there are no remnants of woodcarving from Hlaðir during the tenth century, some fragments of carved furniture dating to the medieval period have been found in excavations conducted in Trondheim. These are decorative carvings in the Urnes style, probably from the late eleventh or early twelfth century. Even though this would have been after Christianization and a hundred years or more after the journey made by Óláfr, they are worth examining as a trajectory of techniques used over time for woodcarving in the Þrándheimr area. As typical of the Urnes style, the figures feature slender heads and their bodies are composed of elegantly curved vine-like scrolls. (fig. 36) In comparison to the Oseberg carvings, far less ornament coverage is seen. There is more recessed wood as background and the raised patterns are in low relief. The ornament surfaces are smooth rather than covered with engraved hatching patterns. These features should be taken into consideration as long-term trends, but they are also consistent with the functionality of furniture, such as the back of a chair. Other Urnes style carvings in Norway are made in a high, rounded relief. For example, the carvings on the portals of Urnes church in

Sogn are 12 cm deep (Wilson 1966: 147). Of course, the remnants found in what was the original town of Niðaróss also provides material evidence that woodcarvings were present in the area shortly after the Viking Age - surely a glimpse of an ongoing tradition.

It was a strategic move for both Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson and Haraldr hárfagri to join forces when the king arrived at the district in his quest to dominate all of Norway. Their combined forces led to significant victories and both achieved expansion of their power. According to Snorri, it was after advancing into the fjord and successfully toppling two kings that Haraldr awarded Hákon with the Strinda district. If it is true, it would have been the first time the lineage occupied this part of the fjord where Hlaðir is located. Haraldr "conquered" all of Trondheimsfjord and Naumudalr, married Ása, the daughter of Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson, and established Hlaðir as a center of power. As discussed in detail below, the development of the Hlaðir compound would have included woodcarvings illustrating mythic scenes linking the aristocrats to divine origins. Hákon was left in charge of the districts surrounding Þrándheimr when Haraldr left for extended journeys and military expeditions. He became known as Hákon Grjótgarðsson Hlaðajarl.

Heimskringla informs us, however, that all of the warfare took its toll on the family of Hákon Grjótgarðsson Hlaðajarl. He lost two sons, Grjótgarðr and Herlaugr, while assisting Haraldr in a battle at Sólskel. Thereafter, Hákon Grjótgarðsson Hlaðajarl lost his own life in a battle over his entitlement to additional territory south of Þrándheimr. Hákon had one remaining son, and Snorri tells us:

> Eptir fall Hákonar tók Sigurðr, sonr hans, ríki ok gerðisk jarl í Þrándheimi. Han hafði atsetu á Hlǫðum. (...) Sigurðr jarl var allra manna vitrastr. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 142)

> After Hákon's fall his son Sigurðr took over the rule and became jarl in Þrándheimr. He had residence in Hlaðir. (...) Jarl Sigurðr was the wisest of men. (*Heimskringla* I 2011: 83)

Snorri's statement about Sigurðr paves the way for his exposition of a shrewd politician yet sympathetic character - a wise chieftain who utilized his connections to a mythic past. Sigurðr's role as cult leader in Old Norse literature mirrors what may be considered the archaeological evidence demonstrating a similar social position held by the Oseberg queen.

1.5 Sigurðr jarl Hákonarson and *Sigurðardrápa*

In contrast to his father, the king's sagas inform us that Sigurðr jarl Hákonarson enjoyed a long tenure in Hlaðir. First, for the remainder of the long life of Haraldr hárfagri he ruled in the frequent absence of the king, who spent his last years in other parts of Norway. After Haraldr died, Sigurðr allied himself with the popular son of Haraldr, Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri, and he helped persuade the many people under his influence to take Hákon as their king. Again, according to Snorri, Sigurðr gained a great deal of power with his alliance. Sigurðr became an interesting go-between because Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri had been raised in England as a Christian, and he would have preferred spreading the faith to Norway. According to the written sources the

farmers were opposed, however, and Sigurðr, who as jarl had taken the role of spiritual leader arranged compromises.

Significantly, in chapter fourteen of *Hákonar saga góða*, it is presented that a role of the Hlaðir jarls was to uphold the sacrificial rituals:

> Sigurðr Hlaðajarl var inn mesti blótmaðr, ok svá var Hákon, faðir hans. Helt Sigurðr jarl upp blótveizlum ǫllum af hendi konungs þar í Þrœndalǫgum. (*Heimskringla* I 1976: 167)

> Sigurðr Hlaðajarl was very keen on heathen worship, and so was his father Hákon. Jarl Sigurðr maintained all the ritual banquets on behalf of the king there in Þroendalǫg. (*Heimskringla* I 2011: 98)

The archaeological evidence in the Oseberg ship burial points to the queen as a religious cult leader. While there is some evidence that the Yngling kings may have presided over rituals in Sweden, there is little, if anything, in the king's sagas that indicate the Yngling kings took on that role in Norway, and it appears that the function was indeed undertaken by the jarls at Hlaðir. For example, it was important for Hákon konungr to participate in rituals, but apparently he did not conduct them.

At this point of citing the literary sources, it is important to reconsider the distance of time and possible misrepresentations of past practices by medieval redactors due to religious, ideological or political positioning. The approach taken in this dissertation is well expressed by Schjødt when he writes:

> After decades of deconstructionism, it is not especially interesting to argue that we can cast doubt on every kind of source; we all know this is the case. I therefore suggest that we try to argue for models which make sense in relation to the material we have at our disposal, well aware that our proposals can never be proved and knowing that, in the future, there will be other and better proposals which can explain more and be more in accordance with new scholarly and scientific results. (Schjødt 2010: 166)

In citing examples from the sagas there are varying levels of modality in terms of historical value. While the existence of some Christian practices that are superimposed on the pre-Christian is inevitable, it must be the opposite is just as true - that Christianity adopted some of those heathen practices in the process of adaptation. Snorri's disclaimer seems genuine when he writes in his *Prologus* to *Heimskringla*:

> En þótt vér vitim eigi sannendi á því, þá vitum vér dœmi til, at gamlir frœðimenn hafi slíkt fyrir satt haft. (*Heimskringla* I 1976: 4)

> And although we do not know how true they are, we know of cases where learned men of old have taken such things to be true. (*Heimskringla* I 2011: 3)

Also, just as Snorri writes it would be dishonorable for a poet to praise a king for a deed that never happened, it would not be to his merit to completely make something up. While his form of recycling previous written sources, oral tradition and legend from an Icelandic medieval mindset needs to be taken into consideration, it is much nearer the time of historic events during the Viking Age, and possibly the world-view, than a modern or post-modern one. The more fantastic legends included below are considered even lower on the modal scale of historic truth. However, it is very unlikely that the representations of character and practices were completely fabricated by a Christian mind, and there must be some clues present in regard to the actual persons and activities they exercised. Therefore, the model for investigation here includes the idea that literary expressions contain elements of belief systems that reflect the cultural settings they describe in the modes of myth, legend and history.

Snorri continues to provide a vivid description of a *blót*, or sacrificial feast, translated and paraphrased here:

> Þat var forn siðr, þá er blót skyldi vera, at allir bœndr skyldu þar koma, sem hof var, ok flytja þannug fǫng sín, þau er þeir skyldu hafa, meðan veizlan stóð. At veizlu þeiri skyldu allir menn ǫl eiga. Þar var ok drepinn alls konar smali ok svá hross, en blóð þat allt, er þar kom af, þá var kallat hlaut, ok hlautbollar þat, er blóð þat stóð í, ok hlautteinar, þat var svá gǫrt sem stǫkklar, með því skyldi rjóða stallana ǫllu saman ok svá veggi hofsins útan ok innan ok svá støkkva á mennina, en slátr skyldi sjóða til mannfagnaðar. Eldar skyldu vera á miðju gólfi í hofinu ok þar katlar yfir. Skyldi full um eld bera, en sá, er gerði veizluna ok hǫfðingi var, þá skyldi hann signa fullit ok allan blótmatinn, skyldi fyrst Óðins full - skyldi þatt drekka til sigrs ok ríkis konungi sínum - en síðan Njarðar full ok Freys full til árs ok friðar. Þá var mǫrgum mǫnnum títt at drekka þar næst bragafull. Menn drukku ok full frænda sinna, þeira er heygðir hǫfðu verit, ok váru þat minni kǫlluð. Sigurðr jarl var manna ǫrvastr. Hann gerði þat verk, er frægt var mjǫk, at hann gerði mikla blótveizlu á Hlǫðum ok helt einn upp ǫllum kostnaði. Þess getr Kormákr Ǫgmundarson í Sigurðardrápu:
>
> Hafit maðr ask né eskis
> afspring með sér þingat
> fésæranda at fœra
> fats. Véltu goð Þjaza.
> Hver myni vés við valdi
> vægja kind of bægjask,
> þvít fúr-Rǫgni fagnar
> fens. Vá Gramr til menja. (*Heimskringla* I 1976: 167-8)
>
> It was an ancient custom, when a ritual feast was to take place, that all the farmers should attend where the temple was and bring there their own supplies for them to use while the banquet lasted. At this banquet everyone had to take part in the ale-drinking. All kinds of domestic animals were slaughtered there, including horses, and all the blood that came from them was then called *hlaut* ('lot'), and what the blood was contained in, *hlaut*- bowls, and *hlaut* -twigs, these were fashioned like

> holy water sprinklers; with these the altars were to be reddened all over, and also the walls of the temple outside and inside and the people also were sprinkled, while the meat was to be cooked for a feast. There would be fires down the middle of the floor in the temple with cauldrons over them. The toasts were handed across the fire, and the one who was holding the banquet and who was the chief person there, he had then to dedicate the toast and all the ritual food; first would be Óðinn's toast—that was drunk to victory and to the power of the king—and then Njǫrðr's toast and Freyr's toast for prosperity and peace. Then after that it was common for many people to drink the *bragafull* ('chieftain's toast'). People also drank toasts to their kinsmen, those who had been buried in mounds, and these were called *minni* ('memorial toasts'). Jarl Sigurðr was the most liberal of men. He did something that was very celebrated: he held a great ritual feast at Hlaðir and stood all the expenses. Kormakr Ǫgmundarson mentions this in *Sigurðardrápa*:
>
> Word order and translation: Man need not take plater nor ash-wood cup's offspring [food or drink] to give the wealth-wounder [generous man]; the god(s) outwitted Þjazi; which descendant would quarrel with the 'important one of power' of the temple; that gladdens fire of the water-Rǫgnir [Sigurðr]; Gramr won treasure. (modified from *Heimskringla* I 2011: 99)

Sigurðardrápa is given its name by Snorri in *Heimskringla*, where he introduces this single stanza of the poem. Finnur has collected 6 additional quatrains, *helmingar*, from Snorri's *Edda* to compile his arrangement of what is left of the *drápa*. It is not entirely certain that these were all from the same poem. Faulkes suggests Kormákr could have been addressing Hákon Sigurðarson in some of these *helmingar* (see *Skáldskaparmál* notes to verses 292 and 301). There are likely, of course, missing verses as well. What links six of the extant *helmingar* to the same *drápa* is the particular use of a refrain. Snorri provides an example of this type in *Háttatal*:

> Þetta kǫllum vér hjástælt. Hér er it fyrsta (vísuorð) ok annat ok þriðja sér um mál, ok hefir þó þat mál eina samstǫfun með fullu orði af hinu fjórða vísuorði, en þær fimm samstǫfur er eptir fara lúka heilu máli, ok skal orðtak vera forn minni. (*Háttatal* 1991:10)
>
> This we call hiástælt [abutted]. Here the first, second and third lines belong together in a sense, and yet this sentence includes one syllable comprising a complete word from the fourth line, and the five syllables that follow complete a full sentence and the expression has to be proverbial statements. (*Edda* 1995: 176)

Anthony Faulkes translates *hjástælt* as "abutted", which is apt because the fourth line of the *helmingr* contains a short sentence with a rather abrupt shift from a conceptual treatment of a given topic in the previous three lines, albeit rich with kennings, to in this case what may clearly be formed as a figurative image depicting a mythological, and possibly iconographic, scene. In what may be considered true to an obtuse skaldic style, it is not entirely clear without further consideration whether these abutted refrains are related to the content in the previous section of the *helmingr*. One gets a sense that Kormákr is performing his praise poem in one of Sigurðr's

halls, and that as he does so, he is demonstrating his keen poetic abilities by working in "asides" describing what he sees around him while keeping with the *dróttkvætt* meter. The best launching point to investigate possibilities regarding the appearance of a temple or hall containing wood-carved mythological scenes in Viking Age Norway is the description of the *blót* by Snorri in combination with *Sigurðardrápa*.

The refrains in the six verses of *Sigurðardrápa* present *images* of mythological content and could very well be examples of ekphrasis. Kurt Schier noted:

> de Boor kam deshalb zu dem Schluß, daß diese Zeilen auf bildliche Darstellungen in der Halle des Jarls Sigurðr anspielen, und ich halte das für die einzige einigermaßen wahrscheinliche Erklärung für diese seltsame Form des Skaldengedichtes. Kormákr, dessen Dichtung sonst nur sehr spärliche mythologische Elemente enthält, hat also wohl dem religiösen Interesse des Jarls in der Form gehuldigt, daß er sein Preislied in ungewöhnlicher Weise mit den mythologischen Bildern in Sigurðs Halle verband. (Schier 1976: 441)

> de Boor therefore came to the conclusion that these lines allude to pictures in the hall of Sigurðr jarl, and I think that's the only reasonable likely explanation for this strange form of Skaldic poem. Kormákr, whose poetry usually contains very sparse mythological elements has, therefore, probably paid homage to the religious interests of the jarl in the form that he combined his praise poem in an unusual way with mythological images in Sigurðr's hall.

Schier makes the connection between Óláfr's (later) trip to Norway and stay with Hákon inn ríki Sigurðarson, Hlaðajarl, as having an influence on the conceptual aspects of the mythological content carved in the *eldhús* at Hjarðarholt and described by Úlfr in *Húsdrápa*, but he does not pursue the woodcarving or halls in and of themselves, nor does he present any ideas about the appearance of the iconography, which is a central objective of this dissertation. Schier also stops short of an in-depth analysis of *Sigurðardrápa* and what more it may reveal about the iconography and its significance other than a source for traditional myths.

The stanza quoted in *Heimskringla* reinforces the presentation of Sigurðr jarl as not only a practicing heathen, but also as a *hofgoði* - one who is in charge of not only political but also spiritual power. It is his position as leader to perform annual rituals to insure prosperity. Such offerings, as the stanza indicates, are reciprocal and through generosity assures his status: *hver kind myni of bægjast við vés vægi-valdi; því fagnar fens fúr-Rǫgnir*. "which descendant could quarrel with the 'important one of power' of the temple; that gladdens fire of the water-Rǫgnir [Sigurðr]" (see word order of the stanza quoted above.) In order to impress upon his district that he is worthy of such an honorable position, it also stands to reason that Sigurðr jarl would seek the finest display of material representations to reinforce the perception of his elevated power. Some of this ornament would have been in the form of woodcarvings in relief that told sagas and myths that bolstered his status as a chieftain who had descended from the gods and wooden sculpture such as cult images or instruments of cult/religious activity described in the passage.

Snorri states that the abutted refrains stand apart as expressions, *orðtak*. While Turville-Petre states the appended myth or legend has nothing to do with the context of the half-strophe, Roberta Frank sees some semantic parallels (Turville-Petre 1976: 46, Frank 1978: 107). Although the two counterpoints are obscure, she notes how the combination places the jarl in the company of gods and heroes. Indeed, as indicated in the following analysis, there are possibly some connections that may be drawn to the rest of the *helmingar* to which the refrains are abutted. In six of the half-strophes considered part of *Sigurðardrápa*, the first three lines plus the first syllable of the fourth are largely a conceptual unit, and the last line containing the *orðtak* may be "seen" as a picture representing a mythological or legendary "scene." Some *helmingar* suggest a double entendre. The strength of the allusion varies, but the sexual nature is generally a balance of masculine and feminine subject/object juxtaposition which may in some cases be captured in the image generated by the *orðtak*. Outside of the military aspects included and so common with skaldic poetry, this is the most identifiable element linking the content of some of these *helmingar* with each other. The reputation of Kormákr as a "love sick poet" might be an interesting psychological study in this context, but it will not be pursued further here. Rather, the sexual content suggests a relevant theme of fertility. Of particular interest is the effect of the concept in relation to the images, i.e. how the construct is visually displayed. Another commonality between the six *helmingar* is the context in which they are delivered. By analyzing the content and in consideration of Snorri's description of the heathen ritual above, it is possible that each might represent a *full*, or toast, performed or simulated by Kormákr at a feast or *blót*. One of the translations for *minni* is memorial cup, toast at old sacrifices and banquets. The expressions of *forn minni*, ancient memorials, that form the refrains of Kormákr's *hjástælt* verses could conceivably be spoken with raised cups in honor of the host, hero, god or goddess. While this is interesting in and of itself, the foci through the recipients of the potential toast reveals a lot about the prevalent belief systems of the earls and their subjects in the districts surrounding Hlaðir. Additionally, of importance for this study, along with the *forn minni*, the additional context of the half-strophes may have been inspired by the iconography carved on the walls of a hall. Perhaps Kormákr shaped his kennings based upon what he saw. In regard to these observations, each of the following six *helmingar* will be considered. These are the six five syllable statements that form the refrains:

seið Yggr til Rindar.
komsk Urðr ór brunni.
sitr Þórr í reiðu.
véltu goð Þjatsa.
vá Gramr til menja.
fór Hroptr með Gungni.

As stated above, although details will vary in accordance with how they are perceived as graphic images, each of these statements may be referenced as representing material iconography of the scenes. Each scenario becomes more complex when additional factors are taken into consideration.

***Seið Yggr til Rindar*. - Óðinn seduced Rindr using spells:**

In what is referred to as the *Ljóðatal* section of *Hávamál,* Óðinn tells of eighteen charms. The sixteenth and seventeenth enable him to seduce women:

Þat kann ec iþ sextánda, ef ec vil ins svinna mans
hafa geð alt oc gaman:
hugi ec hverfi hvítarmri kono
ok sný ec hennar ǫllom sefa. (*Edda* 1983: 44. st. 161)

I know a sixteenth if I want to have all
a clever woman's heart and love-play;
I can turn the thoughts of the white-armed woman
and change her mind entirely. (*Poetic Edda*. 1996: 37)

Þat kann ec iþ siautiánda, at mic mun seint firraz
iþ manunga man (...) (*Edda* 1983: 44. st. 162)

I know a seventeenth, so that scarcely any
young girl will want to shun me (...) (*Poetic Edda*. 1996: 37)

While the charms themselves are not specifically recited, and there is no description of how they are dispensed, we know from *Rúnatal* that Óðinn acquires the knowledge of the spells by reaching a trance state and taking what resemble shamanic journeys to learn such ancient knowledge from giants (see above). Elsewhere in the literature, when examples of *seiðr*, a practice of sorcery, are written about, it seems the practitioners enter a similar physically passive state while the soul journeys. It is possible that in various mythological settings Óðinn would use this technique to cast his spells, but another hint from his seduction of Gunnlǫð presents a more likely scenario. After arriving in her father's hall, he states:

fát gat ec þegiandi þar;
mǫrgom orðom mælti ec í minn frama
í Suttungs sǫlom. (*Edda* 1983: 33. st. 104)

I didn't get much there from being silent;
with many words I spoke to my advantage
in Suttung's hall. (*Poetic Edda*. 1996: 28 st. 104)

This suggests the charms are spoken, chanted or sung in the presence of the one to be influenced. This fits Cleasby Vigfusson's definition of the verb *seiða*: to enchant by a spell.

We learn from Snorri in *Gylfaginning* that Óðinn begot a son, Váli, with Rindr; however, he does not describe the scene. In a separate tradition, Saxo tells of numerous attempts by Óðinn to woo Rindr, including an episode when he casts a spell on her. It seems sorcery and seduction are factors of the missing scene, and the concepts in the rest of the *helmingr* in question metaphorically reflect the sexual content:

Eykr með ennidúki

jarðhljótr dia fjarðar
breyti, hún sás, beinan,
bindr; seið Yggr til Rindar. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 9)

Word order based on Finnur: Land-holder [the jarl], that one who (the sail) binds to the top of the mast, adorns (highlights, distinguishes) the smooth provider of the fjord of the gods [poet] with a forehead-cloth [headband]; Óðinn got Rindr by working spells.

Word order and translation by Faulkes: The land-getter, who binds the mast-top straight, honours the provider of the deities' fiord [the mead of poetry, whose provider is the poet] with a head-band. Ygg [Odin] won Rind by spells. (*Edda* 1995: 68)

Finnur identifies the subject of the *helmingr*, *jarðhljótr*, as Sigurðr jarl, and the terms *beinn* "straight", *húnn,* representing the top of the mast and *binda* "bind", *sá er bindr* "the one who binds" with him. The phrase links the masculinity of Sigurðr with phallic imagery as he is associated with binding, presumably a sail, on the top of the smooth, or straight, mast. The object of the *helmingr*, the skald Kormákr, providing *díafjǫrðr*, the "fjord of the gods", mead of poetry, is rewarded with an *ennidúkr*, a headband. These are feminine symbols, as he receives the ring shaped “headband” (in juxtaposition to the “straight mast”) and, as Gunnlǫð provided the mead of poetry to Óðinn, Kormákr provides the same to Sigurðr. In view of this, the relationship between the two men suggests a veiled homo-eroticism, but the concepts behind the kennings may both inspire and be inspired by visual content. The details of the West Norse myth of the seduction of Rindr are missing today[21], but the *helmingr* hints that it could include a journey by, or take place adjacent to, a ship. Of course, the kennings may be a product of the poet’s imagination with no other impetus, but it is quite possible that he is inspired by a wood-carved scene including Óðinn facing the giantess Rindr, his mouth agape working his charm while on or near a ship with depictions of sexual symbolism exhibited by the top of the mast piercing a sail, spears and ring-shapes. Other symbols representing magic would likely fill the surface aside and between the narrative elements. (fig. 36a)

In the description of the ritual feast, Snorri writes that it was common that there would be toasts made to the deities: *skyldi fyrst Óðins full - skyldi þat drekka til sigrs ok ríkis konungi sínum*. "first there would be Óðinn's toast - that would be drunk to the king for his victory and power." Perhaps here Kormákr is present at a ceremony, this being an *Óðins full,* dedicated not only to Óðinn, but also, in this case for Óðinn to bring fertility to the land through the *jarðhljótr* - the land holder, as incarnated in Sigurðr. Freyr may primarily be considered the Norse fertility god, but the name "All-father" and the success of Óðinn at seduction also place him as a prime mythic fecundity archetype.

Komsk Urðr ór brunni. **Urðr rose from the well:**

[21] For a discussion of Saxo's version of the myth involving Óðinn and Rindr, see section 2.6

In this image the norn associated with the name of the well is emerging from it. Snorri informs us:

> Þar stendr salr einn fagr undir askinum við brunninn, ok ór þeim sal koma þrjár meyjar þær er svá heita: Urðr, Verðandi, Skuld. Þessar meyjar skapa mǫnnum aldr. Þeir kǫllum vér nornir. (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 18)
>
> There stands there one beautiful hall under the ash by the well, and out of this hall come three maidens whose names are Weird, Verdandi, Skuld. These maidens shape men's lives. We call them norns. (*Edda* 1995: 18)

It is conceivable that the ash, Yggdrasill, is in this scene, as Snorri also tells about the "world tree":

> Þriðja rót asksins stendr á himni, ok undir þeiri rót er brunnr sá er mjǫk er heilagr er heitir Urðar brunnr. (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 17)
>
> The third root of the ash extends to heaven, and beneath that root is a well that is very holy, called Weird's well. (*Edda* 1995: 17)

That these maidens determine the ages, lives, or fates of men fits with the rest of the *helmingr* in regard to battle because, along with being chosen by Óðinn and Valkyries, the fallen heroes slain by Sigurðr fulfilled their destinies (Bek-Pedersen 2011: 92-93). The half-strophe also references other feminine deities, such as in *gunnr svall*, "battle raged":

> Svall, þá er gekk með gjallan
> Gauts eld, hinn er styr beldi,
> glaðfœðandi Gríðar,
> gunnr; Komsk Urðr ór brunni. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 70)
>
> Word order and translation as suggested by Finnur and Faulkes: Battle raged, then when the 'mount-feeder' of Gríðr' ['feeder of the wolf' = Sigurðr jarl], he who battle put into violent action, went with the ringing fire of Gautr [Óðinn = [sword]]. Urðr comes from the well.

Gunnr, is also a Valkyrie name, therefore associated with a *dís*, or feminine spirit, as is Urðr. Another female is included in the kenning *Gríðar glaðfœðandi* "feeder of Gríðr's mount". Gríðr is a giantess or troll wife name, and her steed is a wolf. These feminine names forming kennings for battle and warrior also stand in juxtaposition to the masculine *gjallan Gauts eldr*, or sword, and create a balance to the composition. The sword as phallic symbol and the feminine symbols of the well, the erotic undertones of the Valkyries and the untamed forces of a giantess point to a ritualized notion of death and rebirth, hence fertility. Additionally, all of these entities could form part of a visual scene Kormákr describes in the *helmingr*. One can imagine carved depictions of Urðr coming from the well as Valkyries hover and Gríðr with her wolf provide symbols for a battle scene featuring a warrior brandishing a flaming sword. (fig. 36b)

As a toast, this could indeed be a *dísar full*, in dedication and offering to the sacred marriage that brings about good luck and fortune through the Hálogaland (see also *Háleygjatal*) and subsequently, Hlaðir jarls. Such a patron goddess appears in several extant texts, specifically as a crucial component of the power exercised by Sigurðr's son, Hákon jarl inn ríki, the host of Óláfr pái when he came to Hlaðir. In *Skáldskaparmál* where Snorri offers examples of kennings for gold, he mentions her existence:

> Svá er sagt at konungr sá er Hǫlgi er kallaðr, er Hálogaland er við nefnt, var faðir Þorgerðar Hǫlgabrúðar. Þau váru bæði blótuð ok var haugr Hǫlga kastaðr, ǫnnur fló af gulli eða silfri (þat var blótféit) en ǫnnur fló af moldu ok grjóti. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 60)

> They say that a king known as Holgi, after whom Halogaland is named, was Thorgerd Holgabrud's father. Sacrifices were offered to them both, and Holgi's mound was raised with alternately a layer of gold or silver - this was the money offered in sacrifice - and a layer of earth and stone. (*Edda* 1995: 112)

As 'bride of Hálogaland' Þorgerðr embodies a mythic role of queen and mother of the earls, district and its people. It is certainly conceivable that such a patron goddess would be toasted at a *blót*.

In *Brennu-Njáls saga*, a temple housing Þorgerðr Hǫldabrúðr[22] is mentioned. A *goðahús* is in the keeping of Guðbrandr i Dǫlum and owned jointly with Hákon jarl. It states about Guðbrandr, but more significantly about the temple:

> Hann var inn mesti vin Hákonar jarls; þeir áttu hof báðir saman, ok var því aldri upp lokit, nema þá er jarl kom þangat; þat var annat mest hof í Nóregi, en annat á Hlǫðum. (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 2010: 210)

> He made his way over to Gudbrand of the Dales, who was one of Earl Hakon's closest friends; they owned jointly a temple which was never opened except when the earl was there - the largest temple in Norway apart from the one at Lade. (*Njal's saga* 1960: 185)

Here it states that at the time one of the two greatest temples in Norway was at Hlaðir. This supports the argument that Óláfr pái was impressed and influenced by what he saw in the dwelling structures when he stayed with Hákon jarl.

In this segment, a troublemaker from Iceland named Hrappr arrived at Guðbrandr's. He seduced the daughter of Guðbrandr, Guðrún, and much to the chagrin of Guðbrandr, he also impregnated her. Hrappr killed many of Guðbrandr's men and went into hiding. Hákon jarl put a price on Hrappr's head, but nobody could capture him. Hákon jarl paid a visit to Guðbrandr, and Hrappr set out to ruin the occasion. He broke in the temple and stole the rings and valuables from the likes of the idols:

[22] Her name appears with various spellings, perhaps indicating varying traditional lore. For a list, see: McKinnell 2002: 286.

> Um nóttina fór Viga-Hrappr til goðahúss þeira jarls ok Guðbrands ok gekk inn í húsit. Hann sá Þorgerði hǫldabrúði sitja, ok var hon svá mikil sem maðr roskinn; hon hafði mikinn gullhring á hendi ok fald á hǫfði. Hann sviptir faldinum hennar, en tekr af henni gullhringinn. Þá sér hann kerru Þórs ok tekr af honum annan hring. Hann tók inn þriðja af Irpu ok dró þau ǫll út ok tók af þeim allan búninginn; síðan lagði hann eld í goðahúsit ok brenndi upp. (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 2010: 214)
>
> During the night, Hrapp the Killer went to their temple. Inside it, he saw the statue of Thorgerd Holgi's-Bride enthroned, massive as a fully-grown man; there was a huge gold bracelet on her arm, and a linen hood over her head. Hrapp stripped off the hood and the bracelet. Then he noticed Thor in his chariot, and took from him another gold bracelet. He took a third bracelet from Irpa. He dragged all three of the idols outside and stripped them of their vestments; then he set fire to the temple and burned it down. (*Njal's saga* 1960: 188)

It may gladden the medieval Christian audience of the saga that the *hof* was burned down, but more important for this study the event alludes to the extent to which Hákon jarl had this relationship with a patron goddess that resided, here, as a wooden cultic image, and according to the literary sources, in numerous other sacred places near Hlaðir. Víga-Hrappr was not a sensitive guy. The idols did not appear alive to him as he stripped them of their valuables. There is a touch of realism in this depiction of the anti-hero's encounter with a temple. It can be argued that all of the examples involving Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr are fantastic tales. However, Icelanders have always taken their lineages seriously, and as others, *Brennu-Njáls saga* features important families. Previously held folk beliefs referenced in the saga likely have not been included for pure entertainment value nor were the legends considered a complete fabrication. Accounts about pre-Christian temples are plentiful in the sagas (DuBois 1999, Turville-Petre 1964). Scholars have debated whether there actually were any pre-Christian "temples" as described. Some suggest rituals were primarily held outdoors in sacred locations in the landscape, and it is unlikely there were any "purpose-built" temples at all (McKinnell 2002). Others think structures devoted to gods were a late introduction influenced by exposure to Christian churches (for examples of the debate, see: Nordeide 2011, Olsen 1969, Lidén 1969). Opinions have changed, and there is some archaeological evidence for both, but here it is posited that the jarl or chieftain's halls were used for both profane and sacred functions (for example, in Borg, see: Munch 2003b). The literary record regarding life-size graven images of the gods is fascinating for this study as potential, yet lost models. Here, however, the idea reinforces the notion that also woodcarvings in relief depicting mythological scenes, along with three dimensional sculptures, were part of the interior design of buildings belonging to the elite.

For more on Þorgerðr, see the next section regarding the relationship Hákon jarl has with her. Here, the description in *Brennu-Njáls saga* of the *hof* with the wooden images is an appropriate lead-in to the next *helmingr* in *Sigurðardrápa* featuring a poetic "image" of Þórr. This half-strophe has been edited and translated differently:

Sitr Þórr í reiðu. **Þórr sits in his chariot:**

Hróðr gerik of mǫg mæran
meir Hǫ´konar fleira;
haptsœnis geldk hǫ´num
heið. sitr Þórr í reiðu. (Finnur 1908: 69)

Word order suggested by Finnur: I still compose more about Hákon's illustrious son, I give him a poem. Þórr sits in his chariot.

Hróðr geri ek of mǫg mæran
meir Sigrøðar fleira;
haptsœnis galt ek hánum
heið; sitr Þórr í reiðum. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 84 st. 301)

Word order and translation by Faulkes: I shall continue to compose more praise about the renowned son of Sigurðr; I shall pay him the stipend [poetry] of the gods' atoner [Óðinn]. Þórr sits in his chariot. (*Edda* 1995: 132)

There are two different version of this *helmingr* found in manuscripts containing *Skáldskaparmál*. Most versions resemble the one cited by Faulkes, but the one listed by Finnur is based on the manuscript AM 748 I b 4° (A*)*.

The version edited by Faulkes for *Skáldskaparmál* would make this *helmingr* part of a separate poem composed in praise of a different jarl. As Russell Poole points out, for this *helmingr* the majority of manuscripts refer to *mǫgr Sigrøðar* "son of Sigurðr" as the recipient of praise, presumably Hákon jarl inn ríki. Poole presents a couple of options for whom the poem is addressed to, including Sigurðr with some additional praise for his son. Also, *Skáldatal* lists Kormákr as a skald to Sigurðr Hlaðajarl and Haraldr gráfeldr, and not Hákon (Poole 1991: 50-1). Schier, citing Helmut de Boor, and Turville-Petre think the half-strophes seem to belong to the same poem (Schier 1976: 440, Turville-Petre 1976: 45). Additionally, the Skaldic Poetry Project provisionally includes Finnur's version based on AM 748 I b 4° (A*)*. In any case, both have essentially the same abutted *forn minni* and the *hjástælt* form seems more fitting with the rest of the poem titled *Sigurðardrápa* rather than separate verses. Here, de Boor's argument that Kormákr was describing scenes carved in Sigurðr's hall is further pursued. Most of the extant iconography identifiable as Þórr features him, as he is described in *Húsdrápa*, on his famous fishing expedition where he encounters the *Miðgarðsormr*, Midgard Serpent. In *Brennu-Njáls saga,* there is, however, a reference to *kerra Þórs* as a potentially life-sized statue of the god in a chariot. A woodcarving in relief could also feature Þórr in this pose. The hall in which Kormákr is reciting his poem before Sigurðr jarl would be a likely place for such a carving, and the image could be the impetus for a toast both as a *Þórs full* and, as the *helmingr* otherwise reveals, as a continuation of praise in the *drápa* to honor Sigurðr jarl. Arguably, this *helmingr* in *Sigurðardrápa* is an indicator that iconography featuring Þórr driving a chariot is missing from the archaeological record. He is attested in the *Edda* with his chariot, for example in the episode when he embarks on the journey and meets Útgarðaloki: *Þat er upphaf þessa máls at Qkuþórr fór með hafra sína ok reið ok með honum sá Áss er Loki er kallaðr*. "The beginning of this business is that Oku-Thor set off with his goats and chariot and with him the As called Loki" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 37, *Edda* 1995: 37). Ókuþórr translates to "Riding-þórr" as

specifically in a conveyance rather than riding atop an animal. He is also known as *Reiðartýr*, "Chariot-Thor" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 5). Many wagons, both actual remains and those depicted in iconography, form a body of material to draw from in order to form a hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction. (fig. 36c) In regard to a greater setting, this is perhaps the least dynamic *helmingr* in the collection of *hjástælt* verses by Kormákr, as it is reflexive speaking to his gift of poetry, and there is little conceptual material in the way of kennings or content that suggest other visual stimuli.

The verse numbered six by Finnur and also presented above as transcribed in *Heimskringla* is the only complete stanza of the group. It is emended differently by the editors of *Heimskringla*. The quatrains do not appear in Snorri's *Edda*. Here the form as edited by Finnur is used. The two quatrains share a common theme about the character and role of Sigurðr jarl as host and *hofgoði*. Each *helmingr* ends with an item of *forn minni* and are examined separately here in detail:

***Véltu goð Þjatsa;* The gods outwitted Þjazi:**

> Hafit maðr ask né eskis
> afspring með sér þingat
> fésæranda at fœra
> fats; véltu goð Þjatsa; (Finnur 1908: 69)
>
> Man need not take plater nor ash-wood cup's offspring [food or drink] to give the wealth-wounder [generous man]; the god(s) outwitted Þjazi; (modified from *Heimskringla* I 2011: 99)

In the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* Snorri relates the tale of how the giant Þjazi coerced Loki to abduct Iðunn. Þjazi had the upper hand over the Æsir except for when he met his demise. Loki retrieved the goddess and flew back with her in Freyja's falcon suit. Þjazi discovered Iðunn was missing and flew in the shape of an eagle after them in hot pursuit:

> Þá slógu Æsirnir eldi í lokarspánu en ǫrninn mátti eigi stǫðva er hann misti valsins. Laust þá eldinum í fiðri arnarins ok tók þá af fluginn. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 2)
>
> Then the Æsir set fire to the wood-shavings and the eagle was unable to stop when it missed the falcon. Then the eagle's feathers caught fire and his flight was ended. (*Edda* 1995: 60)

Surely the moment when his feathers caught fire would be most representative of when the gods outwitted Þjazi. The rest of the half-strophe is about the generosity of the host Sigurðr jarl. The wooden drinking and eating utensils would have surrounded Kormákr potentially inspiring his circumlocutions. The kennings for food and drink, *eskis/fats afspringr* "offspring of the bowl, vessel", may be seen as feminine symbols; whereas *fésærandi* "ring-breaker", provokes a masculine connotation. This adds to the interpretation of the *helmingr* if the overall sense of the occasion as a fertility ritual is taken into consideration. The result of the gods outwitting Þjazi

was the arrival of his daughter Skaði to the Æsir. And indeed, Sigurðr's generosity is a counter-point to the myth as it points to cultural values of compensation, as Skaði chose Njǫrðr as a husband from the gods as a settlement for the killing of her father. The union between the giantess and that Vanir member of the Æsir clan can be interpreted as an attempt to restore the balance of cosmic forces, and associations may be drawn to the emphasis of ritual exchange in the *helmingr*, but the union did not work out. In *Ynglingasaga* chapter 13, Snorri introduced a couple of verses by Eyvindr skáldaspillir, (Finnur includes these in *Háleygjatal*, see below), by explaining that after the failed marriage Skaði has a number of sons by Óðinn, including Sæmingr, the progenitor of the Hálogaland, and subsequently, Hlaðir jarls. As the jarl presiding over the *blót*, Sigurðr might expect the farmers to bring with them food and drink, yet here the generosity of the jarl is stressed. By providing for his subjects and the gods, Sigurðr positioned himself as a powerful mediator, and he performed a mystical union between the farmers and the "other world" essential to bring fertility to the fields. A toast to Skaði, in this case as a fertility giantess/goddess and mother of the lineage, would be entirely appropriate. Similar to a kenning, as a visual compliment and expression of material culture, a wood-carved image adorning the hall in Hlaðir featuring Þjazi in flames while in pursuit of Loki would be enough to evoke the greater myth surrounding the arrival of Skaði to the Æsir. (fig. 36d)

The second *helmingr* of the stanza has at least one association for matching the overall concept with the image conjured by:

Vá Gramr til menja. **Gramr fought for treasure:**

> hver myni vés við valdi
> vægi kind of bægjask;
> því fúr-Rǫgnir fagnar
> fens; vá Gramr til menja. (Finnur 1908: 70)
>
> Word order and translation: which descendant would quarrel with the "important one of power" of the temple; that gladdens fire of the water-Rǫgnir [Sigurðr]; Gramr fought for treasure. (modified from *Heimskringla* I 2011: 99)

Aside from the famous sword known from the Vǫlsungr clan, Snorri refers to a Gramr as one of eighteen sons of the legendary king Hálfdan gamli (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 103). A couplet by Egill is all that remains about him. The common noun *gramr* in poetic usage also means king or prince. However, in this case as an item of *forn minni*, "Gramr fought for treasure" most likely refers to the sword Reginn re-forged for Sigurðr fáfnisbani. Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* and anonymous accounts in the *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Norna-Gests þáttr* differ in detail, but these sources agree that after attaining the sword Sigurðr slew Fáfnir and Reginn, and hence that implies that the use of Gramr won the gold and treasure for him. The most likely carved image depicting this scene would be encapsulated by the slaying of the dragon, and this famous act is the most prolific extant icon of the legend. The slaying is shown on picture stones and woodcarvings from different periods spread widely across Sweden, Norway, England and the Isle of Man.

As sources tell it and Snorri notes, after slaying Sigurðr fáfnisbani, Gunnarr and Hǫgni hid his treasure in the Rhine. This event is the source for some kennings for gold, such as *Rínar rauðmálmr, Rínar grjót* and *Rínar sól*. "Red metal of the Rhine", "Stone of the Rhine" and "Sun of the Rhine" (*Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 501). The river Rhine may in some kennings be replaced with any type of body of water. Additionally, the color, light or brightness given off by gold, such as "sun" above reflecting on it, may be substituted in the circumlocution. This stanza from *Sigurðardrápa* does not appear in *Skáldskaparmál,* so Snorri does not list it among the many kennings for gold. However, Finnur explains the kenning *fens fúr-Rǫgnir* as *fen*, a collection of water combined with *fúrr*, a poetic name for fire, which emulates the color, to equal gold. Rǫgnir is understood as a name for Óðinn and his name as a general term for man (or chieftain). Hence, Finnur figures *fens fúr-Rǫgnir* as "vandets ild, guld, dets Odin, mand, her Sigurd jarl" "the water's fire, gold, its Óðinn, man, here Sigurðr jarl". The editors of *Heimskringla* concur (cf. footnote *Heimskringla* I 1979: 169). The concept of 'water fire' as gold and its association with Óðinn fits the overall picture of Gramr winning treasure quite well. In *Vǫlsunga saga* Óðinn brought the sword to the hall of Vǫlsungr and put a spell on it so only Sigmundr, the son of Vǫlsungr, could pull it from the tree Barnstokkr. Later the sword came into the possession of his son Sigurðr. Óðinn was the progenitor of the Vǫlsungr clan and an advisor to Sigurðr fáfnisbani throughout his early life, and more specifically leading up to the slaying of Fáfnir. In the legend, he appeared as an old man and saved Sigurðr's life by instructing him to dig several pits for the blood of Fáfnir to drain into, lest he drown. It is quite conceivable that a depiction of Óðinn and the treasure would be carved alongside the image of Sigurðr piercing Fáfnir with Gramr (fig. 36e). If there are any sexual connotations in this *helmingr*, they are at best obscure. Water and gold are feminine symbols, but in a kenning for 'leader' these resist interpretation as such for lack of context. Rather, the parallels of Óðinn to Sigurðr fáfnisbani and Sigurðr jarl are the foci here both as namesake and in regard to genealogy. This *helmingr* may be seen as a toast to Sigurðr jarl as descendent of Óðinn, and the riches bestowed upon him due to this relation, as was the treasure for Sigurðr fáfnisbani won by Gramr.

Fór Hroptr með Gungni. **Hroptr wielded Gungnir:**

> Algildan biðk aldar
> allvald of mér halda
> ýs bifvangi Yngva
> ungr; fór Hroptr með Gungni. (Finnur 1908: 70)
>
> Word order suggested by Finnur: Young, I request the excellent all-powerful of the men born of Yngvi hold over me the "moving-field" of the yew. Hroptr wielded Gungnir.

This abutment to the verse conjures a rather concrete image of Óðinn with his spear (fig. 36f). Snorri writes that Gungnir was made by the dwarves called the sons of Ívaldi at the same time when Loki had them smith golden hair for Sif and the ship Skíðblaðnir. The spear had the magical property *at geirrinn nam aldri staðar í lagi*. "the spear never stopped in its thrust." In *Sigrdrífomál* it states that runes should be cut on *Gungnis oddr* "the edge, or tip of Gungnir" seemingly imbuing it with additional charms. In *Hávamál* Óðinn wounds himself with his spear as he hangs on a tree, *oc gefinn Óðni, siálfr siálfom mér* "and to Óðinn gave (sacrificed), to me

himself to himself", apparently as part of his preparation to take a shamanic journey. A wood-carved hypothetical reconstruction of Óðinn as he may have appeared on the walls at Hlaðir based on the iconography presented thus far is shown in figure 36f.

In the context of its performance, Kormákr includes in the *helmingr* a reference to *ýs bifvangr*, a "moving/shaking-field of yew" held over him. Frank draws a correlation to the yew metaphor as the lord's protective hand and Oðinn's spear as a demonstration of "the intimate relationship between two basic dróttkvætt genres, praise poems about kings and eulogies of the gods" (Frank 1978: 107). Indeed, Finnur may well be correct to take the waving of the yew as meaning waving the arm as a sign of protection, but his assignment of the metaphor as a kenning begs further discussion of the magic/religious implications of the function of the ritual overseer and his methods. The "moving-field of yew" could be a wood-carved wand, similar to the *dyrehodestolper* discussed above, imbued with the power to invoke magical spells when held and waved by the *hofgoði,* temple priest. This reinforces the notion that the Hlaðir jarls were not only cult leaders but accepted as skilled mediating figures with numinous, beneficent powers. A yew-wand has a direct correlation to Óðinn's spear Gungnir, in that it is a rod shaped object with supernatural power. As a masculine symbol, the wand may not just evoke protection, but also virility, particularly in the potential setting of a fertility ritual. In the case of this kenning, Kormákr may not be describing a carving on the wall, but rather comparing a three dimensional, sculpted cult object to Gungnir, and praising its wielder, Sigurðr jarl, with a verse and a toast. These abilities and the instruments for carrying out the spells were woven into the poet's verses. In this context it is helpful to recall the gift of poetry brought to men by Óðinn. As the crafted woodcarvings imbue spiritual powers, the plaited words designed and recited by Kormákr mirror the hall, the content and occasion with the spoken word.

In synthesis, in the poem named *Sigurðardrápa* by Snorri, six out of eight *helmingar* contain verse forms he calls *hjástælt*, which end with *forn minni*, or phrases regarding "ancient lore". Considering the context in which Snorri presents two of the *helmingar* in *Heimskringla*, it is conceivable that they were performed by Kormákr in a hall belonging to Sigurðr jarl engraved with woodcarvings depicting myths described in these expressions. As Kormákr gazed upon the hall, he could have been inspired by the carvings during a ritual event and presented his verses as *full*, or toasts, as Snorri states were common during a *blót* or ceremonial banquet to ensure good seasons. A close reading of the quatrains reveals some gendered symbolism and metaphors that may be associated with fertility. Based on associations between the image evoked by the statements drawn from ancient lore and the concepts expressed in the *helmingar*, some of the content and kennings of Kormákr's invention could have been inspired by additional visual stimuli perceived in the woodcarvings. While some of the suggestions made in view of these hints are rather speculative, this analysis of phenomenological exchange helps bridge information about how these myths were conveyed through referential intermedia created by the craftsmanship of the poet describing the media executed by the woodcarver. The *hjástælt* half-strophes featured in *Sigurðardrápa* provide hints to the greater use of skaldic ekphrasis seen in *Húsdrápa* and discussed in part 2 of this dissertation. A similar scene occurs in *Laxdæla saga* during the wedding of Óláfr's daughter in his newly assembled hall in Iceland. While the saga text emphasized the profane events of the wedding, clearly the ritual, and its setting, would be understood by the participants as sacred. There is a correlation between the hall, the mythic engravings and the ceremony worth further exploration. As Úlfr gazed upon the carvings on the

walls he described them in poetic verse. The kennings he used likely contain clues in reference to the figurative iconography depicted in the wood-carved scenes.

The decorative arts were applied to everyday objects in the Viking Age and were brought to very high levels of execution for those who could afford such expertise, as demonstrated by those items found in the Oseberg ship burial. Many of the motifs in the ornament appear to have had some religious and/or narrative elements designed for expression of cult activity. Indeed, certain instruments for use in rituals were likely crucial elements in achieving the goals of the ceremonies. Some of these objects were made of wood with symbolic decorative engravings. Examples and analysis of the agency of such wood-carved items were provided above in the context of the Oseberg burial finds. Here, in addition to the mesmerizing affect of aniconic patterns, representations of conventional mythic scenes held sway over the observer. In the context the poem was recited, as argued above, in a temple or hall, analysis of *Sigurðardrápa* reveals that the jarls of Hlaðir were likely candidates to possess woodcarvings of remarkable quality for the purpose of magic/religious cult activity. In particular, the items of *forn minni* likely were descriptions of impressive iconographic carvings that provided narratives from myths and sagas. These scenes were not only decorative, but were regarded to possess an agency that represented the demi-god status of the jarls through their divine heredity. This was achieved, not only as Frank noted through a combination of poetic praise and eulogy, but also through the material presence of the visual motifs. As an ideological motive, the woodcarvings would validate the importance and demonstrate the status and power held by the individual jarls and their kinsmen.

1.6 Hákon jarl inn ríki: Pre-Christian worship and wooden idols - myths, legends, temples and halls

Snorri tells us that Sigurðr Hákonarson, Hlaðajarl, and Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri Haraldsson konungr were the best of friends. Through the non-oppressive rule of Hákon and the good harvests attributed to the spiritual balance presumably brought about by Sigurðr, Norway enjoyed peace and prosperity. Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri was present at the birth of Sigurðr's son, and he sprinkled him with water and gave him his name. This is the boy who grew up to become the powerful jarl that Óláfr pái met at Hlaðir, Hákon Sigurðarson. Sigurðr survived Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri but only by a year or so. The unpopular sons of Eiríkr blóðøx Haraldsson and Gunnhildr konungsmóðir, after leading the battle that killed Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri, betrayed and burned Sigurðr to death in a hall he was visiting. This is also told in *Fagrskinna* where two stanzas are quoted from the poem *Háleygjatal* describing the event.

When he heard of his father's death, Hákon Sigurðarson rallied men in the district and they took him as jarl in the line of succession. Hákon jarl inn ríki Sigurðarson became a major player in the struggles for power in Norwegian politics and a very developed persona in *Heimskringla*. A narrative from *Brennu-Njáls saga* regarding his patron "goddess" and idolatry has already been featured above. It is beyond the scope here to recount all of his exploits, but some additional information about his career is helpful insofar as it presents his character, role as the political and spiritual leader at Hlaðir and the notion that he would continue the tradition of maintaining halls furnished with woodcarvings of mythological scenes.

According to the king's sagas, Hákon jarl had enough support in Trondheimsfjord to keep for the most part his rivals, the sons of Gunnhildr, south of the area. The farmers grew tired of the incursions and destruction brought upon them by the two parties, and for a while there was a fragile peace. As time passed, Hákon jarl had to flee to Denmark on a couple of occasions. He was cunning and ruthless. For example, through manipulation and betrayals, he meddled in the affairs of the Danes to his advantage. He befriended both the Danish king Haraldr Gormsson and the king's nephew, Gull Haraldr, who presented a challenge for the throne. Hákon counseled Haraldr Gormsson to trick the leading son of Gunnhildr, the Norwegian king Haraldr gráfeldr, by inviting him to visit Denmark. He devised a plan that Gull Haraldr would attack Haraldr gráfeldr, and by killing him he would win Norway. By doing so, the deal was that Gull Haraldr would withdraw his claim to Denmark. As Gull Haraldr attacked gráfeldr, Hákon jarl managed to convince Haraldr Gormsson that Gull Haraldr would remain a threat, and they struck a deal that Hákon would kill Gull Haraldr and return to rule in Norway under the Danish king. It seems Hákon jarl was planning all along both to avenge his father by having Haraldr gráfeldr killed and without any scruples let no man stand in his way to return to power in Norway.

It worked out for Hákon jarl, and the people welcomed his return. There had been a famine for a long time, and the sons of Gunnhildr were blamed for it. In *Fagrskinna* it states: *Þetta kenndi landsfólkit guða sinna reiði ok því, er konungarnir létu spilla blótstǫðum þeira* (*Fagrskinna* 2007: 98). "This the people of the land recognized as the anger of the gods, and because the kings spoiled their sacrificial places". They were also overbearing rulers. After the fall of Haraldr gráfeldr, the remaining sons of Gunnhildr fled. Although *Heimskringla* provides the most detailed account of these events and actions taken by Hákon jarl, other sagas of the kings concur. In *Ágrip*, an overtly Christian text adds that the Norwegian people: *gafsk ván at lygi* "gave themselves hope in falsehood" (*Ágrip* 2007: 18), by welcoming Hákon back. Snorri writes:

> Hákon jarl, er hann fór sunnan með landi um sumarit ok landsfólk gekk undir hann, þá bauð han þat um ríki sitt allt, at menn skyldu halda upp hofum ok blótum, ok var svá gǫrt. (*Heimskringla* I. 1979: 241)
>
> Jarl Hákon, when he travelled from the south along the coast in the summer and the people of the country submitted to him, then he ordered over his whole realm that people should maintain temples and rituals, and this was done. (*Heimskringla* I 2011: 148)

and:

> Inn fyrsta vetr, er Hákon réð fyrir landi, þá gekk sild upp um allt land, ok áðr um haustit hafði korn vaxit, hvar sem sáit hafði verit. En um várit ǫfluðu menn sér frækorna, svá at flestir bœndr søru jarðir sínar, ok varð þat brátt árvænt. (*Heimskringla* I. 1979: 243)
>
> The first winter that Hákon ruled over the country, herring came in all over the country, and the previous autumn corn had grown wherever it had been sown.

> And in the spring people got seedcorn, so that most farmers could sow their land, and there was soon prospect of a good harvest. (*Heimskringla* I 2011: 149)

In *Fagrskinna* the heathen practice of Hákon jarl inn ríki associated with the return of good harvests is emphasized even more:

> Hákon var ríkr ok tók at efla blót með meiri freku en fyrr hafði verit. Þá batnaði brátt árferð ok kom aptr korn ok sild, grøri jǫrðin með blómi, svá sem segir Einarr:
>
> Ok herþarfir hverfa,
> Hlakkar móts, til blóta,
> rauðbrikar fremsk rœkir
> ríkr, ásmegir, slíku.
> Nú grœr jǫrð sem áðan;
> aptr geirbrúar hapta
> auðrýrir lætr ǫru
> óhryggva vé byggva. (*Fagrskinna* 2007: 111-12)
>
> Hákon was powerful and proceeded to practice sacrifice with more rigor than had been before. Then the seasonal harvests quickly healed and the grain and herring returned, the earth grew flowers, thus as told by Einarr:
>
> Word order of the stanza suggested by Finnur: And the beneficient sons of the gods turn to the sacrifice; the powerful Hlakkar [Valkyrie] battle "red-plank" [shield] of meeting [battle] practitioner [= warrior = Hákon] furthers such (things); now the earth grows as before: the "riches-reducer" [generous man] lets the servants of the "spear-bridge" [shield] [= warriors, men] "not-sad" (gladly) inhabit the temples of the gods.

The stanza is from the poem *Vellekla*, and since few observers doubt its provenance during the reign of Hákon, it can be considered a direct source. If so, the existence of heathen temples would in this case not be misconstrued by the imagination of Christian redactors. Even keeping in mind skepticism regarding Snorri's narrative, there is substantial literary testimony to the pre-Christian practices of Hákon jarl. The way *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla*, both written by Christians, present it, the return of the heathen Hákon jarl ended the misery of famine in Norway. Irrespective of their motives, it is to be understood from reading these medieval texts that the farmers and people of Norway associated the tradition of sacrificial feasts, and the leaders who practiced them, as bringing fertility to the land. These sacrifices were made to the Norse gods and deities of mythology, chief among them the Æsir. The Hálogaland jarls, later known as the Hlaðir jarls, claimed descent from these gods, as it is revealed in the previously mentioned poem *Háleygjatal* composed by Eyvindr skáldaspillir ca. 985 for Hákon jarl inn ríki.

In the Prologue to his *Edda*, Snorri writes:

> Eptir þat fór hann (Óðinn) norðr þar til er sjár tók við honum, sá er þeir hugðu at lægi um ǫll lǫnd, ok setti þar son sinn til þess ríkis er nú heitir Nóregr. Sá er Sæmingr kallaðr, ok telja þar Nóregskonungar sínar ættir til hans ok svá jarlar ok aðrir ríkismenn, svá sem segir í Háleygjatali. En Óðinn hafði með sér þann son sinn er Yngvi er nefndr, er konungr var í Svíþjóðu, ok eru frá honum komnar þær ættir er Ynglingar eru kallaðir. (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 6)
>
> After that he proceeded north to where he was faced by the sea, the one which they thought encircled all lands, and set a son of his over the realm which is now called Norway. He is called Sæming, and the kings of Norway trace their ancestry back to him, as do the earls and other rulers, as it says in *Haleygiatal*. And Odin took Sweden, and from him are descended the family lines known as the Ynglings. (*Edda* 1995: 5)

This statement indicates that the rulers in Norway, including the Hálogaland jarls, had descended from the Æsir. *Háleygjatal* is named as a basis for this information. It is not documented as a complete poem in any original source. As is customary, editors assemble the poem from scattered stanzas and *helmingar* in *Snorra Edda* and, in this case, the king's sagas. It is evident from the way Snorri described *Háleygjatal* that there are missing parts which would further clarify how the kings, jarls and other powerful men in Norway descended from Sæmingr. In the extant stanzas as Finnur arranged them, two introductory *helmingar* and a final one speak to the mead of poetry presented by the poet and praise for a *stillir*, or leader, presumably Hákon jarl. In stanza 3 and *helmingr* 4, kennings present that a *skattfærir*, "tax-bringer", or jarl, and other sons were begot of Óðinn and Skaði. As mentioned above, Snorri refers to and cites these two verses when he writes more about Sæmingr in *Heimskringla*:

> Njǫrðr fekk konu þeirar, er Skaði hét. Hon vildi ekki við hann samfarar ok giptisk síðan Óðni. Áttu þau marga sonu. Einn þeira hét Sæmingr. Um hann orti Eyvindr skáldaspillir petta:
>
> Þann skjaldblœtr
> skattfœri gat
> Ása niðr
> við jarnviðju;
> þás þau meir
> í Manheimum
> skatna vinr
> ok Skaði byggðu. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 21)
>
> Njǫrðr married a woman called Skaði. She would not have relations with him and later married Óðinn. They had many sons. One of them was called Sæmingr. About him Eyvindr skáldaspillir composed this:
>
> Word order and translation: The tax-bringer [jarl= Sæming] begot of the ás, honored by shields [cultivated by skalds = Óðinn] with the giant-woman [Skaði],

when they, the friend of men and Skaði still lived in Manheimar. (modified from *Heimskringla* I 2011: 12)

Snorri writes in *Gylfaginning* that: *Í þeim skógi byggja þær trǫllkonur er Járnviðjur heita*. "In that forest live trollwives called Iarnvidiur" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 14, *Edda* 1995: 15). Hence, in the stanza the dweller in *Jarnviðr* refers to the giantess Skaði. She is also mentioned by another one of her names:

sævar beins,
ok sunu marga
ǫndurdís
við Óðni gat. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 22)

of the bone of the sea, and many sons the ski-goddess [Skaði] with Óðinn begot. (modified from *Heimskringla* I 2011: 13, a footnote adds that *sævar beins* must have been part of a kenning in the other missing part of the verse.)

Skaði is also known as *Qndurdís*, the "ski-goddess."

It would follow that those descendants from Sæmingr and his brothers would include one or more *skattfœrir*, " tax-bringers" and be traceable to the one whom the poem praises, Hákon jarl inn ríki. Following the verses quoted above Snorri writes: *Til Sæmings talði Hákon jarl inn ríki langfeðgakyn sitt*. "Hákon jarl inn ríki could trace his ancestry to Sæming".

Gro Steinsland has written extensively about *hieros gamos*, the holy marriage represented, in this case, by Norse myth and pre-Christian culture. Steinsland cites the poem *Skírnismál* as an example of *hieros gamos* represented in Norse mythology. The god Freyr became infatuated with the giantess Gerðr and sent Skírnir to woo her on his behalf. After some coercion, she agreed to a wedding date. Steinsland argues there is a link between the symbolism in this eddic poem and the Nordic ideology of rulership. The myth may represent an inauguration or accession ritual (Steinsland 2011: 25). Clunies Ross has criticized Steinsland's theory for lack of support in view of a close examination of the texts (Clunies Ross 2014). However, in the sources, there are many instances of Norse gods mating with giantesses. One has been discussed above, the *hjástælt helmingr* quoted from *Sigurðardrápa*: *seið Yggr til Rindar*. "Óðinn seduced Rind using spells". Óðinn also begot Þórr from his joining together with Jorð, earth. These unions demonstrate the aspects of the *hieros gamos* myth that not only bring balance between spiritual and natural, material forces, but also incorporate god with land. When this myth is projected on the king or jarl, there is a symbolic marriage between ruler and territory, and the concept serves as an entitlement to power. The origin myth of the Hlaðir jarls in *Háleygjatal* deriving from the union between Óðinn and Skaði informs this cult/ideological phenomenon. Steinsland expresses the result of the concept quite well:

The son of such an exogamous union, here the prototypical earl, is neither god nor giant; but a new creation, a prototypical ruler who embodies the complete spectre of cosmic tensions between Ásgarðr and Útgarðr. This equips the earls of the

> Hlaðir-dynasty with extraordinary energies, pre-destined for an exceptional role in society and history. (Steinsland 2011: 28)

The union between Óðinn and Skaði also mirrors another origin myth alluded to above - the one between Hǫlgi and Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr - literally, Hǫlgi's bride - the patron goddess of Hákon jarl. One interpretation includes King Hǫlgi as the mythical founder from whence Hálogaland got its name and therefore also a progenitor of the Hlaðir jarls. When Hákon jarl is depicted as seeking fortune and counsel from Þorgerðr, he metaphorically is energized from the power of his land of origin. It seems Eyvindr skáldaspillir's choice of Skaði as the founding mother of the jarls could be interchangeable with Þorgerðr as a referent to the land. The point is the ruler is impotent without his terrain. Male dominance is also an issue. The giantess dwells in and is symbolic of the rugged Norwegian landscape that the leader seeks to control.

Hákon jarl and his patron goddess Þorgerðr

Myth and legend play with the notion of power and relationship, and the literary sources abound with the reliance Hákon jarl has on his sacral union with Þorgerðr. Such a patron goddess needed appeasement, such as in the context of securing victories. A sacrifice is dramatized in *Jómsvíkinga saga*:

> Nú ferr jarl upp í eyna Prímsignd ok gengr í skóg á brott ok leggsk niðr á kné ok bizk fyrir ok horfir í norðr. Þar kømr bœnarorðum hans at hann skorar á fulltrúa sinn, Þorgerði Hǫlgabrúði. En hon vill eigi heyra bœn hans ok er hon reið. Hann býðr henni mart í blótskap, en hon vill ekki þiggja; ok þykkir honum óvænt um. Þar kømr at hann býðr henni mannblót, en hon vill eigi þiggja. Hann býðr henni um síðir son sinn er Erlingr hét sjau vetra gamall; ok hon þiggr hann. Fær jarl sveininn nú í hendr Skopta, þræli sínum, ok ferr hann ok veitir sveininum skaða. (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962: 36 V)

> The earl went ashore on Prímsignd and went away into a wood. He knelt down facing the north and prayed. In his prayers he called upon his protector, Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr. But being angry she would not hear his prayers. She rejected all the offers of great sacrifices which he made, and Hákon thought things were looking very black. It came to his offering her a human sacrifice which she likewise rejected. Finally he offered her his seven-year-old son called Erlingr, and she accepted him. Then earl delivered up the boy to his thrall Skopti, who proceeded to kill him. (*Jómsvíkinga saga* 1962: 36 R)

As the translator Lee Hollander adds in a footnote, "the Germanic heathen did not fall on his knees before his gods" (*Saga of the Jómsvíkings* 1955: 100). His point is the account is clearly influenced by a Christian worldview. However, this legendary segment with its mythic dimension showed the intimate relationship Hákon jarl inn ríki had with his patron goddess. It also raises questions why it was told that he sacrificed his son in desperation. The Christian redactors to varying degrees portray Hákon jarl as a cunning, powerful, yet less-than-noble heathen. Here, it is blatant when he resorts to "evil" forces in the sensationalized account of how he turned the battle of Hjǫrungavágr in favor of the Norwegians. Nevertheless, the legend

probably contains portions of truth; as discussed above, sacrifices could have been made to secure victories in battle, and the idea of a "patron goddess" providing such a gift in return is perhaps not so far-fetched.

Of interest for this study is not only the cultural phenomena of *hieros gamos* and sacrifice, but also the descriptions provided of the material form of the deities. In Chapter 23 of *Færeyinga saga* Hákon jarl visits Þorgerðr with the goal of receiving a good luck charm for his man:

> Og nú ganga þeir til skógar akbraut eina og afstíg lítinn í skóginn, og verðr þar rjóðr fyrir þeim, og þar stendr hús og skíðgarðr um. Þat hús var harðla fagrt, ok gulli og silfri var rennt í skurðina. Inn ganga þeir í húsit, Hákon og Sigmundr, ok fáir menn með þeim. Þar var fjǫlði goða. Glergluggar váru margir á húsinu, svá at hvergi bar skugga á. Kona var þar innar húsit um þvert, ok var hún vegliga búin. Jarl kastaði sér niðr fyrir fœtr henni ok lá lengi; ok síðan stendr hann upp ok segir Sigmundi at þeir skulu fœra henni fórn nǫkkura ok koma silfri því á stólinn fyrir hana; „en þat skulu vit at marki hafa," segir Hákon, "hvárt hon vill þiggja, at ek vilda at hon léti lausan hring þann er hon hefir á hendi sér. Áttu, Sigmundr, af þeim hring heillir at taka." En nú tekr jarl til hringsins, ok þykkir Sigmundi hon beygja at hnefann, ok náði jarl eigi hringnum. Jarl kastar sér niðr í annan tíma fyrir hana, ok þat finnr Sigmundr at jarl tárask, ok stendr upp eptir þat ok tekr til hringsins ok er þá lauss, ok fær jarl Sigmundi hringinn ok mælti svá, at þessum hring skyldi Sigmundr eigi lóga, og því hét hann. (*Færeyinga saga* 2006: 51)
>
> They set forth along a certain path to the wood, and thence by a little bypath into the wood, till they came where a ride lay before them, and a house standing in it with a stake fence round it. Right fair was that house, and gold and silver was run into the carvings thereof. They went into the house, Hacon and Sigmund together, and a few men with them. Therein were a great many gods. There were many glass roof-lights in the house, so that there was no shadow anywhere. There was a woman in the house over against the door, right fairly decked she was. The Earl cast him down at her feet, and there he lay long, and when he rose up he told Sigmund that they should bring her some offering and lay the silver thereof on the stool before her. "And we shall have it as a mark of what she thinks of this, if she will do as I wish and let the ring loose which she holds in her hand. For thou, Sigmund, shalt get luck by that ring." Then the Earl took hold of the ring, and it seemed to Sigmund that she clasped her hand on it, and the Earl got not the ring. The Earl cast him down a second time before her, and Sigmund saw that the Earl was weeping. Then he stood up again and caught hold of the ring, and now, behold, it was loose; and he took it and gave it to Sigmund gave him his word on it. (*Færeyinga saga* 1896 Icelandic Saga Database)

In this legendary passage we have not only a reenactment of Hákon jarl worshiping and asking favors of his patron goddess Þorgerðr, but also a fairly detailed description of a *hof*, temple, or dwelling of the gods. The *hús* is not within the estate of Hlaðir but in the forest, past a "liminal" roadway on the outside of the domestic world. As described, the exterior is richly carved and inlaid with silver and gold. This exaggeration, along with the roof of glass, are both likely a

product of the saga writer's imagination. Whether or not there were purpose-built temples in Norway or Iceland is a topic for debate. Indeed, the only surviving accounts about Þorgerðr are handed down by Christian authors, and are to a more or lesser extent filtered through a disdain for sacrifice and idolatry (McKinnel 2002). However, some observations relevant to material culture are present in the episode. It states there were many gods inside, as if they were animated, and it is likely meant that these were carved idols that act with life-like powers. Apparently, this is the impression of what woodcarvers were able to achieve with their designs. One must have been impressed with the dynamic motion achieved by the depth and sweeping shapes of the sculpted surfaces. Þorgerðr, as a sort of door-keeper within the hall is certainly portrayed alive enough after engaging with Hákon and during two attempts to clench and then release a gold ring from her hand. The passage both reinforces Hákon as a legendary cult practitioner and powerful intermediary to the gods and also expresses a belief in the existence of richly decorated halls featuring ornament of religious inspiration and representations of mythic narrative figures. This *hof* also shares other features in common with those described in *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Kjalnesinga saga*, which are investigated in part 2.

A tale featuring Hákon jarl working with Þorgerðr appears in *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds*. To summarize the event, earlier in the saga Þorleifr was insubordinate, so Hákon jarl had killed his crew and stolen his trade goods. In chapter 5, Þorleifr returned (in disguise) and recited a poem before the jarl. Hákon became uncomfortable and began to itch. He recognized that it might be related to the verses, and he demanded that the *karl* provide something of praise rather than insult in order to remedy the situation. Instead, Þorleifr delivered a curse called *Jarlsnið*. Þórleifr jarlsskáld Rauðfeldarson (Ásgeirs son rauðfeldar) *Jarlsnið*, ca. 990:

> Þoku dregr upp it ytra,
> él festist it vestra,
> mǫkkr mun náms, af nøkkvi,
> naðrbings kominn hingat. (*Þorleifs* 2001: 223)
>
> Prose word order and translation based on Finnur: Fog is dregded up, not without reason, the more eastern way, and a shower festers the more westerly; a dense cloud of the plunder of the serpent lair (goods taken with violence) must come this way.

Suddenly, the hall went dark, and when Þórleifr finished the rest of the poem men took to arms and many were killed. Hákon jarl passed out, and Þorleifr escaped before the light returned to the hall. As he gained his senses, Hákon realized that he “came to close quarters” with the insult, and his beard had rotted and his hair was parted on the other side, and never came "up" later (went back, grew). The jarl had the hall cleared of the dead. It seemed to him, then, that he recognized it must have been Þorleifr taking vengeance for his crew and loss of valuables. The jarl lay in pains that whole winter and part of the summer.

In chapter 7 after healing from most of his pains, Hákon jarl plotted his revenge:

> (...) ok vildi jarl nú gjarna hefna Þorleifi þessar smánar, ef han gæti, heitr nú á fulltrúa sína, Þorgerði Hǫrgabruði ok Irpu, systur hennar, at reka þann galdr út til

> Íslands, at Þorleifi ynni at fullu, ok færir þeim miklar fórnir ok gekk til fréttar. En er hann fekk þá frétt, er honum líkaði, lét hann taka einn rekabút ok gera ór trémann, ok með fjǫlkynngi ok atkvæðum jarls, en trollskap ok fítonsanda þeira systra, lét hann drepa einn mann ok taka ór hjartat ok láta í þenna trémann, ok færðu síðan í fǫt ok gáfu nafn ok kǫlluðu Þorgarð ok mǫgnuðu hann með svá miklum fjandans krapti, at hann gekk ok mælti við menn, kómu honum síðan í skip ok sendu hann út til Íslands þess erendis at drepa Þorleif jarlsskáld. (*Þorleifs* 2001: 225-26)
>
> As the earl was very keen to take revenge on Thorleif for this humiliation if he could, he called on his tutelary spirits, Thorgerd Altar-bride and her sister Irpa, to perform whatever witchcraft in Iceland that would kill Thorleif. He took them many offerings and sought their auspices. When he had received the omens he wanted, he had a wooden figure made from driftwood and, with his own witchcraft and spells, and with the sorcery and magic of the sisters, he had a man killed so that his heart could be put into this wooden figure. They then clothed it and named it Thorgard. With the strong power of the devil, they charmed it so that it could walk and talk, put it on a ship and sent it to Iceland with the task of killing Thorleif. (*Tale of Thorleif* 1997: 367)

The demon Þorgarðr arrived in Iceland during the Thing, and he was able to run a halberd through Þorleifr. In turn, Þorleifr managed a verse and thrust at Þorgarðr with his sword in order to eliminate him, too. As McKinnel points out, Þorgarðr may be a "male version" of Þorgerðr, who repeatedly is represented by a dark side, sometimes her sister Irpa, "Swarthy", and here a magically created assassin who sank down into the earth when his dark deed had been realized (McKinnel 2002: 285).

In the legendary passage from *Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds*, we learn that Hákon jarl was both vulnerable and quite capable as an opponent in a war of sorcery. He called up his patron deity and her sister in order to be assured of his success, and he, in yet another ruthless act, was able to take the heart of a sacrificed man, place it in a wooden resemblance of a man and bring him to life. This Odinic, gothic, act went well beyond heathen worship and placed Hákon in the ranks of the most powerful of wizards - with the ability to create life. It is a twist on a myth related by Snorri in *Gylfaginning*:

> Þá er þeir Bors synir gengu með sævar strǫndu, fundu þeir tré tvau, ok tóku upp tréin ok skǫpuðu af menn. Gaf hinn fyrsti ǫnd ok líf, annarr vit ok hrœring, þriði ásjónu, málit ok heyrn ok sjón; gáfu þeim klæði ok nǫfn (...) (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 13)
>
> As Bor's sons (Óðinn and his brothers) walked along the sea shore, they came across two logs and created people out of them. The first gave breath and life, the second consciousness and movement, the third a face, speech and hearing and sight; they gave them clothes and names. (...) (*Edda* 1995: 13)

When Óðinn and his brothers created humans out of driftwood, they did not need to kill others and take their hearts to place them in the trunks. It was a much more elegant operation. Nevertheless, Hákon jarl was in a macabre way likened to Óðinn when he created life from the same material, provided the wooden man with clothes and a name. One has to wonder if the Christian text was consciously making the comparison. If so, it would of course not be a compliment. In any case, it is interesting that the cult leader who possessed numinous qualities may at times also have been considered an incarnation of a god who was a divine progenitor, and this belief seems to have been brought out by the tale, albeit in not a flattering way. Creating life out of wood is quite interesting because the myths reinforce the notion that the carved objects possess a certain agency, or potential, which is tapped by the mystic. A life force is latent in the material, and the object becomes animated through manipulation. It appears this was achieved through a spell that was in the form of spoken verse. Just as the *Jarlsnið* curse is able to enter Hákon jarl inn ríki and make him itch, his beard rot and hair fall out, a charm quickened the wood-man. It is not specifically addressed in the passage whether the driftwood without further effort transformed into an anthropomorphic shape or a craftsman assisted the jarl in sculpting a mannequin. What may be concluded, however, is a certain legendary/mythic belief existed between the relationship of humans and their animated likenesses formed with wood. The character of Hákon jarl, through the stories passed down about him, embodied several instances of this myth, and he is central to the discourse surrounding the agency of wood-carved art objects.

Iconography in the North

Support for the literary sources of a fertility/*hieros gamos* myth involving leadership and cult activity in the north is found among the artifacts from a chieftain's farm excavated in Borg, Lofoten. (fig. 37) Five tiny, delicate gold foils called *gullgubber* feature the image of a male and female couple facing each other. There is some agreement with Steinsland that the Borg foils depict Óðinn and Skaði (Munch 2003: 259). If that were the case, it would have to be argued that it was a local convention and understanding of the iconography. For example, in other contexts, the couple could be understood as Freyr and Gerðr, and this is a very important point concerning interpretation of images. Particularly in Nordic pre-Christian religion, while an Æsir mythology seems to have been widespread, local cultivation of particular gods, goddesses, and hence practices, would have been reflected by diverse understandings of similar iconography. *Gullgubber* are not rare, but they are unique to Scandinavia. It is uncertain if they had any practical purpose outside of a ritual context. There are no holes indicating that they were mounted or sewn to anything. Some have been found within what may have been a purse, which suggests they may have been used as currency (Munch 2003: 254). However, any item of value could be stored in such a manner, and from the rest of the deposits it seems more likely the foils had a cult application. The actual spots where the foils were found at Borg, around the north corner of room "C", provide clues to their possible ceremonial purpose. That room contained the highest concentration of artifacts both for everyday use and luxury items that were likely used for banquets and ritual gatherings. Those articles include shards of imported glass, fragments of Tating ware jugs, an insular bronze bowl and other items indicating the inhabitants of Borg were of high status. There may have been shelves or a cabinet along the wall where most of the items were found. Room "C" was 14 meters long and featured an 8 meter fire pit which ended in a round hearth toward the north-east corner. Carbon 14 dating demonstrates that these were in use from the Merovingian through the Viking periods. There were probably raised floors on each

side of the pit. The gold foils were found in or near the post holes in the north-east corner. It is a matter of speculation whether they were accidentally swept into the recesses formed by the post holes or deliberately placed there. Given the value of gold it seems highly unlikely that they were misplaced and lost. It seems more plausible that they were consciously placed in the context of a hall dedication or some other ceremony. Munch suggests the high seat of the hall may have been integrated into this corner. (fig. 38 - see also section 2.7) It appears the foils were not all placed in their spots at the same time. Following Steinsland's interpretation, they could have been deliberately placed as part of *hieros gamos* ceremonies during accessions to power (Munch 2003: 261). Insofar as the gold foils depict a man and woman embracing, and given the importance of alliances formed between families, it could be that marriage rituals were performed as a mythic union and the sacred occasions were marked with iconography stamped in gold.

One can imagine that room "C" of the hall featured beautifully carved ornamentation, which has unfortunately now completely decomposed. The carvings could have been integrated into the posts, cross beams, boards that made up the ceiling, walls and wainscoting, benches, shelving and the high seat itself. The obvious difficulty in this study of the possible appearance of mythic wood-carved scenes in Hlaðir is the lack of archaeological finds in northern Norway comparable to those in Oseberg. Therefore, the iconography on the gold foils found at the building site at Borg provide some rare clues to how anthropomorphic figures were depicted. As mentioned, they are very small and fragile and must have been fashioned with a stamp die. Four of the five portray "classical" features. Among the known *gullgubber* there are two basic types, some with pointed faces and others with more rounded ones. The foils from Borg are of the rounded variety. The largest of these four is only 1 x .8 cm, but its image is well preserved. (fig. 39) The man is on the left and the woman on the right. They stand with their faces in profile. Both faces are tilted up as they look at each other, and each reaches a hand out to touch or embrace the other. They have distinct eyes and noses, and the woman has visible lips to form a mouth. Her hair is long with a commonly seen knot tied half-way down the length of her locks. She has a pleated dress that tilts backwards, which apparently is an unusual fit and suggests local production. On top of the dress she wears a mantle with a diamond pattern. The man has shoulder length hair, and he wears a kirtle that stops at the knees and features a rhombic pattern. Another foil is extremely small, .7 x .5 cm and not as legible as the one previously described, but it quite clearly shows two figures who hold each other around the waist. Two other foils appear to be pressed from the same die. They are .8 x .5 cm. These differ from the others because the woman is on the left. It appears that they have their arms on the shoulders of each other in an embrace. A fifth is larger than the other four at 1.85 x 1.5 cm, and the iconography is less typical in comparison to the other *gullgubber*. A slender woman is clearly visible on the right. It is difficult to determine its original appearance in its current condition, but at least one of her arms is broad in the middle and looks somewhat like a wing. Her shape recalls the ones on the tapestries from Oseberg, such as fragment "13" on which the woman leans against a horse, or "7 B" where a feminine human shape resembles a bird (see full descriptions above). The figure on the left, presumably a man, is more difficult to discern, and it cannot be determined if they are touching each other (Munch 2003: 247-49).

In terms of iconography, the *gullgubber* at Borg present human figures that conform with those seen in the south at Oseberg: the bodies are either in frontal positions or along with their

faces, are in profile; women are in long dresses and have long hair tied into a knot in the middle as it cascades down the back; men wear kirtles or tunics that reach the knees, and the surfaces of clothing worn by both sexes feature variations of rhombic patterns. These descriptions are not all that dissimilar from the human-like figures seen on the Oseberg wagon. As arguments have been presented that the gold foils likely depict deities, one may draw conclusions that wood-carved scenes depicting gods and mythological scenes in the north bore some resemblance to the Oseberg finds. This, in turn, suggests that similar iconography adorned halls along the length of the Norwegian coast, not least in Hlaðir, situated almost in the middle between the two locations.

All of the items found at Borg indicate that the chieftains who occupied the site were members of very powerful families. They may quite possibly have been kinsmen of the Hálogaland, later known as the Hlaðir, jarls described above and further below. While the rest of the Borg site is informative, and uncovered graves from the Merovingian period and Viking age in northern Norway have revealed both imported and local metalwork that are decorated with ornate patterns and masks familiar throughout Scandinavia, very few artifacts in northern Norway can be said to feature mythological "scenes." The excavation of the chieftain's farm at Borg helps, however, both inform that the far north was exposed to widespread iconography, and based on the layout of room "C", that the local culture likely practiced cult ceremonies in a similar manner as described in the sagas. Of particular interest is the combined use of space for both profane and sacred activities. While a *hof*, or temple, may have existed in certain locations, it was not necessarily a meeting place for communal activities. To the contrary, the chieftain's hall may have been the site, and displayed the iconography validating the right, or performing the rite, to rule. The wealth and splendor of such a hall far above the arctic circle at Borg speaks to the potential of even more magnificent structures further south in Hlaðir that are lost or yet to be excavated.

There is no certain archaeological record in Hlaðir of a *hof*, or temple. However, in 2010, Preben Rønne of NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet claims to have excavated a cult site in Ranheim, only a few kilometers away. There, remains of a circle of stones indicate a *hǫrgr*, and post holes indicate a structure once used as a *hof*. The posts appear to have been removed and the location deliberately covered. Rønne likens the site to cult locations described in the sagas, and he claims the excavation prompts counter arguments to the skepticism among scholars that such temples existed (Rønne 2012). In any case, the descriptions from the sagas cited above present those spaces more like sanctuaries rather than locations for large interior gatherings. The hall at Borg demonstrates that ceremonial feasts would have taken place in a communal location. The building in which Snorri described the events of a *blót* performed during the times of Sigurðr Hlaðajarl would have likely had a similar layout - in either a designated structure or a large, special room. According to Cleasby Vigfusson, this would best be termed a *hǫll*, or *hall*.[23] Here, let it suffice that the ceremonial spaces initiated by earlier jarls would have been further developed and maintained by Hákon jarl inn ríki.

The end of Hákon jarl

[23] "but in the Norse only of a king's or earl's hall never could be used of an Icel. dwelling." (Cleasby Vigfusson 1969: 310) However, there were certainly chieftain's dwellings in Iceland that had large rooms used for gatherings, in which case I use the term "hall" to describe those spaces.

Due to his reputation as a powerful practicing heathen, Hákon jarl was not a favorite among Christian redactors. The sagas agree that his long tenure as ruler of considerable regions of Norway came to a disgraceful end. Most indicate he was a womanizer, and this led to his demise because the farmers were fed up with him sleeping around with the women in their households. *Ágrip* is the most damning:

> En Hákon jarl sat í ríki tvítján vetr síz Haraldr gráfeldr fell at Hálsi í Limafirði, ok sat með ríki miklu ok óvinsælð mikilli ok margfaldri, er á leið upp, ok með einni þeiri, er hann dró til heljar, at han lét sér konur allar jafnt heimilar, er hann fýsti til, ok var engi kvenna munr í því gǫrr ok engi grein, hvers kona hver væri eða systir eða dóttir. (*Ágrip* 2007: 16)
>
> And Hákon jarl sat in power for twenty years after Haraldr gráfeldr was killed at Háls í Limafirði, and was very powerful and very unpopular and manifold, and went to hell for at least one reason: he had sex with any woman he desired, and no woman had any say in it and with no distinction, whether it was a man's wife, sister or daughter.

One time Hákon went too far and tried to force himself on the daughter of an influential man. The irate father sent out a "war-arrow" and his friends came to his aid. Hákon went on the run and ended up hiding in a pigsty. There, his thrall cut off his head (...) *ok lauk svá saurlífismaðr í saurgu húsi sínum dǫgum ok svá ríki* (*Ágrip* 2007: 17). "So the fornicator ended his days and power in a polluted house". Recall how Hálfdan svarti could not dream, so the wise man advised him to sleep in a pigsty, and it worked. Perhaps this comparison indicates a folk belief that death is like a dream, or both are related to the "other world." Not according to the saga text, apparently, as it clearly associates Hákon with filth. The sagas portray Hákon jarl not only as a practicing heathen, but also as having Odinic powers and attributes. It is as if the legend of Hákon jarl inn ríki mirrors the mythic Óðinn - their propensity for seduction is a case in point. From the Christian perspective, it is only fitting that the old rulers would go the same way as the old gods in order to usher in the new "true" faith. One must be critical of the sources, and an untainted "historic truth" cannot be ascertained from the literature. However, without these medieval sources there would only be archaeology to draw from. The two disciplines inform each other to create a hypothetical picture.

It would have been sometime after Hákon jarl inn ríki returned to Norway from Denmark and was at the height of power in Hlaðir that Óláfr pái came to visit him. Although he was not anywhere near as powerful as a jarl, Óláfr became a prosperous and influential man in Iceland. He was proud of his heritage. He went on a heroic journey to prove he was not just the son of a slave-woman, but rather he was the grandson of the king Mýrkjartan of Ireland. His father descended from a Danish king, and Norwegian district kings were on his mother’s side. As Óláfr's epithet, "peacock", captures, he was fond of finery. All of this helps explain why he would make such an effort to have built the most ornate hall in Iceland. He must have been very impressed when he visited Hákon jarl at Hlaðir. He could relate to the woodcarvings in the halls at Hlaðir as status symbols, and through his heredity, perhaps he felt some claim to have also descended from the Æsir. At minimum, the splendor of having wood-carved mythic scenes and gods depicted in his *eldhús* must have appealed strongly to him.

The deaths of a couple of Hákon jarl's predecessors are referred to in the remaining verses of *Háleygjatal*. Snorri knew from these that Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson, who is called "the kinsman of Freyr" laid down his life at the battle of Fjalir. (See above and chapter 12 of *Haralds saga ins hárfagra*) The death of Hákon jarl Grjótgarðsson is also recorded in *Fagrskinna* along with two stanzas from *Háleygjatal* (*Fagrskinna* 2007: 63). This is of course the grandfather of Hákon jarl inn ríki - he had recently been given the rule over the Trondheim district by Haraldr hárfagri. This topic is followed by the burning in death of Hákon's father, Sigurðr Hákonarson, Hlaðajarl, who is referred to as the kinsman of Týr. The final verses refer to Hákon in the battle with the Jómsvíkingar and the power he held over western Norway. Nothing specific in this part about him harkens to his divine ancestry, but it had been established by Eyvindr earlier in the poem. Clearly it would be in the interest of Hákon jarl inn ríki to have this résumé as a divine right to rule, and it follows that he would cultivate the inherited responsibilities as Hlaðajarl to perform the ceremonial *blót*, sacrifices or seasonal feasts, to guarantee good seasons and prosperity.

In these sections about the Hálogaland, later known as the Hlaðir, jarls, it has been outlined how the family claimed a right to rule as descendants of the Æsir and heredity that linked them in a sacral union with the landscape, through the feminine deities Skaði and Þorgerðr representing the countryside. This has been presented not only through the literature, but also from the, albeit sparse, archaeological finds in the north. These artifacts demonstrate a common iconography to other areas of the Scandinavian mainland and settlement. The literature describes the cult role of the jarls, and other halls and remains of structures indicate they would have performed rites with similar roles as the priestesses in Vestfold. After seeing the magnificent woodcarvings in the Oseberg ship burial, one can imagine that the places where these cult practices took place would have ample depictions of gods and mythological scenes in order to provide a mystic environment and convey pertinent sagas.

1.7: Conversion ideology, destruction of woodcarvings, remnants seen in stave churches

Unfortunately, no woodcarvings have yet been found in the immediate area surrounding Hlaðir that date from prior to the death of Hákon jarl. This may be attributed to at least two factors: the rotting of wood and subsequent loss partially due to building techniques, and the systematic destruction of iconography depicting heathen topics or idols. The former is addressed below in view of church construction, but arguably the greatest factor that created a critical void in wooden artifacts from the heathen times in Þrándheimr was the reign of Óláfr Tryggvason. His arrival in Trondheimsfjord was timely, for as the farmers threw stones at the beheaded Hákon jarl, they apparently welcomed Óláfr as their king. According to Snorri, after spending his youth in exile and taking the Christian faith, Óláfr progressively sailed with his fleet from Vík along Norway and coerced the population of the coastal regions to convert to Christianity. The amicable relations in the Þrándheimr district were then put to the test as Óláfr used force against defiant farmers and implemented a particularly thorough "heathen cleansing." Snorri writes:

> Síðan siglir hann inn á Hlaðir ok lætr brjóta ofan hofit ok taka allt fé ok allt skraut ór hofinu ok of goðinu. Hann tók gullhring mikinn ór hofshurðunni, er Hákon jarl hafði látit gera. Síðan lét Óláfr konungr brenna hofit. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 308)

> After that he sails in to Hlaðir and has the temple knocked down and all the wealth taken away, and all the finery from the temple and off the idol of the god. He took off the temple door a great gold ring that Jarl Hákon had had made. After that King Óláfr had the temple burned. (*Heimskringla* I 2011: 192)

Unlike Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri, Óláfr did not compromise with the farmers by reluctantly participating, in this case, at a midsummer *blót* at Mære. Upon his arrival he entered the temple:

> En er konungr kom þar, sem goðin váru, þá sat Þórr ok var mest tígnaðr af ǫllum goðum, búinn með gulli ok silfri. Óláfr konungr hóf upp refði gullbúit, er hann hafði í hendi, ok laust Þór, svá at hann fell af stallinum. Síðan hljópu at konungsmenn ok skýfðu ofan ǫllum goðum af stǫllunum. (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 317)

> And when the king came to where the gods were, there sat Þórr, and was most dignified of all the gods, adorned with gold and silver. King Óláfr raised up a gold-adorned ceremonial halberd that he had in his hand and struck Þórr, so that he fell off his pedestal. Then the king's men leapt forward and shoved down all the gods from their pedestals. (*Heimskringla* I 2011: 198)

According to Snorri, after destroying the idols Óláfr killed the leader of the farmers, and the rest chose not to go to battle with him. He sent his men throughout the district and no one dared oppose Christianity. Reading the saga material leaves little doubt that as Óláfr's men combed the countryside they destroyed any remaining material displays of the old faith.

Current research indicates that conversion was not abrupt in Scandinavia (Bagge, Nordeide 2007, Skre 1998). For example, burial practices show that Christian and pre-Christian rites existed simultaneously in the same regions. Christianization took place in phases, with the first during the late ninth/early tenth century (Nordeide 2011: 322). Recall that Hákon inn góði (r. c. 935-60) came from England with the intent to convert Norway, but without the iron fist as told about the two Óláfrs. While the sagas tell of resistance, it is likely many under his sphere of influence accepted the new customs (Bagge, Nordeide 2007: 140). It is possible that for a period stretching over a hundred years or so people coexisted somewhat peacefully as gradually more people adopted Christianity, but that does not mean individual families gradually adopted Christian practices. There was a marked increase in differences of non-Christian and Christian burial practices toward the end of the Viking period - indicating a need for marking of social identity (Nordeide 2011: 321). At the same time, it can be interpreted that the conversion kings used Christianity as a strategy to break down old power structures in order to consolidate power (Nordeide 2011: 314). It appears there was a difference between the gradual Christianization of the population and the Conversion, which is presented as national under the control of a Christian king. The position taken here is while the sagas may have exaggerated the abruptness of the conversion process through their focus on militaristic activity and the antics of the participants, the record passed down describing eradication of pre-Christian cult art objects is for the most part accurate.

Given that Óláfr Tryggvason founded the trading town, *Kaupangr*, synonymous with or a section of Niðaróss, and built his residence at the mouth of the river on a site called Skipakrókr, it is clear that his influence was maintained and penetrated the surrounding area during his five year tenure as king. In all the sagas where he is mentioned, Óláfr is portrayed as a fervent missionary determined to stamp out heathenism and either convert or brutally eliminate its practitioners. However, it is likely that he was able to destroy more material culture than the belief systems and traditions which were represented by the wood-carved idols and ornament that he plundered in this first wave of forced conversion in Þrándheimr.

According to the sagas the second missionary king, Óláfr Haraldsson, had more work to do. He learned that people of the inner reaches of Trondheimsfjord were still conducting sacrificial feasts, and he proceeded to stamp them out. Whereas Óláfr I primarily coerced the residents of the Norwegian seaboard, Óláfr II moved further up the mountain valleys in the interior and forced the farmers to convert. In *Óláfs saga helga*, Snorri describes how Óláfr sailed about the fjords in the Mærr districts (present day Møre, not to be confused with Mære) and disembarked at Raumsdalr. From there he and his men went by land up the valley to Lesjar and Dofrar, persuading the farmers to accept the new faith by threatening them with death as the alternative. He arrived along the Ótta river and summoned the people from settlements in the surrounding area, from among them Lóm and Vági, where stave churches with woodcarvings dating from the 1100's (discussed below), still stand. Óláfr threatened to burn their farms, and the people had little chance of refusal. Some fled south and joined up with Dala-Guðbrandr. The *hersar*, chieftains, summoned men to stand against Óláfr, but once again the resistance crumbled in face of the army of the king. In subsequent negotiations, Snorri states:

> (...) þá stóð konungr og segir, at Læsir ok á Lóm, á Vága hafa teket við kristni ok brotit niðr blóthús sín - (...) (*Heimskringla* II 2002: 186).
>
> (...) the king arose and said that the people at Lesjar, Lóar, and Vági had accepted Christianity and had destroyed their heathen houses of worship, (...) (*Heimskringla* 1964: 372)

And, in a rather fantastic account Snorri relates a stand-off of the gods. After the farmers brought out the figure of Þórr on his pedestal all adorned in gold and silver Óláfr spoke:

> "(...) Ok lítið þér nú til ok séð í austr, þar ferr nú guð várr með ljósi miklu." Þá rann upp sól, ok litu bœndr allir til sólarinnar. En í því bili laust Kolbeinn svá goð þeira, svá at þat brast allt í sundr, ok hljópu þar út mýss, svá stórar sem kettir væri, ok eðlur ok ormar. (*Heimskringla* II 2002: 189)
>
> "(...) And now look ye to the east, there comes our God now with great light." Then the sun rose, and all farmers looked at the sun. And at that moment Kolbein struck at their god so he fell to pieces, and out jumped mice as big as cats, and adders, and snakes. (*Heimskringla* 1964: 374)

The farmers were so terrified they tried to flee, and Dala-Guðbrandr admitted their god had failed to help them, so they all received baptism.

As historic fiction, in particular this last conversion story ranks low in a modal scale of verisimilitude (Anderson 1988: 283-84). It is unlikely that the populace were so suddenly convinced. While the new rulers ushered in a new religion with an either/or, live/die urgency, the kings maintained long established elements of ideology regarding a divine right to rule coupled with overwhelming force. Power struggles also continued in the same vein, and alliances and battles determined who were on top. Other than an "official" change of religion reflected in burial practices and perhaps a discontinuation of *blót*, it is unclear whether social interactions and customs may have largely remained consistent in the culture for decades, if not centuries. Similarly, the Christian religion was likely understood within the framework of belief systems that had existed previously for generations. What is important for this study, however, is the methodical destruction of heathen imagery in Hlaðir and subsequently in the inner reaches of Trondheimsfjord and the surrounding mountain valleys, which the sagas convey. Namely, this would account for why there is no material evidence remaining that these carvings existed. Surely most of the woodcarvings from the period prior to the reign of Óláfr Tryggvason were destroyed by the king's mercenaries. However, that does not mean that traditional imagery did not live on after the people were converted to Christianity. Just as beliefs did not rapidly transform in the minds of the populace, the aesthetic tradition would remain steady in the expression of long held sensibilities related to cosmic order - perhaps even more rooted semiotically in images than in lore or literature. It is evident that there was a transition period in the woodcarving tradition that included pre-Christian motifs, and with careful examination one can observe an overarching development in the *longue durée* to assist in filling in the lacunae brought about by the destruction at the hands of the missionary kings. Namely, when certain objects are compared consistencies become apparent, and when they are merged, hypothetical forms of missing woodcarvings can be reconstructed.

During the post-conversion period, heathen imagery continued to be crafted, ironically but perhaps not surprisingly, to adorn Christian churches. In turn, the use of woodcarvings at Christian places of worship serves to validate the cult/religious nature of the woodcarvings found at Oseberg and designs incorporated in other pre-Christian artifacts. The artwork in question took the form of the intertwined serpent animal-like shapes that had been produced with gradual style development for roughly the previous 600 years to varying degrees blended with Christian influences from continental and insular iconography (Hauglid 1976). These carvings are seen on numerous surviving portals of stave churches, a few of which are presented with some detail below. There are also anthropomorphic figures among the surviving wooden carvings including sculpted heads, along with masks and full body representations in relief. The following is a roughly chronological presentation of the pertinent material.

Early Norwegian churches

At the advent of Christianity in Norway, there were a few churches and cathedrals erected in central locations based on Romanesque models and built out of stone. The early stone buildings in present-day eastern Norway show influence from Germany, perhaps due to links with the archdiocese in Bremen. Stavanger Cathedral demonstrates some Norman ornamentation. The Munkeliv monastery in Bergen featured Corinthian styled capitals in a form that has been traced to Lund, which was the seat of the archbishopric prior to 1153. Italian builders and

masons must have participated in the construction of stone buildings at Lund, and they, or their trained workers, were likely brought to Bergen (Rácz 1970: 9). There was also English influence. The king Óláfr kyrri Haraldsson initiated work on Christ's Church in Bergen and what became the Trondheim Cathedral in the third quarter of the eleventh century (*Heimskringla* III 2002: 204). Remnants from the earliest parts of the cathedral and other stone buildings either demonstrate features of Anglo-Norman architecture and sculpted capitals or are otherwise distinctly original based on traditional Scandinavian designs. István Rácz suggests the soapstone used would not have presented too many challenges for woodcarvers. The motifs show elements of the Ringerike (early eleventh century) and the Urnes styles (see below). Other sculpted elements of interest to this study are numerous masks and animal figures. Here, one must be careful to associate the motifs with earlier Viking art as an influx of influence from Christian European ornamentation blended with traditional forms during the 1100's. For example, stylized lions begin to be incorporated in more recognizable shapes and intertwined serpent designs transform into dragons with wings and forelegs. Nevertheless, traces of Nordic traditions were incorporated in the stonework, such as bears and wolves that provide a local touch to depictions of Christian myth (Rácz 1970: 11).

Techniques for building in stone were brought to Norway from abroad during this period, but the exchange was not unidirectional. Viking expansion westward led to many Scandinavians settling in the North Atlantic islands. Some of those were craftsmen who became specialists in carving Nordic style ornament in stone. Most of the surviving iconography from the period is seen on carved stone crosses and monuments in churchyards. In addition to Borre style ringchains and other ornamentation derived from Scandinavia, there are some depictions of Nordic gods and mythological scenes on stones in present day Northern England and the Isle of Man dating from the Viking age. The iconography is an important source for representations of heathen depictions even as they stand side by side with Christian symbology. These images of the gods Óðinn, Þórr, Heimdallr, Tyr and other deities are described in detail along with the discussion of verses in *Húsdrápa* in part two of this dissertation.

Two parish churches near Hlaðir, one 30 kilometers east in Værnes dating from the early 1100's, the other 100 kilometers north at Mære, are built of stone but have open wooden beam roof structures featuring sculpted heads. These beams could have been recycled from earlier Viking halls or temples, and some of the carvings with them. One of the heads bears a strong resemblance to the ones carved on one of the Oseberg wagon trusses. (fig. 40) Although it has been disputed (Olsen 1969), archaeological finds below the floor of the present church in Mære suggest that cult activity occurred there (Lidén 1969, Hauglid 1976). Additionally, there is an account in *Landnámabók* in which a certain *hofgoði*, temple-priest, named Þórhaddr enn gamli took down his *hof*, temple, in Mære and brought with him the temple-soil and pillars to Iceland (*Landnámabók* 1986: 307). There are grave mounds in the vicinity of both churches that also indicate they are situated in religious sites that pre-date Christianity. If the heads were carved during the building of the church, based on their appearance it is likely that they were modeled after pre-Christian prototypes and adapted for the symbology of the new religion. One hundred years after the conversion of these areas the heavy hand of the missionary kings may have lifted enough for the earlier woodcarving traditions and the not-forgotten visual memory of shapes and motifs to emerge for a new purpose.

Stavkirker "stave churches" and conversion ornament

Outside the developing central places of post-conversion Norway early church buildings were executed based on traditional techniques used to construct structures made of wood. There is no direct evidence that the stave churches, *stavkirker,* that developed resembled earlier heathen temples because the latter no longer exist. However, that does not rule out the possibility of similarities, and at least certain design features from pre-Christian times carried on. Among other ways, this is evidenced by the sculpted serpent heads that adorn protruding exterior roof beams of many stave churches. For example, those on the Lom Stave Church may be compared with the Oseberg tapestry featuring a similar design. (figures 41, 28) As outlined above, heathen temples would have been broken apart or burnt down, and in some cases churches were built on the same sites. Archaeological finds show that the earliest stave churches used the same type of construction as previous Viking dwellings, with posts and vertically erected wall boards sunk in the ground. Direct ground contact of end grain sucks up moisture and severely limits the life-span of wooden material due to rot, and if the structures featuring wooden idols and relief carvings of mythological and legendary scenes were not deliberately destroyed, the decay of wooden wainscoting would have contributed to the disappearance of artifacts. Largely due to the limited lifespan of buildings erected using this method, all but a very few of the carvings from the first stave churches are lost. The Urnes Stave Church portals are the oldest important remains. Dating from the late eleventh century, they were salvaged from the original church and reused on the north wall of the rebuilt twelfth century structure. Around this time a new construction technique was introduced. Instead of driving the posts and boards directly into the ground, the structural pieces stood upon a framework of horizontally placed wooden sills that in turn rested upon stones elevated from the soil (Hauglid 1976). As a result, close to forty of the Norwegian stave churches dating from the twelfth century onward have survived, many of them featuring intricately carved portals featuring elements of pre-Christian ornamentation (Nordanskog 2006: 227). The Urnes portals have lent the name to a Nordic style dating from the middle to late eleventh century. The motifs are a development of the animal ornament and entwined serpent designs dating back hundreds of years. The style is, arguably from a modern aesthetic sense, one of the most pleasing and the last instance of what is considered Viking art. The slender, tapering forms make up the shapes of extended zoological figures winding in C, S and figure 8 compositions. On the portals in very high relief, a four-legged creature is the dominant figure surrounded by two-legged and snake-like serpents that intertwine and bite each other. (fig. 42) For this study, the close temporal and spatial proximity of the style to Hlaðir is noteworthy. In this style that flourished just after the demise of Hákon jarl, a few carved panels of what are thought to be furniture fragments were found during excavations of present-day Trondheim - some of the few pieces of material evidence demonstrating a woodcarving tradition in the immediate vicinity. (fig. 36)

There seems to have been a lapse in ornamental animal decor for a period after the Urnes designs. For a period in the twelfth century the smaller, single nave stave churches were in many cases replaced by a newer basilica column type based on a sober Norman influence. However, perhaps due to the rural tradition of woodcarving in combination with a general stylistic trend in European Romanesque art, the portals soon again became decorated with carvings. In the meantime, the motifs had also become more Europeanized with two-legged dragons and tendrils that became increasingly based on plant forms (Hauglid 1976). Norse animal style iconography

remains a strong feature, however, and some distinct elements can be noted. The portals salvaged from the Ulvik stave church in Hardanger feature the slim, tapering Urnes-type shapes, but otherwise the composition is a curious blend of features seen on earlier Viking art styles. (fig. 43) The gaping beast-like heads toward the bottom of the design resemble those seen in profile on a Mammen style (tenth to eleventh century) horse collar from Søllested, Denmark (fig. 44), and also featured on the Gosforth cross, Cumbria from ca. 1000 (fig. 45), which Wilson categorizes as an example of the mid-tenth century Jellinge style (Wilson 1966: 106) and Bailey, noting the ring-chain design on the cross sculpture, typifies as an even older Borre style (Bailey 1980: 54). An interesting add to the mix on the portals at Ulvik are fan and fern-like terminating tendrils that emulate the early to middle eleventh century Ringerike style seen, for example, on the Heggen weather vane. (fig. 46) This eclectic mix not only demonstrates that these styles had a tradition of being executed as woodcarvings (other examples are typically seen in metalwork), but Ulvik also seems to defy a clear-cut identification and categorization of isolated style development. Concurrently, as the features of the portals can be compared with objects dated to the tenth century, the portals provide testimony that the woodcarvings seen on the entryways of the stave churches make available examples of work from earlier Viking periods.

Closer to the Þrándheimr district, the Rennebu church portals from originally approximately 80 kilometers to the south in Oppland are particularly interesting because they feature masks with a blend of heathen ornament used to convey a Christian message. (fig. 47) The top of the inside sections of the portal form rounded supports with carved faces that resemble other masks identified as Óðinn, such as a tenth century brooch on display at *Kulturhistorisk museum* in Oslo. (fig. 48) Curiously, one of the two masks at Rennebu has an obfuscated eye - this could, of course, be the result of damage during the past 900 years, but it nevertheless fits the Óðinn prototype. The stylized round eyes and brows that wrap down from the forehead to shape the nose are seen from Viking style carved heads from as far back as Oseberg. The moustache and fan-shaped beard are other Viking iconographic traits and associated with Óðinn depictions. Perhaps most interesting are the Jellinge style (tenth century) serpents, identifiable by the double-contoured ribbon bodies with carved billets on the inner surfaces, that originate from "Óðinn's" mouth and wrap down terminating in serpent-heads that bite other serpent bodies coming forth from the mouths of additional masks further down the column. In medieval Christian art, there are depictions where scrolls extrude from mouths of figures and contain written messages. In this instance, the serpents may be seen as semiotic metaphors for the heathen spoken word - as a Christian symbol of spoken blasphemy or false rhetoric by the former gods. Snorri informs us in *Ynglinga saga* that Óðinn, as the god who acquired the gift of poetry, spoke in verse. The skaldic poet Gunnlaugr Ormstunga had the byname "serpents tongue" because he was renowned for his derogatory compositions, so there are precedents for this symbolism and negative connotations with spoken verse - here a possible play with words and image in this wood-carved portrayal.

This type of "Odinic" mask can be seen in another instance at the stave church at Høre, dated by dendrochronology and runic inscription to ca. 1179 (Rácz 1970). At the top of a column an elongated face with crossed-eyes has scrolls leaving its mouth and where horns would normally be located on a goat or other animal. (fig. 49) These are acanthus vines and not serpent-like shapes - the iconography here is an excellent example of the blend of pre-Christian and newly incorporated Christian stylized plant ornament. Other masks adorn the walls of this church,

including one of a king staring straight ahead with eyes and nose sculpted in a familiar fashion as earlier Viking features, but now with a smooth moustache and beard. Half of a wolf-mask also remains at Høre. An additional array of grotesque masks that hearken to misled heathens line the tops of posts and glare down at the parishioners of the Hegge Stave Church, from the first half of the thirteenth century (Hauglid 1976). Remains of both of these churches are in the heart of the mountains in Valdres, Norway.

A bench end in the Torpo Stave Church in Hallingdal dated to the end of the twelfth century features what may be interpreted as a representation of Óðinn being swallowed by the Fenris wolf (Kusch 1964: 70), or one of the Christian damned suffering the same punishment (Rácz 1970). The face of the figure has both eyes, so that piece of identification that it depicts Óðinn is missing, but the overall features resemble earlier Viking masks. (fig. 50) The gaping wolf in profile has the fangs and bulging eyes familiar from Oseberg, but there are no intricate small carvings of theriomorphic creatures covering the surface as seen from that period. Rather, there are coiled serpents with Jellinge ribbon bodies and off-shoots of Ringerike style vegetative tendrils and scrolls. A serpent twists about and bites one of the legs of "Óðinn." This is a full-body anthropomorphic figure, and one that can be referenced in comparison to pre-Christian artifacts in order to imagine wood-carved scenes portraying the Æsir at Hlaðir in the late tenth century.

By far the majority of carvings that remain from the stave churches in Norway are seen on the portals in what Roar Hauglid refers to as the dragon style. Not far from Torpo Stave Church are the Ål and Flå churches dating from the first to middle part of the twelfth century (Hauglid 1976). Again, these portals combine heathen imagery of intertwined animals with intricate scrolling vines familiar from the Ringerike style with an influx of continental Christian design elements such as interspersed fleur-de-lis knots. The imagery indicates that a simultaneous transition of worldview and carving motifs was taking place. The styles, technique and ornament demonstrate a gradual change; the semantics of the iconography differ from that of the pre-Christian, but arguably, the shift in how the supernatural world was perceived through imagery was incremental.

The serpent-like creatures that adorn material objects both prior to, throughout the Viking Age and during the early post-conversion period of Christianity can be described as depictions of theriomorphic beings - animal forms representing deities. Hypothetically, perhaps it is opaque to the modern viewer that those stylized animal shapes may have been intended as a broader hybrid of beings from nature that formed spiritual entities. Even the heathen bird and serpent-like creatures with their elongated, intertwined scrolling bodies are vegetative in the sense that their extended limbs resemble vines. The beings seem to grow, weave and transform into zoological features of limbs, wings and heads creating a synthesis of the tangible material world. Yet, they resemble no particular living creature and with an added sense of complexity and multidimensional depth in the design were intended to embody a mysticism that reaches beyond, to the cosmological, the "other world" or realm of the ancestors. Hence, these "beings" were likely understood to have agency and were perceived as liminal, to create a threshold allowing a connection and a flow of communication between the material and spiritual. This may literally be seen in the function of the stave church portals, where believers left the profane behind as they passed through the door and entered the sacred space of the sanctuary. Certainly pre-

Christian and post-conversion theologies were in opposition, but the concept of an "other realm" was a constant, and traditional imagery representing spiritual semantics were adopted in the transitional mode of portraying religious concepts. In pre-Christian iconography, when these liminal shapes, which may be termed biomorphic, surrounded and framed masks and figures, they were intended to create awe and/or mediate a magical connection between the prototype and deities, including the ancestral Æsir. There is not only archaeological evidence for this sociological phenomenon as represented in material culture. Literary sources reveal another mode of craftsmanship with words in, for example, *Húsdrápa*, where Úlfr describes the mythological scenes carved in the dwelling in Hjarðarholt. The complex form of skaldic poetry weaving metaphors in the form of kennings as liminal references "surround" the deities in circumlocutions and artfully create access to mythic concepts. The notion of poetry as craftsmanship in this manner is further explored in the sections of part 2.

The anthropomorphic figures framed by intertwined shapes, which are in essence enveloped in thresholds, became more explicit and realistic in the transition during the post-conversion era. The serpent-vine scrolls were used to form medallions that frame kings with crowns instead of heathen warriors with helmets, such as on the Hemsedal stave church portal. However, in a similar fashion the Hylestad portals feature legendary scenes from the pre-Christian past. (fig. 51) In a series of medallions formed by scrolling vines, Sigurðr fáfnisbani is depicted along with Reginn smithing the sword Gramr, the slaying of Fáfnir and Reginn by Sigurðr, the roasting of Fáfnir's heart and Sigurðr's understanding of the language of the birds. A final touch of the legendary cycle is added with Gunnar playing his harp with his toes as he succumbs to the poison of snakes. These Romanesque carvings, from the first half of the thirteenth century, demonstrate that pre-Christian legend was adapted to fit contemporary teachings of the church. Stylistically the depictions developed into a realism that can be synthesized retroactively to tenth century iconography - but not without considerable discernment. Alter pieces from medieval times including Scandinavia frequently feature static biblical "scenes" as a series of images on panels framed by grid work. It is likely the carvers were influenced by the influx of this Christian method of iconographic presentation in order to portray a narrative that worked its way northward during the first centuries of post-conversion.

1.8 Conclusion to part one

As reiterated, there is a temporal/spatial lacuna of wood-carved objects from Hlaðir during the reign of Hákon jarl inn ríki. It has been argued throughout part one that the appearance and cultural context of woodcarvings in Hlaðir are of importance to this study because, at minimum, these factors would have made a strong impression on Óláfr pái when he went to Hlaðir to acquire the lumber for his hall in Iceland, and the woodcarvings were either acquired in Hlaðir or served as models for the engravings described in the poem *Húsdrápa*. With the exception of some earlier objects, the material artifacts presented in this part span a timeframe from roughly the years 800 to 1200 and mostly from a range of distance from Vestfold in the south of Norway to Borg in the north, which includes the high mountains of central Norway and the districts surrounding Þrándheimr. From these examples, in addition to the social agency involved with the objects, a synthesis of design elements may be drawn in order to compile and present some suggested prototypes of missing wood-carved artifacts from the period in question based on the archaeological record of crafted faces, anthropomorphic

figures and biomorphic serpent-like forms framing deities. The individual pieces may further be combined to present compositions of the carvings based on the descriptions of scenes provided by poets.

The social agency of an object, because it is a concept, is difficult to present visually, but nevertheless in its complexity informs a hypothetical reconstruction. Otherwise, it would be a matter of blindly copying existing iconography without an emic sense of application or understanding of the image carrier. Following Gell's model, the agency of an art object is relational - a woodcarving, for example, has a secondary agency due to the causal affect it has upon what he terms the "patient" acted upon - coexistence is essential to the theory. However, the relationship between agent and patient is not unidirectional nor does it imply passivity. Patients may resist, and the peculiarities surrounding the art object form difficulties that are extremely complex. Within the art nexus presented by Gell, either agent or patient may be the artist, index, prototype or recipient in the relationship. For this study, the artist may also be termed the craftsperson. The index is the material thing, here, the woodcarving or other image carrier of an art-related kind. In realistic art, the appearance of the prototype, for example, is imitated by the artist. A recipient may be a patron or spectator. Yet, depending on what role each of these play the transaction differs (Gell 1998: 21-27). Gell provides a rubric that is useful for considering interaction between these entities. For a chart, see figure 53. A synthesis of remarks may be drawn from the observations presented in part one regarding the entities in relation as agents and patients.

Very little is provided in the description of the life and role of the artist/craftsman in the king's sagas, legendary sagas or poetry presented thus far. Outside of some references in Icelandic family sagas examined in part two, artifacts from the Viking Age provide material for analysis of the artist's situation. In regard to the artist as agent and source of the creative act, the studies by Shetelig of the Oseberg woodcarvers presented them as individuals, with varying skill levels, often blindly copying previous models and others, yet certain carvers stood above the rest in regard to not only execution but also innovation and development of style (Shetelig 1920). These exceptions are certainly signs of agency in the hands of the craftsperson. Helmbrecht, on the other hand, posits the craftsperson more situated as a patient, with varying technical skills executing long known motifs and patterns, albeit with some new compositions yet through imitation and following rules (Helmbrecht 2011: 243). This role can be likened to that of an anonymous text and the lack of a sense of authorship. One might consider the patient role of the artist based on metalwork, where dies produced numerous instances of the same product. Certain artifacts, such as brooches, may seem strikingly similar. Yet, the variances seen in the Oseberg carvings indicate that in a less molded medium individuality could flourish, and within traditional constraints the artist exercised some agency.

The Old Norse artist was keenly aware of tradition, nevertheless, a gradual development in styles demonstrates innovation. The frequent lack of realism in Old Norse art makes it difficult to decipher. Hence, the representation of the prototype is most often highly imaginative and stylized, as in the case of biomorphic creatures, and although the components are based on tradition, the overall compositions are dictated by the artist. On the other hand, when more realistic anthropomorphic figures are depicted, they are often generic. At best, differentiation may be detected through other identifying markers in the iconography, such as magical weapons

or tools in the case of Þórr, Óðinn and Heimdallr. In these instances, the artist indeed had a patient relation to the prototype for the human shape, as it was dictated by tradition. Those extant models that exhibit little variance are helpful in the reconstruction of hypothetical woodcarvings featuring gods and deities as anthropomorphic figures.

In relation to the index and patron, it appears that to a great extent the art objects were shaped by the artist's intention and agency. In the cases of wood-carved art focused on in this study, it is less likely that the media determined the outcome of the product than if the craftsperson sought out the appropriately shaped pieces of wood. While the priestess at Oseberg may have commissioned, for example, an animal head post, and that overall image-carrier had a basic traditionally known form as prototype, the intricate work incised on the sculpted piece clearly shows an intricate meaning intended and expressed by the craftsperson. In these instances, the artist was no less than a mystic conveying spiritual knowledge and power. This does not mean that the artist did not also intersubjectively take a patient position in awe of what he had given birth to. Inherent to the artistic practice, transferring the visual idea to the wood-carved medium would lend to a certain variance of results unforeseen by the artist. As a recipient, the index he created likely asserted its agency upon him as well as others. To a great extent the craftsperson was bound to tradition and to the patron for the purpose of the work and making a living. For his means, it appears the specialist woodcarver could move about in search of employment. The settlement and at other times regional trading center Kaupangr in Vestfold demonstrates a somewhat independent and transient craft and trade working class. Yet, the specialists' art objects were not likely purchased at a market place, indicating the craftsman must have made himself available to the patron when need arose. That is likely to have been the situation at regional centers surrounding Vestfold and would have been the case at Hlaðir as the settlement developed and halls were maintained. Hence, it appears the woodcarver could act in particular modes as his own agent within the constraints of both traditional expression and society.

The indices, the art objects motivating interpretation and reconstruction in this study, as agents and patients prove to be highly intersubjective in Old Norse pre-Christian culture. In its least worked form, wood in the shape of a stick or branch used, for example, as a wand may be seen as "self-made" and hence a "cause of itself". As living things with properties such as variations of grain and shape, trees may indeed be understood as agents, but what concerns this dissertation are the pieces manipulated by the carver. On one hand, that places the wooden object as image carrier in the patient position. However, while these were made things shaped by the artist's agency, they may not have been perceived as such. In the context of idolatry, the index could be seen as a source of power to which the recipient would submit without much consideration of the artist that created the carved likeness. At the same time, sacrifice would indicate there was an agency of the index that acted upon and mediated an influence over the god, goddess or deity prototype the likeness represented. Also, it has been argued in section 1.1 that through a composite index, such as the carved Oseberg ship, the recipient could gain access to the interiority of a vessel containing a prototype deity, in that case the priestess herself. The relationship is not unidirectional, however, as the prototype may through the index, as in the case of the ship, act upon the patients as recipients, held in awe. In the case of the idol as index, the passages concerning Þorgerðr indicate a belief system that the prototype could animate and act through the index as patient and empower the mannequin - such as when she hands over her ring

to the charge of Hákon jarl. Gold bracteates used as amulets and gold foils also map a bi-directional use of the index. For example, it was believed the recipient as agent rubbed the bracteate index, which through the iconography featured the prototype of, and acted upon Óðinn. With the grace of the god, the index in return channeled the good luck upon the recipient as patient. The woodcarvings that adorned the halls in Hlaðir may not have been used as charms, but nevertheless would have been conceived to be indexical in a similar manner allowing a flow between present and past, the cosmographic and the cosmologic, the chieftain and ancestor. This cultural context is crucial to the understanding, and considering in a hypothetical reconstruction, the indexical woodcarvings as a portal between the recipient and prototype - not simply iconography as decorative art. The animal head posts found in the Oseberg ship burial form a tangible analogy of how the index acted upon itself in a binary agent/patient relationship and generated the perception of such an exchange. The complex web of engravings on the overall sculpted head could be seen as both binding and releasing the animated potential of the indexical entity allowing it to serve as a numinous object. When a similar juxtaposition is mapped on wood-carved walls and a hall, the structure would have been understood as a sacred space. This notion is further explored in part two.

The discussion above has hitherto addressed the relationship of the prototype, i.e. god, deity, ancestor, with the entities artist and index. The remaining pertinent associations are the various relationships of the recipient as agent and patient with the prototype vis-á-vis the index. The contextual background presented from Old Norse literature referenced in part one, along with secondary sources of analysis, suggests that the recipient as patron/agent, in a cult leadership role, exerted control over the recipient patient, as community spectator of the index. For this to occur, it must have been believed that the patron/agent was able to exert some control over the prototype - namely influence the gods/deities in beneficial manner for the cult. However, for this to be genuine and not just the act of a charlatan, the patrons would need to also position themselves in a patient role in regard to the index. Hence, demonstrating a belief in the ritual, the patron as an intermediary had an intimate relationship with the prototype on behalf of the recipients among the cult. In this manner, the wood-carved objects representing idols or wood-carved mythological scenes became agents of persuasion for the desired action - be it for good crops or victory in battle, as the ability to perform the rite also validated the role of the priestess or jarl. The recipients' awe of the wood-carved index coupled with respect for the leadership role of the cult patron was directly linked to a material and pragmatic outcome of the ritual or sacral function of complex associations in the relationship of the entities artist, index, prototype and recipient.

Multifaceted relations are expressed not only in the content, but also the intricate compositions and designs of the Viking Age. While it is valid to seek out individual iconographic elements, such as rare representations of gods or goddesses in Viking Age art, it is important to keep in mind the multilayered cultural relations. It is uncommon to find only one depicted scene on an image carrier. Where realistic representations are portrayed, there are frequently many figures in combination with biomophic forms that perplex a modern recipient. The complexity of relations in representations of myth not only appears in visual form but is also present in in the oral art of skaldic poetry. The intricately smithed verses and kennings reflect the involvedness of graphic design and composition. It is evident that there was a love for puzzling references of compound and often inexplicable associations in Viking Age art production and

reception. This does not make it any easier to arrive at hypothetical reconstructions of missing woodcarvings. However, taking clues from extant sources of individual elements and creating compositions based on layers of woven words describing the mythic scenes by poets, societal context and iconography it is possible to postulate analytical renderings.

As an example of deriving an individual component, among the selection of artifacts presented from Norway spanning these four hundred years, a composite can be made to form a hypothetical prototype of a wood-carved Óðinn face, or mask, that would have been present in Hlaðir ca. 985. As described in detail above, some of the oldest surviving anthropomorphic figures that were wood-carved in relief appear on the interior stem of the Oseberg ship. Their arms and legs are rather stylized as they grip each other in the manner of biomorphic beasts, but the faces of these "deities" appear quite human. They are simple in shape with protruding rounded eyes that are bridged with an oblong shaped nose. If one combines the fully sculpted heads terminating the front truss of the Oseberg wagon with the ones carved in relief on the *tingl*, a more detailed face emerges with stylized but developed brows that wrap down to form a distinct nose shape. A beard and moustache provide an additional human-like appearance, and a tight fitting helmet, slightly raised, crowns the top of the head. The sculpted head that adorned a ceiling beam of the Værnes church some 400 years later is strikingly similar to the ones on the Oseberg wagon. Its eyes are more realistically shaped, but the other features show only slight variances. The helmet has three incisions engraved on it rather than one. The face has a moustache, but if it has a beard, it is less distinct than the sculpted head found at Oseberg. The mask on the Rennebu portal, however, has a fan shaped beard with similar V-groove incisions intended to mimic hair. Overall, the Rennebu face resembles a flatter relief version of the Oseberg wagon sculpted heads with ringed, rounded eyes and a moustache. The final item of consideration in this particular example is the aforementioned brooch displayed at *Kulturhistorisk museum* in Oslo featuring an Óðinn mask of unknown origin but dated to the tenth century. It is made of metal, yet it characterizes the relevant elements of the wood-carved pieces with an additional attribute that clearly links the mask to Óðinn - it was cast quite deliberately with a missing eye. Combined and synthesized, these elements morph into a wood-carved mask featuring a head wearing an incised helmet with an integrated brow and nose. The moustache and beard follow the overall shapes of the examples provided and are engraved to mimic facial hair. One of the eyes is recessed in order to convey that conventional quality attributed to Óðinn. For a photo of a hypothetical prototype of a wood-carved Óðinn mask based on this synthesis of artifacts see figure 52. To view an interactive Flash movie blending the images illustrating the hypothetical prototype, see Animation 1.

A full body carving of Óðinn based on a synthesis of anthropomorphic figures seen on Viking Age iconography has been presented in figure 36f. This carving was produced by the author as a hypothetical reconstruction based on the last *hjástælt* line in a half-strophe of the poem *Sigurðardrápa* presented in section 1.5: *fór Hroptr með Gungni*, "Hroptr [Óðinn] fared with Gungnir [his spear]". In the analysis of that poem, it is suggested that the rest of the content of the *helmingar* could have been visual inspiration for Kormákr while he was composing the verses looking about a hall in Hlaðir. In that particular half-strophe, however, there is little to suggest additional imagery, and it would have been a guess at best to include, perhaps a raven and/or additional biomorphic figures in a broader setting. As previously stressed, the intricacies of complex relationships are reflected in Viking Age art, and anthropomorphic or other shapes

infrequently stand alone, so the carved Óðinn holding his spear should be considered an element in a larger composition. Though some of the half-strophes in *Sigurðardrápa* do suggest additional elements, and a few preliminary sketches for potential carvings of larger portions of scenes have been provided in figures 36a-e. For this dissertation, that poem and the suggested wood-carved iconographic displays should be considered as precursors for the more detailed study in part two of the poem *Húsdrápa* and the carvings described in those stanzas. There is greater potential for hypothetical reconstructions based on the referential intermedia presented in *Húsdrápa* due to the more direct observation and detail relayed by Úlfr.

Here it should be noted that the spatial distance scrutinized in part one is mostly limited to the area of present day Norway. However, this is not a national study. For one, the focus turns to Iceland in the remaining sections. Indeed, there are important pieces of archaeological evidence from other Nordic lands, the North Atlantic islands including the British Isles and the European continent which are introduced in subsequent sections.

Based on literary sources and surrounding archaeological evidence, it is reasonable to claim the existence of wood-carved mythological imagery at Hlaðir during the realm of Hákon jarl inn ríki. However, more discussion remains as to where and from whom the carvings were acquired. Mary Helms conducted a comparative study of more than a hundred years of anthropological data collected from traditional, non-industrialized societies around the world with a focus on acquisition of specialized crafts. Before closing part one, it is worth reviewing the role of indices and artists in view of several of her observations, including:

> Skilled crafters become present-day transformers and culture hero creators. Their acts of crafting compress the original creations and transformations recorded in myth and legend into still existing actions, maintaining a direct, living connection between the temporal/spatial here-and-now of the cultural setting and the there-and-then of outside dimensions that relate the present to the past by the metaphor of distance. (Helms 1993: 17)

Helms detects that in traditional cultures skilled crafts are perceived to have qualities analogous to the gods responsible for creation. Those skills present in the objects are also associated with legendary figures and original ancestors. In that sense, skilled crafting qualitatively embodies the creative power believed to existed in the distant past and on the cosmological vertical axis, an intangible distant space. Helms adds to this understanding a comparable phenomenon of qualities attributed to skilled crafting on the horizontal axis of distance. In the cosmographic plane of time and space, items acquired from afar are often imbued with a similar mystique of spiritual value (Helms 1993: 49). For this study, not only does the absence of extant woodcarvings from Hlaðir present an intriguing mystery, but the existence of wood-carved remains in the surrounding areas of Norway begs the question if the Hlaðir jarls acquired the woodcarvings in their halls from afar. It is quite possible that loose objects, such as ritual instruments or the idols, pedestals and high seats could have been brought to Hlaðir from some distant valleys up in the mountains. It may have been more conceivable to imagine some unknown craftsman having the ability to perform such work imbued with spiritual powers. Or, particularly in the case of idols, that these were the creation of a divine hand - perhaps they were thought to have come into being and animated of their own accord or prototype. In any case, there would be more mystique attributable to an

unknown source rather than a person whose daily habits are familiar to the recipients. As presented in the sagas above, Hákon jarl had temples in remote areas and the missionary kings systematically advanced with their men through the upper valleys seeking to destroy woodcarvings with heathen themes. They were unable to stamp out a tradition, however, as seen from the stave church portals and furnishings. It is perhaps not just coincidence or more favorable weather conditions (preventing rot) that have led to the remaining stave churches surviving clustered in the remote central mountain valleys of Norway. An aesthetic tradition has remained alive there through the millennia that maintains an aura of cosmological qualities. Hence, a bridge exists in the craftsmanship seen from other areas of Norway to what must have been present in Hlaðir, reaching from Oseberg to the stave church in Hylestad in cosmographic time and space.

However, for those carvings in relief that were integral to the structure of the halls, it would have been more practical if the woodcarving craftsmen were present during construction or renovation and involved with the design of the building. In addition to crafts imported from distant places, Helms argues the same effect applies when craftsmen are brought to central places who are recognized as having powers to access the cosmological realm in the production of their work (Helms 1993: 36). Unknown to the locals, and perhaps somewhat sequestered to the court, these craftsmen could maintain an aura as "others" endowed with abilities to access the supernatural qualities represented in their carvings. Hákon jarl or his agents could have located and contracted the very woodcarvers who sculpted the idols to come and participate in assembling his halls. On the other hand, as argued above in the case of mobile, migrant craftsmen, such individual specialists with reputations for their skills could have freely sought patrons and been invited to join the retinues of the jarls. In that scenario they could have been regarded with a similar respect for their abilities as that granted to skalds. Not surprisingly, Old Norse literature focuses on the "word-smith" as the sagas frequently weave verses along with saga prose. The redactors are less concerned about the actions of other craftspersons that fall outside the central deeds of the storyline. Nevertheless, every indication points to *smiðar* of all types having been held in high regard. While it is impossible to single out any certain circumstances, it is interesting to consider various scenarios regarding the occupation and social relations of the woodcarvers. Everything presented thus far indicates that there was a pool of talent from which the Hlaðir jarls could attract craftspersons or acquire exceptional woodcarvings of mythic scenes. It can also be concluded that the specialized objects created were considered to have qualities of agency, and hence, the craftsmen must have been recognized to have magical abilities as mediators. Their association with distant realms would have enhanced the aura of mystique attributed them. The myth surrounding craftsmen as "others" is further explored in part two, section three.

Although there were craftsmen in Iceland capable of producing carvings as described by Úlfr in *Húsdrápa*, based on the account of events in *Laxdœla saga* it is conceivable that the carvings were produced by professional carvers commissioned at Hlaðir in Norway and brought to the farm at Hjarðarholt. The mythic tales and their depictions would have had a strong presence in Norway during the time in question. The economy at Hlaðir would have allowed for those who could afford to be patrons of the arts to attract and commission artists capable of producing the carvings. The cult activity at Hlaðir also contributed to the demand for woodcarvings in order to display and be of use for the religious/ideological leadership role of the

jarls. All of these factors indicate that there would have been a supply of woodcarvings featuring mythological scenes potentially available for Óláfr to purchase. This scenario is further discussed in part two in comparison to how the woodcarvings may have appeared if they were carved on location at Hjarðarholt in Iceland.

Part 2: Icelandic dwellings, woodcarving, skaldic poetry and *Húsdrápa*
Introduction:

Part two builds on the woodcarving tradition and related cultural factors examined in the first sections but adds to the background information by presenting the legendary diaspora from Norway to Iceland as it relates to material culture. In particular, the function of the *ǫndvegissúlur*, wood-carved high seat pillars, is examined in relation to how these are presented in Old Norse literature as agents of mythic/cultural identity. Wood supplies on the volcanic island were sparse. Slow growing birch of small diameter initially covered areas of Iceland, but this resource was quickly diminished. Arguably, a lot of driftwood was available, but it is unlikely this material was suitable for building many of the large halls described in the sagas such as the one in Hjarðarholt. Indeed, as told of many other chieftains, Óláfr made his legendary trip to Norway to acquire timbers. The transport of Norwegian lumber is another example of linking cultural value to the material, giving wood - and things created out of it - a mythic status. This is followed by the work of legendary/historic Icelandic craftsmen, and how Óláfr's hall may have been carved on location at Hjarðarholt. The bases for analysis are primarily the remnants of carved planks and panels found in the districts surrounding Skagafjǫrðr dating from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries (Kristján Eldjárn 1953, Magerøy 1961, 1953, Selma Jónsdóttir 1959). Although these carvings have been dated to about a hundred years after the ones described in *Húsdrápa*, legend attributes some of them to the saga hero Þórðr hreða (Kuhn 2006, Kristján Eldjárn 1953). According to his saga, Þórðr was about fifteen when his mentor king, Gamli Gunnhildarson, was slain in a battle with Hákon konungr inn góði. If Finnur is correct in dating the composition of *Húsdrápa* to 983, Þórðr would have been making incisions in wood on Iceland prior to and possibly during the period in question. It is likely that a craftsman of the legendary stature of Þórðr initiated a style of carving peculiar to the region, which could have been utilized by the carvers of the mythical scenes at Hjarðarholt. These *smiðar* may have differed from the "professional carvers" who implemented the designs decorating the Oseberg ship burial artifacts and were specialized craftsmen commissioned by the Hlaðir earls and other wealthy chieftains who engaged them. The multi-talented *smiðr* was, nevertheless, highly regarded in the Icelandic community, and we have a few archaeological remains to attest to his skills.

The carvings found at Bjarnastaðahlið and Flatatunga both contain Christian motifs using similar techniques, yet the two sets are dissimilar enough to be attributed to two different carvers and applications. Hence, they point to a broader tradition. I build upon previous scholarship and examine these panels in depth. (Kristján Eldjárn 1953, Magerøy 1961, 1953, Selma Jónsdóttir 1959, Guðrún Harðardóttir 2010). Several ideas are presented as to how a Byzantine Last Judgment scene came to be carved in a cathedral at Hólar. Here another craftsman, mentioned in *Jóns saga helga,* comes to the fore. Þóroddr Gamlason was the best candidate to have carved the Last Judgment scenes. He would have, however, needed some kind of model for the renderings. Various options and influences of style imported from abroad are explored. I present the argument that Icelandic carver(s) of the *Húsdrápa* scenes would also have used some sort of

models for the imagery used in the mythological scenes described by Úlfr. Nevertheless, following *Laxdœla saga,* the execution of the carvings would need to be adapted in order to have been completed in a short amount of time, and the "V-groove" type of incisions used by the Icelandic craftsmen in rendering the designs of the Flatatunga and Bjarnastaðahlið panels provides one explanation for how the depiction of the scenes in Ólafr's hall could have been quickly produced.

In addition to an introduction of the poem as a composition peculiar to skaldic poetry and the mythic underpinnings of the art form, the case studies of the execution of the carved mythic scenes described by Úlfr in his poem *Húsdrápa* form the core of part two. A close reading of the poem and the mythological content is presented and examined by scholarly analysis, and iconographic examples from archaeological finds that may be considered related are linked to the content of the poem. I present composites of hypothetical reconstructions of the imagery and contribute additional thoughts and analysis regarding the agency of the carvings within this interdisciplinary study.

We have Snorri to thank for the preservation of what we know of the poem. However, he did not present *Húsdrápa* in any certain order; rather, he used individual *helmingar* attributed to Úlfr among those from other skalds to present groups of kennings in *Skáldskaparmál*. Finnur Jónsson grouped Úlfr's *helmingar* into arguably a logical sequence based on mythological time, and his ordering is used as a way to organize the following sections. I conduct a close reading of each *helmingr* and present research accordingly. Some of the *helmingar* are individual topics, but others are grouped as a section according to the mythological scene described.

Section three focuses on the first *helmingr* of the poem as edited by Finnur. As an introductory *helmingr*, Úlfr presented the poem to Óláfr as a gift of Óðinn and used a kenning for the mead of poetry. A close reading leads to a broader exposition of skaldic verse as praise poetry, and the kenning also provides a perfect signpost to elaborate on the general use of a kenning and the imagery conjured by circumlocution. The mythic background and significance of poetry in the Old Norse worldview is elaborated on through the mead of poetry myth and numerous other examples provided by Snorri and in the *Poetic Edda*. Mythical smiths and the craftsmanship of dwarves are important features of this study. The mythological *smiðar*, including *dvergar*, found in Snorri and Old Norse poetry are identified, along with comparisons between the metal smith and the wood smith. It is examined how the various roles of craftsmen relate to Norse culture and society. Here, the skald as craftsman is also a pertinent topic as Úlfr presents the gift of Óðinn. I take the opportunity to examine the relationship between poet and craftsman and suggest that what the craftsman has built as material culture is comparable in the Old Norse worldview with what the poet has composed and "constructed" in verse.

The next three sections of the dissertation focus on the body of the poem as three distinct mythological scenes. The order in which Finnur has arranged them may be seen chronologically, as the last two episodes are presented by Snorri as following each other as he records the myths. In alignment with other scholars it is presented that the first stanza, involving the struggle between Heimdallr and Loki over the Brísingamen, is a creation myth. The *helmingar* that follow include Þórr's fishing expedition and encounter with Jǫrmungandr. This myth, as in others involving Þórr, arguably represents life challenges and rites of passage. The third group of

helmingar describes the funeral procession and pyre for Baldr. Hence, based on topic matter, these myths are considered not only as a linear progression but also representing a mythic cycle of birth, life and death. The notion of a cult ritual expressed by the recital of the poem and the perception of sacred space as expressed by the carved hall is a central aspect of analysis.

Section four includes a background of source material regarding Heimdallr, Loki and references about the Brísingamen sufficient to expand on the myth and kennings in stanza two. In addition to references of interpretations of this stanza by various scholars, an overview of instances of ekphrasis within Old Norse poetry is provided. This survey reveals that there are no known iconographic depictions of the somewhat obscure myth described in the stanza. I nevertheless argue that certain iconographic elements exist independently that can be compiled to depict the scene. These sources are pointed to and guide the reader through the analysis of the mythic scene using a woodcarving made by the author as a visual aid.

In section five the five *helmingar* describing Þórr's fishing expedition are examined in depth. There are numerous other poems and kennings referring to this mythic fight between Þórr and the Midgarðsormr, and Snorri describes the event in prose. The myth is anything but obscure, and scholars have pointed to various depictions among rock carvings spread as far as Gosforth, England to Sweden. Variances in the poems and carvings are carefully scrutinized for nuances, and a survey of scholarship provides interpretations of the narratives concerning the widely depicted scene with Þórr. There are a multitude of extant carvings of serpents, and indeed intertwined snake-like animal shapes are a main motif in Viking Age art. This section provides an example of how these mythic depictions reflect Norse culture as a macrocosm and carved artifacts and the hall as a microcosm. Based on Úlfr's descriptions and extant iconography, along with analysis, I provide a hypothetical graphic of the scene as it would have appeared in Óláfr's hall.

Baldr's funeral procession and pyre are described by Úlfr in the next five *helmingar* of *Húsdrápa* and make up the final scene. We learn from Snorri's account that the gods, giants and at least one dwarf were there at the dramatic mythic event. One gets a sense that all mythological creatures were present. Úlfr's list is shorter: in addition to Óðinn, he mentions Freyr on his boar, Valkyries and ravens, Heimdallr on his horse and the giantess needed to shove Baldr's funeral ship out to sea. Her steed, magnificently described by Snorri and also alluded to by Úlfr, is felled. Baldr's death plays a significant part in the stages leading to Ragnarǫk, which ultimately leads to renewal. There is also a long tradition of interpretation among nature mythologers that this is a solar myth. Additional sources and scholarship are brought forward, and by combining extant iconography and arriving at a synthesis, I provide a hypothetical depiction of the mythic scene.

Having completed the descriptions of the individual myths, I turn to Úlfr's poetic verse of praise for Óláfr and the hall recited in *Húsdrápa*, and section seven brings together the individual components of the poem and woodcarvings as a whole. The final *helmingr* of *Húsdrápa* introduces some closing thoughts about the poem in regard to the Norse dwelling representing a microcosm of the greater mythic corpus. A selection of excavated and reconstructed Iron Age Scandinavian dwellings are examined in order to arrive at a hypothetical size and layout of the Viking Age *eldhús* at Hjarðarholt. I place particular emphasis on the hall transformed into a sacred space and its significance as an image carrier for the wood-carved iconography. What is

known about Scandinavian structures as wood-carved cultic buildings is compared with houses of other cultures, specifically in the Pacific Northwest and South Pacific Islands. Here, anthropological connections become evident which combine religion and ideology with iconic displays. Returning to Norse dwellings and my hypothetical model for Óláfr's hall, I offer some thoughts regarding the perception of the poem during its recital. Based on the descriptions from previous sections, I present some sketches proposing a visual interpretation of what Úlfr gazed upon as he ambled in the hall at Hjarðarholt and described the carvings on the paneling in front of him.

The skills of poet and woodcarver combine as crafted referential intermedia, and the resulting product underscores the importance of these skills in Old Norse society. The final *helmingr*, as Finnur has compiled the poem, speaks to the river running to the sea - a concluding statement, but Úlfr also speaks of praise to Óláfr and the wood-carved hall. Generally, Viking Age iconography, and more specifically in this study, woodcarving, and the art objects/halls that serve as image carriers, exercise a social/cultural/sacral agency through the multifarious contexts that lead to the qualities and appearance of the forms. Skaldic ekphrasis mirrors this agency through its performance and primarily the use of kennings, which allude to larger mythic themes arguably present in the image and the imagination of the audience. The mythic underpinnings of the crafted words and wood reflect and serve to reinforce the ideological/religious and hence cultural worldview of Old Norse societies. The process of arriving at hypothetical reconstructions of missing woodcarvings is as important as the results, insofar as the designs are the outcome of analysis presented in a visual format. The inverse is also true because, much like a kenning, the woodcarving presents its agency as a portal to the greater myths of the corpus.

It should be noted that just as with the king's sagas, the sagas of the Icelanders and other Old Norse texts cited in part two, such as *Landnámabók*, the book of settlements, are not presented as entirely historical documents. Indeed, some scholars, such as Adolf Friðriksson and Orri Vésteinsson, view these Old Norse texts as medieval scholarly constructs, with events described largely shaped by those who wrote them in the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries (Vésteinsson 2007, Friðriksson 2003). The position taken here, however, is the information presented in the literature, with proper discernment, informs the audience of not only early medieval trends found in Old Norse society, but also with varying levels of modality represents Viking Age social activity and belief systems conveyed through legend, myth and descriptions of material culture.

2.1: The transport of woodcarvings and timber from Norway to Iceland

Many Old Norse texts describe the settlement of Iceland as designated by spiritual guidance through material objects. High seat pillars, *ǫndvegissúlur*, were used in some circumstances by Norse peoples for divination. Described in *Landnámabók* and sagas of the Icelanders, as ships approached the shores of Iceland, the wooden posts were thrown overboard and emigrants vowed to settle where they washed ashore. In other situations the *ǫndvegissúlur* were "asked" in ritual settings for guidance, and through sacred objects the knowledge of where they should stand was revealed. Important for this study, the texts inform that the wood-carved pillars, and sometimes additional building parts of temples, were brought from Norway to Iceland. What other furnishings and building materials the settlers took with them are only

mentioned as vague references. It seems the *ǫndvegissúlur* were central to the narrative. However, that does not rule out the possibility that other wood-carved timbers were brought along in anticipation of building needs.

Accounts of return journeys to Norway from Iceland to acquire building lumber are not uncommon. There are four such ventures mentioned in *Laxdæla saga* alone. In some cases shipments are mentioned as an aside, such as when Þórir brings a load of *húsaviðr*, house timber, with him from Norway after his third winter of exile abroad in chapter seven of *Ljósvetninga saga*. In other situations it is mentioned that merchant ships arrive with a load of lumber, as in chapter nine of *Þórðar saga hreðu*. The acquisition of lumber in Norway by Ingimundr in *Vatnsdæla saga* is well described and the actions involved are ritual customs recognizable from other scenes in saga literature. Quantitatively, because we have so many accounts, the saga events validate the historic practice of transporting building material from Norway. Qualitatively the descriptions underscore the mythic foundations of Icelandic society discussed in this section and the prevalent worldview, albeit recalled through eyes of the saga redactors, revealed through material culture. Hence, the motives of the characters involved also shed light on the biographies of the wooden objects they bring with them. A closer look at a selection of accounts in Old Norse texts helps fill in the gaps in the description of the journey for lumber by Óláfr and the woodcarvings for his *eldhús*.

Previous scholarship examines the ritual of casting high seat pillars over board in order to divine settlement locations in the mythic/cultural contexts put into writing by Christian redactors in Old Norse texts. Margaret Clunies Ross focuses on the act as symbolizing the transfer of authority from Norway to Iceland by the dominant male of the household. In regard to the legendary accounts in *Landnámabók* and the sagas describing pre-Christian divination practices, she reasons certain auguries were not deemed produced by sorcery or demons and were therefore not presented in a derogatory light (Clunies Ross 1998). Pointing to similarities, Jonas Wellendorf provides examples in Christian accounts describing divine guidance provided through material objects such as bells, and he reasons the Christian redactors did not damn the pre-Christian practice due to a common sense of piety (Wellendorf 2010). Both of these perspectives help explain how and why the practices were recorded in the literature. In addition, the scholars present numerous accounts from Old Norse texts, and each contributes broader observations regarding the mythic underpinnings of Icelandic settlement, some of which are also described below. Here, the emphases are on the material objects involved in the rites, in varying modes as image carriers, and the social relations involving these indices.

In the *Hauksbók* and S*turlubók* redactions of *Landnámabók,* and in transcripts of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, it is told that the legendary first settlers of Iceland, Ingólfr Arnarson and his foster-brother and brother-in-law, Leifr Hróðmarsson, gave up their lands in Norway as a settlement for some slayings. (Hjǫr)Leifr, went harrying, but Ingólfr stayed behind and answered for their property:

> Þenna vetr fekk Ingólfr at blóti miklu ok leitaði sér heilla um forlǫg sín, en Hjǫrleifr vildi aldri blóta. Fréttin vísaði Ingólfi til Íslands. Eptir þat bjó sitt skip hvárr þeira mága til Íslandsferðar; hafði Hjǫrleifr herfang sitt á skipi, en Ingólfr félagsfé þeira, ok lǫgðu til hafs, er þeir váru búnir. (*Landnámabók* 1986: 42)

> That winter Ingólfr conducted a great sacrificial ritual and sought a divine token regarding his fate, but Hjǫrleifr would never sacrifice. It was revealed he should go to Iceland. After that those brothers-in-law prepared their ships for the journey to Iceland; Hjǫrleifr had his booty on his ship, and Ingólfr their common fund, and they took to sea, when they were ready.

Cleasby Vigfusson defines *félags-fé* as a common fund, and in this case it is property they owned in common. Ingólfr and Hjǫrleifr gave up their *eignir*, rights to their ancestral lands, as a settlement, but they were able to take whatever *lausa-fé*, "loose" or moveable property, that they could fit with them on their ships. When the two reached Iceland, they parted ways. There is no mention of *fjár-skipti*, a division of property. However, Ingólfr performed the first documented instance of a saga tradition:

> Þá er Ingólfr sá Ísland, skaut hann fyrir borð ǫndugissúlum sínum til heilla; hann mælti svá fyrir, at hann skyldi þar byggja, er súlurnar kœmi á land.
> (*Landnámabók* 1986: 42)

> When Ingólfr saw Iceland, he cast off board his high seat pillars as an auspice; he declared, that he would settle there, where the pillars washed ashore.

The *ǫndugissúlur* (alternate spelling) are not described here, but as discussed below, they may have been carved with the likenesses of gods, and it is evident that along with providing the pillars for the seating place of the leading ranked men, these posts that made up the high seat were seen to mediate answers from divine sources regarding one's destiny. This supports the notion that it was of religious significance to bring carved items from Norway, and the action is central to the narrative regarding the origins of settlement in Iceland, but it also raises questions about other possible timbers that were brought on the journey. The rest of the seat parts, certainly, would be likely candidates for additional transported wooden pieces. As a *súl*, pillar, column, this wooden post could also have had a structural function for a *salr*, room or hall, by extending to the ceiling and supporting the roof (Munch, 2003: 261, Birkeli 1932: 37, Holmqvist 1981: 292, see section 2.7). In short, the high seat pillars could have been a central feature of numerous strategic, and culturally significant, fitted timbers ready to assemble in Iceland.

Ingólfr and Hjǫrleifr had spent a winter in Iceland prior to this permanent move, and they would have been familiar with the resources of the land. *Íslendingabók* provides in chapter one the following description: *Í þann tið vas Ísland viði vaxit á miðli fjalls ok fjǫru* (*Íslendingabók* 1986: 5). "At that time Iceland was wooded between the mountains and fjords". While there was wood in Iceland during the time of settlement, it was more like scrub birch or willow and probably not very useful as building material[24] (Miller 2008: 22, Byock 2001). There may have

[24] In *Svarfdæla saga* it states: En skip þat hafði gert verit uppi í Tungunni, ok var þar hǫggvinn viðrinn, því at þar var skógr þykkr; en til kjalarins var hǫfð eik sú, er stóð niðri í Eikibrekku fyrir ofan Blakksgerði (...) (Íslenzk fornrit IX: 156) Translated by Frederik J. Heinemann: The ship had been built up on Tunga, where the timber for it was cut, as there was a dense forest there. For the keel a large oak that stood at Eikibrekka above Blakksgerd was used (*The Complete Sagas of the Icelanders* IV: 164). A footnote in Í.f. relates that it must be a legend that seaworthy ships were made of Icelandic wood. Indeed, this account is an anomaly.

been plenty of driftwood, and indeed this was a valuable resource for settlers. However, many of these pieces of driftage were often short and had flaws. Building turf houses was a partial solution for lack of other materials. Turf provided outside perimeter walls and insulation covering all the surfaces, but the ridge and the rest of the roof still needed to be supported with a wooden structure. Two rows of posts, *stafar*, along the inner sections were used upon which were fastened *staflægjur*, beams, that ran the length of the dwelling. The parallel framework was tied together with cross-beams, *þvertré* or *bitar*, which in turn supported *dvergar*, short pillars placed centrally that held up the top ridge beam, *áss*. The *stafar* and *staflægjur* allowed the roof rafters, *raptar*, to be securely joined lengthwise upon them and divided into two spans. Perhaps those shorter lengths of structural framework would have been easier to collect from driftwood or the larger trees from the birch forest. Also, in order to use less wood, the earliest settlement dwellings appear to have had rafters that terminated directly on the turf walls rather than having a framework for wall paneling or wainscoting (Byock 2001: 34 - see also section 2.7). In order to reach the necessary height, however, the inner posts supporting the roof structure would have needed to be stout and quite long, perhaps 4 meters or more, and it would have been preferable for the rest of the beams to have been as long as possible without splicing to provide rigidity and strength for the structure. (fig. 54)

Hjǫrleifr went right to the task of building two sizable structures: *Hjǫrleifr lét þar gera skála tvá, ok er ǫnnur tóptin*[25] *átján faðma, en ǫnnur nítján*. "Hjǫrleifr had built there two halls, and the one marked out lot was eighteen fathoms, and the other nineteen" (*Landnámabók* 1986: 43) A *faðmr*, or fathom, is a unit of measurement that has its roots as outstretched arms, and has become standardized to 6 feet or approximately 1.85 meters. Using that as a basis the saga text of *Landnámabók* would make these buildings approximately 100 feet or 30 plus meters in length. Sizes of these proportions were likely exaggerated by redactors, perhaps influenced by the larger contemporary dwellings of the early medieval period. Archaeological evidence of settlement era building sites suggests that structures were much smaller. The largest appear to have been about 90-130 sq. meters, while the majority fit the "small" category of only about 40-90 sq. meters (Vésteinsson 2007). One type of an Icelandic *topt*, according to Cleasby, would have walls and no roof, so one of the structures built by Hjǫrleifr and his men was more likely used as a pen for livestock. However, the other must have been a covered hall, *salr,* and had a ceiling. A roofed dwelling that would have provided adequate shelter for Hjǫrleifr and his household required quite a bit of lumber. Erring on the side of caution and using an archaeological excavation as an example, the structure could have been like the one at Grelutótt in the West Fjords of Iceland: with an interior about 13.4 meters long and 5.4 meters wide, or 72.36 sq. meters (Byock 2001: 360) - half the size of what was described in *Landnámabók*. If so, the roof structure would require at least a dozen pillars, *stafar*, and two sets of substantial rafter-bracing roof beams, *staflægjur*, along with a roof ridge beam, *áss*, that would span the length of the house. In order to erect the dwelling before winter quite a bit of preparation would have been necessary. A door would be required and also some other basic furnishings, such as bench seats, would have provided a minimum of comfort. Even if some materials were available on location for rafters and other fittings, it is not unlikely that in addition to his *herfang*, among the rest of his *fé*, or

[25] Cleasby provides a third definition for *topt* and cites this as an example: *a square piece of ground without a roof* (cp. tjalda), this is the special later Icel. sense ; Hjǫrleifr lét þar gera skála tvá, ok er ǫnnur tóptin átján faðma, en ǫnnur nítján Landn 35 ; (1969: 636)

property, Hjǫrleifr had some of the long posts and possibly other sturdy timbers with him from Norway ready to use for building material.

Ingólfr, in the meantime, did not permanently settle until after three years had passed when he found where his *ǫndugissúlur* had washed ashore. Prior to that, after finding Hjǫrleifr murdered, he is quoted to have exclaimed:

> „Lítit lagðisk hér fyrir góðan dreng, er þrælar skyldu at bana verða, ok sé ek svá hverjum verða, ef eigi vill blóta.“ (*Landnámabók* 1986: 44)
>
> "For little cause befell here a good man, when thralls would be the cause of his death, and I see what becomes of one, if (he) will not sacrifice".

It is notable that Hjǫrleifr was not a *blótmaðr,* a man who would pay attention to omens, and he had no reason to delay building his *salr*. Ingólfr took over his property and spent one winter there, but it is not told how his household took shelter the rest of the time. Perhaps the *ǫndugissúlur* were not only valued singularly as religious omens, but they were also considered integral to both the material and cosmic[26] structure of his permanent *salr*, and the rest of his cargo from Norway became arranged around the pillars. As a *blótmaðr*, it can also be imagined that other items among Ingólfr's property, some with woodcarvings, would have cult significance which were fundamental to his *salr* as well.

Indeed, the settlers were persistent in tracing down their *ǫndvegissúlur* and would move to where they were found even several years after they heard of the pillars whereabouts. It also took a certain Hrollaugr, also mentioned in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta,* three years to reach his (*Landnámabók* 1986: 316-17). In *Flateyjarbók* it states in *Þorsteins þáttr uxafóts*:

> Þorðr skeggi hét maðr. Hann nam lönd öll í Lóni fyrir norðan Jökulsá, millum ok Lónsheiðar, ok bjó í Bæ tíu vetr. En er hann frá til öndvegissúlna sinna í Leiruvági fyrir neðan Heiði, þá seldi hann lönd sin Úlfljóti lögmanni, er þar kom út í Lóni. (normalized from *Þorsteins þáttr uxafóts* 2009: 341)
>
> There was a man called Thord Beard. He claimed all the land in Lon north from the river Jokulsa to Lon heath and lived at the farm called Baer for ten years. But when he learned that his high-seat pillars had come to land in Leiruvog below the heath, he then sold his land to Ulfljot the Lawspeaker who landed there at Lon. (*Tale of Thorstein Bull's-Leg* 1997: 340)

It cannot be argued that Þorðr waited ten years to build a permanent dwelling, but by selling his land he would have had the resources to build a new *salr* incorporating his pillars. Given that Þorðr was willing to make the effort to move testifies to the agency granted to the *ǫndvegissúlur*. In *Kormáks saga*, there was no delay for Ǫgmundr Kormáksson in finding his pillars. He sailed

[26] For example, in Norse mythology *dvergar* also hold up the heavens. See Gunnel 2001: 21-22. A dwelling may be seen as a microcosm of the greater cosmos. The notion of cosmology represented in a hall is pursued further in section 2.7.

into Miðfjǫrðr after them. However, the following is related about when he went to mark out the spot for his *salr*:

> Þat var þeira átrúnaðr, ef málit gengi saman, þá er optar væri reynt, at þess manns ráð myndi saman ganga, ef málvǫndrinn þyrri, en þróask, ef hann vissi til mikilleiks; en málit gekk saman, ok þrem sinnum reynt. Síðan lét Ǫgmundr gera hús þar á melnum ok bjó þar síðan. (*Kormáks saga* 1939: 205)
>
> That was their belief, if the measuring (stick) shrank, then when it was tried a few times, that this man's situation would decrease, if the measuring wand decreased, but increase, if it was seen to enlarge; and the measuring (stick) shrank, and it was tried three times. (modified from *Kormak's saga* 1997: 180)

Evidently it was believed important to settle in the divined location indicated by the *ǫndvegissúlur*, but that was not a certain guarantee of good fortune. The *málvǫndr*, measuring wand, could mark out not just the ground plan of the *hús* but also read the "lifeline" of the occupants. In this case it is intended as foreshadowing, but this incidence of geomancy is an additional example of how material objects embodied cultural values and beliefs as revealed by literary devices in the sagas.

There are so many interesting indicators of the existence and transport of woodcarvings and building materials in *Eyrbyggja saga*, that it is worth referring to and quoting at length. Summarizing the key points of the description, Þórólfr Mostrarskegg was a follower of Þórr, and he watched over a temple devoted to the god in Norway. After he had provided sanctuary to an enemy of Haraldr hárfagri, the king gave Þórólfr the choice of either going into exile or becoming one of his followers. In response:

> Þórólfr Mostraskegg fekk at blóti miklu ok gekk til fréttar við Þór, ástvin sinn, hvárt hann skyldi sættask við konung eða fara af landi brott ok leita sér annarra forlaga, en fréttin vísaði Þórólfi til Íslands. Ok eptir þat fekk hann sér mikit hafskip ok bjó þat til Íslandsferðar ok hafði með sér skuldalið sitt ok búferli. Margr vinir hans réðusk til ferðar með honum. Hann tók ofan hofit ok hafði með sér flesta viðu, þá er þar hǫfðu í verit, ok svá moldina undan stallanum, þar er Þórr hafði á setit. Síðan sigldi Þórólfr í haf, ok byrjaði honum vel, ok fann landit ok sigldi fyrir sunnan, vestr um Reykjanes; þá fell byrrinn, ok sá þeir, at skar í landit inn fjǫrðu stóra. Þórólfr kastaði þá fyrir borð ǫndvegissúlum sínum, þeim er staðit hǫfðu í hofinu, þar var Þórr skorinn á annarri. Hann mælti svá fyrir, at hann skyldi þar byggja á Íslandi, sem Þórr léti þær á land koma. En þegar þær hóf frá skipinu, sveif þeim til ins vestra fjarðarins, ok þótti þeim fara eigi vánum seinna. Eptir þat kom hafgula; sigldu þeir þá vestr fyrir Snæfellsnes ok inn á fjǫrðinn. Þeir sjá, at fjǫrðrinn er ákafliga breiðr ok langr, ok mjǫk stórfjǫllótt hvárumtveggja megin; Þórólfr gaf nafn firðinum ok kallaði Breiðafjǫrð. Hann tók land fyrir sunnan fjǫrðinn, nær miðjum, ok lagði skipit á vág þann, er þeir kǫlluðu Hofsvág síðan. Eptir þat kǫnnuðu þeir landit ok fundu á nesi framanverðu, er var fyrir norðan váginn, at Þórr var á land kominn með súlurnar; þat var síðan kallat Þórsnes. (*Eyrbyggja saga* 1985: 7-8)

> Thorolf Moster-beard held a great sacrificial feast during which he consulted his dear friend Thor about whether he should reconcile himself with the king or leave the country and seek another fate. The oracle directed Thorolf to Iceland. He got himself an ocean-going ship and prepared it for the journey to Iceland, taking with him his household and all his goods. Many of his friends decided to go on the journey with him. He dismantled the temple and transported most of its timbers, together with the earth from underneath the pedestal on which Thor had been placed.
> Thorolf then sailed out to sea with a fair wind and came within sight of land sailing then west along the southern coast and around cape Reykjanes. The wind dropped and they could see on the shore where broad fjords cut into the land. Thorolf cast overboard the high-seat pillars which had been in his temple, one of which had Thor carved on it. Thorolf declared that he would settle in Iceland in whatever place Thor directed the pillars to land. As soon as the pillars were thrown overboard, they were swept towards the more westerly of the fjords and seemed to travel faster than might be expected.
> A sea breeze then sprang up and they sailed west around the headland of Snaefellsnes and into the fjord. They saw that the fjord was extremely broad and long and that it was bordered on both sides by high mountains. Thorolf named the fjord Breidafjord (Broad Fjord). He put in to land halfway along the southern shore of the fjord and anchored his ship in a cove there, which has since been named Hofsvog. After that they explored the area and found that Thor and the pillars were already ashore at the tip of the headland north of the cove. The headland has been called Thorsnes ever since. (*Saga of the People of Eyri* 1997: 133)

Here it referred to Þórólfr conducting a *blót*, usually translated as a sacrificial ceremony, in order to question the god Þórr for counsel regarding what action to take, and Þórólfr received an answer from Þórr - just how is not stated, casting of lots or some other token - that he was directed to Iceland. Importantly, in addition to the people of his household and his chattels, he dismantled his temple and took most of the wood with him. This sets a precedent for similar transport of fitted building materials from Norway to Iceland in other situations. Namely, the parts needed to reconstruct the temple are in the ship, ready to reassemble. As argued throughout this dissertation, a hall likely served both secular and sacral functions for a family and the community. Hence, it also may have been commonplace to bring the key wooden parts needed to assemble a *salr* for both practical and ritualistic purposes. The description of Þórólfr's migration happens to be quite detailed in regard to his *hof* contents, whereas in similar saga scenes other aspects of the events often receive more emphasis.

Þórólfr loaded a large sea going ship, and as he approached Iceland, he threw his *qndvegissúlur* overboard in the established fashion. Here we are provided with another detail not mentioned elsewhere: Þórr was carved on at least one of the pillars. Þórólfr vowed they would settle where Þórr showed them to take land. Hence, according to this saga account, woodcarvings of Þórr were transported from Norway to Iceland, and these likenesses in the form of woodcarvings were understood to contain a presence of Þórr and mediate his will. This is further

emphasized by the statement *at Þórr var á land kominn með súlurnar;* They found that "Þórr had washed ashore with the pillars", i.e. not "the pillars with Þórr carved on them". In this case the prototype, Þórr, was considered the agent and the index representing him was in the patient position, i.e. acted upon.

As one way to analyze the transfer of personal luck to the new land, Clunies Ross points to Arnold van Gennep's tripartite structure for rite of passage (Clunies Ross 1998: 172). During the sea voyage, the head of household entered the middle stage, a liminal place devoid of the identity left behind in the old land. In the case of casting the *qndvegissúlur* overboard, the person undergoing transformation gave up his authority to the prototype represented by the index, seeking guidance to reach the destination and eventually regain an autonomy of self in the new domain. Hence, in the threshold moments, the agent of the household entered a patient position. The high seat pillars were also a material vehicle for transport of the gods and beliefs that the immigrant brought with him. In that regard, it was not faith alone, but also the material index that was the agent as carrier of the essential core values crucial to cult identity.

Chapter 4 in *Eyrbyggja saga* continues to inform the reader that Þórólfr claimed a certain portion of land and erected his homestead and temple. The temple is described in detail. The *qndvegissúlur* are erected there inside the door. Of interest are the *reginnaglar*, holy nails, which are applied to the pillars. One might speculate that these are the same as the silver decorative nails applied with dense coverage to some of the wood-carved objects found in the Oseberg excavation, including the *dyrehodestolper* mentioned above. Otherwise, the description of the temple includes items such as the ones in the scene described at Hlaðir by Snorri, also above.

Although they are not referred to as specifically *qndvegissúlur* parts, the carvings of Þórr described in *Fóstbræðra saga* are similar in kind. The saga hero Þormóðr was on the run in Greenland and found refuge on a remote farm with a couple named Gamli and Gríma. A party seeking Þormóðr arrived.

> En Gríma, kona Gamla, átti stól einn mikinn, en á brúðum stólsins var skorinn Þórr, ok var þat mikit líkneski. (*Fóstbræðra saga* 1943: 245)

> Gamli's wife, Grima, had a large chair with a figure of Thor carved into the arms - a sizeable effigy - (*Saga of the Sworn Brothers* 1997: 384)

Gríma instructed Þormóðr to be seated in the chair with the graven image of Þórr carved on the posts, and under no circumstances to move from it. And when the search party arrived:

> (...) geta þá at líta stól Grímu, þar er hann stóð á miðju gólfi. Þau sá Þór með hamri sínum skorinn á stólsbrúðunum, en þau sá ekki Þormóð. (*Fóstbræðra saga* 1943: 247)

> They saw Grima's chair in the middle of the floor with the figure of Þórr and his hammer carved into the arms, but they did not see Thormod, (...) (*Saga of the Sworn Brothers* 1997: 385)

Even when the smoke filled room was cleared they were unable to see Þormóðr sitting in the chair. The implication is that the prototype god Þórr acted with agency through the indexical carved likeness in order to conceal Þormóðr. Further social relations involved the agency of Gríma calling on Þórr to perform the concealment with the index as the intermediary portal allowing access to and communication with the deity. The magic event did not happen on its own, but it involved social relations. While a skeptic may dismiss the woman's sorcery and ability of the chair to make Þormóðr invisible, one may grant that carved furnishings such as these were present in the Norse Greenland settlements and the possibility that, as with the aforementioned *ǫndvegissúlur,* they were brought there from Norway via Iceland. Here is also evidence that Þórr would be identifiable in iconography by the inclusion of his hammer. The aforementioned reconstruction of a hypothetical high seat at Borg exhibits carved serpent-heads. (fig. 38) As a three-dimensional sculpture such as those, one might imagine heads such as the ones terminating on the Oseberg wagon trusses. These could comprise of the lower body, including hands clutching a hammer, such as the one held by the bronze figure from Eyrarland, Eyjafjarðarsýsla, Iceland. (fig. 55) Indeed, the 6.7 cm. Eyrarland bronze statuette arguably represents Þórr seated in a small chair, indicating perhaps the image carrier under discussion - the high seat - is also of sacral importance, not just the graven image carved upon the pillars. For an example of a relief carved prototype, one might consider the bench end from the Torpo church in Hallingdal, Norway. (fig. 50) The anthropomorphic figure swallowed by the wolf-like creature could be carved in a similar fashion depicting Þórr striking a mythological foe with his hammer. Whether sculpted or carved in relief, the high seat pillars would likely have featured additional Viking Age patterns in a mesmerizing fashion, such as those animating the animal head posts discussed above. It is clearly conveyed in the literature that these pillars had a magical function, and the carving would have been designed to facilitate the effect with biomorphic interwoven creatures as liminal "gate-keepers" with captivating orifices and textures.

There are instances worth mentioning in regard to the agency of an *ǫndvegissúla* and a *hlutr*, amulet, in *Vatnsdæla saga*. Much to his chagrin, Ingimundr heard his fortune told by a "Finn" sorceress that he was destined to leave his ancestral home in Norway and relocate in Iceland. The *vǫlva*, sorceress, let him know that he would find the silver *hlutr,* a talisman engraved as the likeness of the god Freyr, which was missing from his purse. Ingimundr would know the prophecy was true, she told him, when he found the *hlutr* as he dug a post hole for his *ǫndvegissúla* at his future home in Iceland. In Old Norse sagas, there is no overturning one's fate, and here the belief is demonstrated through these material objects when five chapters later the prophecy was realized. After his initial resistance, Ingimundr sailed to Iceland to seek out his destiny. He happened upon his foster-brother, Grímr, who had already settled, and he and his followers stayed there with him that winter. Grímr offered Ingimundr everything he owned, but Ingimundr knew he had to find the location of his destined lands as described to him by three Finn shamans.

> Ingimundr kvað honum fara allt sem bezt, sem ván var at, -- „en norðr mun ek halda, en um flutning ok farargreiða verðu vér þín at njóta.“ (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939: 39)

> Ingimund said that, as was to be expected, he had been treated as well as could be, "but I must head north, though we will avail ourselves of your help with transportation and provisions." (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 19)

The saga text makes a point that Ingimundr was in need of assistance to transport his household items, and he and his followers began a 150 kilometer long trek overland:

> Þá leið á sumarit, því at mart var at fœra, en farit síð, ok kómu nær vetri í dal þann, er allr var víði vaxinn. (*Vatnsdœla saga* 1939: 39)

> Summer was passing, for there was a great deal to move and they had set out late, and winter was almost upon them when they came to a valley with willow scrub growing all over it. (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 19)

It is unclear why Ingimundr did not sail around the Vestfirðir to seek his land, but apparently he followed his intuition as he and his followers conveyed their belongings up Norðrárdalr. They continued over the heaths and reached an inlet of the sea which he named Hrútafjǫrðr, and they finally spent their second winter in a wooded valley he named Víðidalr. What makes in this context the mythic journey through previously unsettled territory worth mentioning is hinted at in the quotation above. Namely, there was a great deal to move: among the household items was the *qndvegissúla* that was to be transported from Norway to Iceland in order to lead them to their new home. After spending the winter in Víðidalr, it was not a far trek to complete the journey to what Ingimundr would recognize as his destined spot for relocation, which he named Vatnsdalr.

> Ingimundr kaus sér bústað í hvammi einum mjǫk fǫgrum ok efnaði til bœjar; hann reisti hof mikit hundrað fóta langt, ok er hann gróf fyrir ǫndvegissúlu[m], þá fann hann hlut sinn, sem honum var fyrir sagt. Þá mælti Ingimundr: „Þat er þó satt at segja, at eigi má við skǫpunum sporna, en þó skal nú á þetta góðan hug leggja. Bœr sjá skal heita at Hofi.“ (*Vatnsdœla saga* 1939: 42)

> Ingimund chose a site for his home in a very beautiful vale and prepared to build his homestead. He built a great temple a hundred feet long, and when he dug holes for the high-seat pillars, then he found the amulet as had been prophesied. Then Ingimund said, "It is indeed true to say that one cannot fight against fate, and we may now settle here in good spirits. This farm will be called Hof (Temple)." (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 19)

In this foundation myth, the religious/societal/ideological potency represented by the *qndvegissúla* was thrust into the *jqrð* (earth and goddess) in Iceland, and its seed was signified by the agency of the *hlutr* mediating the fertility god Freyr[27]. The prophecy was proven true that this act would generate Ingimundr and his offspring as the leading men of the district. What the

[27] Clunies Ross views this and other symbolic actions with phallic objects as the transfer of authority by the male to the new land and a display of dominance over the feminized earth (1998). While that general theory seems particularly apparent in this example, this study includes additional analysis regarding the specific social engagements involving material objects, particularly the agency of individual types of image carriers such as the high seat pillars.

saga text neglects to mention is how Ingimundr and his party could raise a great *hof,* temple, when he arrived there. He and his followers were undoubtedly slowed down in their trek by transporting some of the necessary materials. The act of setting the high seat pillars in the ground would have initiated the final stage of transformation for the immigrants - a symbolic *hieros gamos* uniting their identity with the land. If the *ǫndvegi* "high seat" was transported as parts, the rest of the ritual would have involved reassembly of the wooden members integral to the place of honor. These panels, stiles and rails would have had tenons (protrusions commonly referred to as "male" parts) that were sunk into mortises (holes commonly referred to as "female" parts) in the leg posts and other reciprocating sections of the framework which joined the seat together. Once the seat was in place in the *hof* or hall the sense of being a "central place" would have been transferred to the new dwelling. Hence, the *ǫndvegissúlur* were not the only cultic components, but in proximity with the rest of the seat structure formed an integrated entity. These parts were likely wood-carved with biomorphic creatures that were intended for the binding and release of the agency of the pillars and seat - similar to the qualities of the engravings on the sculpted *dyrehodestolper* discussed above. The overall mystic effect would have been perceived to be evoked when the cult leader sat upon this seat that allowed communication and mediation with the deities. While the emphasis in the narrative is on the pillar as the central sculpted index of agency, collectively the seat parts would have needed to reunite in the sacral location in order to form a chieftain's reconstructed farmstead.

There are two instances mentioned in the beginning chapters of *Laxdæla saga* of casting *ǫndvegissúlur* over board pointing to subsequent choices for settlement locations. In chapter three the sons of Ketill flatnefr migrate to Iceland and Bjǫrn finds his high seat pillars washed ashore in Breiðafjǫrðr. In chapter five, the *ǫndvegissúlur* belonging to Unnr in djúpúðga Ketilsdóttir are driven all the way to the innermost reaches of the fjord, and she builds her farm there. This *bær* is called Hvammr, and it is about ten kilometers north of the Laxá, "Salmon River", in Laxárdalr, the "Salmon River Valley", from which the saga gets its name. Óláfr pái is a descendent of these initial settlers of Hvammsfjǫrðr and the surrounding valleys which lend the name to the district referred to as Dalir. Hjarðarholt, where Óláfr built his *eldhús*, was above the north bank of Laxá.

Other than the *ǫndvegissúlur*, it is not mentioned what wooden household items or building materials the settlers of Dalir brought with them. It appears that the first inhabitants made do with what they had along with the scrub birch and driftwood available. However, if the events of the saga are held to be factual, there must have been a subsequent need for a superior quality lumber. No fewer than four sailings to Norway in *Laxdæla saga* include the procurement of *viðr*, lumber, or more specifically *húsaviðr*, house timbers.

Sailing to Norway for lumber

Hǫskuldr Dala-Kollsson, the great-grandson of Unnr in djúpúðga, thought the buildings on his farm were not representative of his wealth: *honum þótti bær sinn húsaðr verr en hann vildi* (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 21). He procured a ship and left his farm and children in the hands of his wife Jórunn. Hǫskuldr was one of Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri's men, so officially he had to seek out the king and get his permission to move about. However, he delayed meeting with him after arriving in the Bergen area and overwintered with some kinsmen there. Come spring in order to

meet Hákon, he attended the assembly and market at Brenneyjar, on the mouth of the Göta River. Hǫskuldr seemed more intent on his pleasures, though, as he bought a slave woman and slept with her before presenting himself to the king. Later, he told Hákon:

> „Hafið þǫkk fyrir boð yðvart, en nú á ek þetta sumar mart at starfa; hefir þat mjǫk til haldit, er ek hefi svá lengi dvalit at sækja yðvarn fund, at ek ætlaða at afla mér húsaviðar.“ Konungr bað hann halda skipinu til Víkrinnar. Hǫskuldr dvalðisk með konungi um hríð; konungr fekk honum húsavið ok lét ferma skipit. (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 25)

> "For your offer, many thanks, but I have much work ahead of me this summer. My intention of acquiring building timber was the main reason for the delay in paying you my respects."
> King Hakon told Hoskuld to sail to Vik, where he spent some time as the king's man. The king gave him a supply of building timber and had it loaded aboard ship. (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 11)

It is not really clear why Hǫskuldr claimed his delay in meeting Hákon was due to seeking *húsaviðr* because it could not be that difficult to purchase, but perhaps it was both an excuse and a polite way of asking the king for a choice supply of wood. In any case, the scenario is replicated in this saga and others, that the protagonist from Iceland received lumber from a royal patron or jarl. This is perhaps not a surprise, as in the sagas Icelanders are typically greeted warmly by aristocrats and held in high esteem. Nevertheless, the gift of lumber from the rulers in Norway adds an epic dimension and mythic embodiment to the biography of the wood. There is no follow up of this incident regarding the *húsaviðr* once Hǫskuldr arrived with it in Iceland. Rather, the plot focuses on the mystery slave woman, who is revealed to be Melkorka, the daughter of King Myrkjartan of Ireland, and the birth of Hǫskuldr's illegitimate son by her, Óláfr, the main protagonist of this study.

When Óláfr became a young man, he set out to prove his mother's claim that she was an abducted princess. Óláfr arranged passage with a certain Ǫrn stýrimaðr - he did not have part ownership of the ship, but he brought with him some trading goods to Norway. Óláfr quickly fell into good graces with Haraldr gráfeldr konungr and his mother Gunnhildr dróttning. After Gunnhildr overheard Óláfr's plan to sail to Ireland, the queen offered to sponsor his expedition, and she provided him with a ship and sixty warriors for a crew. Óláfr found his grandfather, Mýrkjartan, Írakonungur, and during a year in his service, proved himself a man of distinction. After his successful heroic journey, he returned to Norway as promised. Soon Óláfr asked permission from the king to sail to Iceland. In typical saga style, the king reluctantly lets him go - but not empty handed:

> Haraldr konungr lætr fram setja skip um várit; þat var knǫrr; þat skip var bæði mikit ok gott; þat skip lætr konungr ferma með viði ok búa með ǫllum reiða. Ok er skipit var búit, lætr konungr kalla á Óláf ok mælti: „Þetta skip skaltu eignask, Óláfr; vil ek eigi, at þú siglir af Nóregi þetta sumar svá at þú sér annarra farþegi.“ (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 60)

> King Harald had a ship set afloat that spring, a knorr, of good size and seaworthy. He had it loaded with timber and all necessary provisions and, when the ship was ready, he sent for Olaf and said, "This ship is yours, Olaf. I won't have you sail from Norway this summer as another man's passenger." (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 30)

It does not state what he did with that lumber upon his arrival to Iceland, only: *Óláfr setr upp skip sitt, en fé hans er norðan flutt*. "He had his ship beached and his property sent south, (...)" (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 61, *Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 30). Rather, the plot turns to Óláfr's reunion with his family and marriage proposal. He did not use the timber, *viðr*, to build his first farmhouse. In chapter twenty-four, after Óláfr married Þorgerðr, he inherited his foster-father's farm and also purchased Hrappsstaðr. In a clearing in a wood, he made a new farmstead:

> Þat var á einu hausti, at í því sama holti lét Óláfr bœ reisa ok af þeim viðum, er þar váru hǫggnir í skóginum, en sumt hafði hann af rekastrǫndum. (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 67)
>
> One autumn Olaf had a house built in this same clearing, using wood from the forest as well as driftwood. (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 33)

What is significant here is the type of building materials are specifically mentioned. This may be taken as testimony that it was possible to build farmhouses without having brought *húsaviðr* from Norway. However, as most examples repeatedly demonstrate, the Iceland native forest and wood driven ashore evidently were not adequate for the buildings on the farmsteads of certain chieftains who wished to demonstrate their elite stature.

Óláfr named the farm Hjarðarholt. In this chapter carpenters in his household are mentioned:

> Þeir váru brœðr tveir með Óláfi, er hvárrtveggi hét Án; var annarr kallaðr Án inn hvíti, en annarr Án svarti; Beinir inn sterki var inn þriði; þessir váru smiðar Óláfs ok allir hraustir menn. (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 66)
>
> Among the members of his household were two brothers, both of whom were named An - one An the White, the other An the Black. A third was known as Beinir the Strong. They were good carpenters and capable men. (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 33)

Even though they are not specifically linked to any building activity in the saga, these smith/carpenters must have been involved in constructing the first farmhouse in Hjarðarholt out of material collected from the surrounding area and driftwood. The strongest indication is they are mentioned in the same chapter (i.e. division indicated by large capital letters in the *Mǫðruvallabók* manuscript[28]) as during the building of the new farm. However, the proximity of the passage and context of the carpenters and the building activity in the text is the only clue.

[28] AM 132 Fol. See also transcription by Andrea van Arkel-De Leeuw van Weenen.

Each of these *smiðar* repeatedly are noted for their loyalty to Óláfr and his sons in subsequent events but never for their talents as artisans. In any case, it is apparent that Óláfr found the resulting *bær* dwellings were not of a quality that reflected his status, and it is possible that was attributed to both the material and the craftsmanship performed by the *smiðar*.

In chapter twenty-nine the events took place - both stated and unstated - that are central to this dissertation. Namely, Óláfr sailed to Norway to acquire the *húsaviðr* for his *eldhús* featuring the woodcarvings described in the poem *Húsdrápa*. It is evident from the text that when Óláfr set out he had plans to improve his dwelling at Hjarðarholt. One hypothesis is that these plans were loosely formed until Óláfr arrived at Hlaðir, but by the time he sailed back a quite specific design had taken shape and was loaded on his ship ready to be assembled in Iceland.

Instead of using the knǫrr given to him earlier by Haraldr konungr, the whereabouts of which is untold later in the saga: *Hann kaupir skip, er uppi stóð vestr í Vaðli*. "He bought a ship, which was beached at Vadil" (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 77, *Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 39). After an uneventful crossing, Óláfr arrived in Norway at Hǫrðaland, and he was hosted over winter in good conditions by a "retired" Viking named Geirmundr gnýr. Come spring, Óláfr informed Geirmundr of his intention to acquire house timber:

> En er á leið vetrinn, sagði Óláfr Geirmundi skyn á um ørendi sín, at hann vill afla sér húsaviðar; kvazk þykkja mikit undir, at hann fengi gott viðaval. (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 78)
>
> As spring approached, Olaf told Geirmund that the purpose of his voyage was to get building timber and that it was of great importance to him to get a prime selection of timber. (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 39)

Óláfr had not only come to acquire house timbers, but it was of the upmost importance that he got a good selection of wood. Geirmundr was one of Hákon jarl's "men", and he told Óláfr that the jarl owned the best forest, and he was certain the likes of Óláfr would be well received by the jarl and granted the favor. Indeed, upon his arrival Óláfr was treated excellently by the jarl and:

> Óláfr segir jarli, hversu af stózk um ferð hans, - „vil ek þess beiða yðr, herra, at þér létið oss heimila mǫrk yðra at hǫggva húsavið.“ Jarl svarar: „Ósparat skal þat, þóttu fermir skip þitt af þeim viði, er vér munum gefa þér, því at vér hyggjum, at oss sœki eigi heim hversdagliga slíkir menn af Íslandi.“ (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 78)
>
> Olaf told the earl the reasons for his voyage. "I would like to request permission to cut lumber in your forest, my lord."
> The earl replied, "It's an honour for me to fill your ship with wood from the forest, as it is not every day we receive guests like you from Iceland." (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 39)

Óláfr asked that he may have a right to cut wood in Hákon jarl's forest. The jarl replied that it would not be withheld that he load his ship with the wood he gives him - because Óláfr is such an exceptional Icelander. That is all that is stated about the acquisition of the timber, and in the

next sentence: *En at skilnaði gaf jarl honum øxi gullrekna, ok var þat in mesta gersemi*. "In parting the earl gave Olaf an axe inlaid with gold, a prize weapon, (...)" (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 78, *Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 39). The saga text stresses the formality of the gift-giving custom and emphasizes the honorable treatment given to visitors from Iceland. All of this seems provided to validate the status of Óláfr ranking him among the aristocracy, even if Iceland was a commonwealth at the time. These are important points because Óláfr had repeatedly set out to establish his royal descent - earlier by sailing off on a heroic journey to Ireland and here by acquiring the means to display such an elevated heritage through a choice selection of house timbers. However, what is left unclear by the saga is just how value-added the material might have been prior to its loading on the ship. The possibilities range from raw logs to a pre-dimensioned, ready to assemble "kit." At minimum, it can be argued due to necessity and in view of other examples from the sagas that the lumber would have been cut to size according to a plan.

The fourth instance of traveling to Norway for material in *Laxdæla saga* is the best example of pre-planning a building and the subsequent transport of lumber. In chapter seventy-four, a generation after Óláfr and post-conversion, a certain Þorkell sailed to Norway to acquire *kirkjuviðr*, church timber. He met with Óláfr inn helgi Haraldsson konungr and stayed with him over winter. The king allowed him to cut lumber, and Þorkell oversaw the selection and loading of the ship:

> Um várit var viðr sá til skips fluttr, er konungr gaf Þorkatli; var sá viðr bæði mikill ok góðr, því at Þorkell gekk nær. (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 216)
>
> The following spring the timber which the king had given Thorkel was loaded aboard ship. The timber was both of fine quality and in great quantity, for Thorkel spared no pains with its selection. (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 113)

There is emphasis given to both the quantity and quality of the material. The saga states that Óláfr was having a church built out of wood in Þrándheimr. Þorkell went up in the rafters of the church and measured the cross-beams, *bitar*, and the plates, *staflægjur* (the long beams along the tops of the walls) joining the *uppstǫðutré* or *stafir*, the posts. One morning the king went out early and noticed Þorkell up on the unfinished roof of his church:

> Konungr sneri þegar þangat til ok mælti: „Hvat er nú, Þorkell, ætlar þú hér eptir at semja kirkjuvið þann, er þú flytr til Íslands?“ Þorkell svarar: „Satt er þat, herra.“ Þá mælti Óláfr konungr: „Hǫgg þú af tvær alnar hverju stórtré, ok mun sú kirkja þó gǫr mest á Íslandi.“ Þorkell svarar: „Tak sjálfr við þinn, ef þú þykkisk ofgefit hafa, eða þér leiki aptrmund at, en ek mun ekki alnarkefli af honum hǫggva; mun ek bæði til hafa atferð ok eljun at afla mér annan við.“ (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 216)
>
> The king went over to him immediately and said, "What are you up to, Thorkel? Do you plan to cut timber for your church in Iceland on this model?"
> Thorkel answered, "Right you are, my lord."
> Then King Olaf spoke: "Chop two ells off the length of each beam and your church will still be the greatest in Iceland."

> Thorkel answered, "Keep your timber then, if you fear you have given of it too generously, or regret making the offer, but I'll not chop so much as an ell's length off it. I lack neither the energy nor the means to obtain my timber elsewhere." (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 113)

Of the four loads mentioned in *Laxdæla saga*, Þorkell's acquisition of building timber in Norway is described in the most detail. It is probably because the saga writer wished to set up and provide foreshadowing and a cause for Þorkell's catastrophic death. Nevertheless, it is told how he oversaw the selection and loading of the timber and carefully measured a model. This can be interpreted as having thoroughly prepared the lumber for shipping to Iceland. The two events are listed in a reverse logical sequence (normally one would measure, then cut and load the lumber accordingly), but the order in which these events are told need not be chronological. There is no adverb indicating time, such as *síðan, þá* or *eptir* introducing the scene when the king observes Þorkell in the rafters of his church. The transition used is *Þat var einn morgin snimma* indicating the event happened sometime while Þorkell was there. Þorkell answered the king with his indignant statement that he would not cut an ell off it - meaning that he would load or has loaded the required lengths to replicate the church he was measuring. The king concludes the exchange with a premonition that the lumber will be lost. This begs several questions: Was the load too heavy? Apparently not because the journey to Iceland went without problems. It seems that it was a "supernatural" invoked wind that caused the ferry to sink when Þorkell transported the lumber across a fjord in Iceland the next summer. So, if the load was not too heavy, due to economy of weight was the timber indeed cut to lengths and only the required amount shipped? This seems likely and is indicated by the careful watch of Þorkell regarding both quality and quantity upon loading.

Vatnsdæla saga provides some of the most detail regarding the acquisition of house timbers in Norway and shipping of the load to Iceland. Recall how Ingimundr located his homestead in Iceland according to the Finn prophecy proven true by having found his Freyr amulet in the post-hole dug for one of his high seat pillars. Chapter sixteen begins:

> Þá er Ingimundr hafði búit nǫkkura hríð at Hofi, lýsir hann útanferð sinni at sœkja sér húsavið, því at hann kvazk vel vilja sitja bœ sinn ok kvazk vænta, at Haraldr konungr myndi honum vel taka. (*Vatnsdæla saga* 1939: 43-44)

> When Ingimund had lived for some time at Hof, he announced that he was going abroad to collect building-wood for himself, because he said that he wanted to live in fine style there, and that he expected King Harald to greet him warmly. (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 20-21)

It appears that Ingimundr, with all of his other household belongings, including his *qndvegissúlur* and possibly other wooden parts for the high seat and *hof*, could not take with him enough building material when he initially left Norway. He was not satisfied with the structures he could build from the materials available to him in Vatnsdalr, so he decided to sail back to Norway to seek out house timbers. Once he had arrived, he sought out Haraldr hárfagri, and a familiar pattern of an honorable reception and generosity took place.

> Konungr spurði, hvernig honum hugnuðu landakostir; hann lét vel yfir, - „en þat er mitt ørendi mest, at afla mér húsaviðar.“ (*Vatnsdœla saga* 1939: 44)
>
> The king asked what the good points were about the new land.
> He spoke well of it, "and it is my main object now to get some building timber."
> (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 21)

The king granted him the right to cut wood from his forest and more:

> Konungr mælti: „þat er vel gǫrt, er þér ok heimil vár mǫrk sem þú vill hǫggva láta, en ek mun láta til skips fœra, ok skaltu engan hlut um þat annask, ok ver með mér.“ (*Vatnsdœla saga* 1939: 44)
>
> The king said , "Good for you. I grant you permission to cut down our forests for whatever timber you want, and I will have it moved to the ship, and you will have no trouble on that score; and you should stay here with me." (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 21)

In return, Ingimundr gave the king a bear he caught in Iceland. The gift of a polar bear provides a folk-tale flavor to the episode, but that should not take away from the actual gift exchange customs of the period (Miller 2008: 17). Once again, most of the saga scenes cited here involving voyages and lumber were intended by the saga writers to illustrate the elevated status of the visiting Icelander through the honors they received as much as the material goods they brought home.

> Þeir skiptusk mǫrgum gjǫfum við um vetrinn, ok er váraði, var búit skip Ingimundar með farmi þeim, er hann kaus, ok því viðarvali, er bezt fekk. (*Vatnsdœla saga* 1939: 44)
>
> They exchanged many gifts over the winter, and when spring came, Ingimund's ship was loaded with the cargo which he had selected, and with the choicest timber to be found. (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 21)

Ingimundr was able to pick out the best selection of lumber, and Haraldr had it loaded for him on the ship he sailed from Iceland. But that was not generous enough for the king, he gave Ingimundr an additional, better ship to load the *húsaviðr* on and sail back to Iceland:

> Konungr mælti: „Ek sé þat, Ingimundr, at þú munt eigi sjálfr ætla optar at fara til Nóregs; nú þyrftir þú at hafa svá mikinn við, at þér nœgði, en þat má eigi eitt skip bera. Nú er hér at líta á nǫkkur skip; kjós hér af, hvert er þú vill.“ (*Vatnsdœla saga* 1939: 44)
>
> The king said, "I see, Ingimund, that you have no intention of travelling again to Norway; you should take enough timber with you now to meet your needs, but a single ship cannot carry it. Here are some other ships to look at. Select whichever one you want." (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 21)

Ingimundr asked the king to choose the ship for him, and the king chose "Stígandi" - a ship that caught the wind the best[29]. Afterwards he parted company from the king with many gifts, and Ingimundr quickly understood what a great ship it was. He sailed the (two) ship(s) along the north of Iceland to reach the west - this was done for the first time.

> Þetta spyrsk nú víða útkváma Ingimundar, ok létu allir vel yfir því, er hann kom heim. Ingimundr átti ágætt bú með nógum efnum; hann bœtti nú mikit bœ sinn, því at efnin váru nóg; hann fekk sér ok goðorð ok manna forráð. (*Vatnsdœla saga* 1939: 45)

> News of Ingimund's arrival spread widely, and all were pleased that he had returned. Ingimund had an excellent farm with ample resources. He now greatly improved his homestead, because he had enough building materials. He also acquired for himself a godord and authority over men. (*Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* 1997: 21

The saga text underscores Ingimundr's increased reputation and scope of leadership in direct correlation with the improvement of his farm with the ample supply of wood. Certainly Óláfr had the same goal in mind with his journey and resulting *eldhús*. While these saga scenes are similar in so many ways, one might conclude they were stamped out of the same legendary mold. Indeed, literary accounts often replicate one another in the sagas and are not necessarily independent of each other. However, as an additional source for this particular cultural memory, the bear, ship and gift of the timber are also mentioned in *Landnámabók*:

> Ingimundr fann beru ok húna tvá hvíta á Húnavatni. Eptir þat fór hann útan ok gaf Haraldi konungi dýrin; ekki hǫfðu menn í Nóregi áðr sét hvítabjǫrnu. Þá gaf Haraldr konungr Ingimundi skip [*skipit Stíganda HSkÞ*] með viðarfarmi, ok sigldi hann tveim skipum fyrir norðan land fyrstr manna fyrir Skaga ok helt upp í Húnavatn; þar er Stígandahróf hjá Þingeyrum. (*Landnámabók* 1986: 219-20)

> Ingimundr found a bear and two white bear cubs at Húnavatn. After that he journeyed east and gave King Haraldr the animal; People in Norway had not seen a polar bear before. Then King Haraldr gave Ingimundr the ship [*Stígandi*] with a cargo of wood, and he was the first of men to sail the ships around Skagi to the north of the land and all the way up to Húnavatn; that is called Stígandahróf by Þingeyr.

While the saga scenes described here are scant of detail regarding the actual shape and design of the lumber transported, each is informative in its own way. Here, the most important aspect of the journey is the need for two ships to haul the cargo. Since Ingimundr had no plans to return to Norway, the king figured he needed an ample supply of wood to make his farmstead in

[29] This ship harkens to the mythic Skíðblaðnir, which in the *Poetic Edda* and Snorri's *Edda* is mentioned to have been magically crafted by the dwarves Ivaldi's sons and came into the possession of Freyr. Skíðblaðnir is described as the finest of ships, and as soon as its sails are hoisted it finds good winds. Hence, "Stígandi" adds to the mystic/legendary underpinnings of the tale about Ingimundr and his cargo of lumber from Norway.

Iceland reflect his status. This episode also reinforces the importance of selecting only what was needed for those trips that only involved one ship. It is obvious that the weight of the wood limited the amount that could be loaded onboard, so it follows that the timber would be shaped to the needed size prior to departure. The saga text does not comment on the process, but the *viðaval, er bezt fekk* must imply that these were not entire logs chopped down in the woods. Rather, in the forest the trees cut would be selected for the desired shape, felled, and then trimmed on site to the required dimensions. Most likely the repeated request in the saga scenes *at þér létið oss heimila mǫrk yðra at hǫggva húsavið* "you grant us permission to cut house timbers in your forest" is a simplified expression of a much more complex procedure. We know from the archaeological record that woodworking techniques were quite advanced. There are mentioned slaves, laborers, farmers and *smiðar* in the demographics of the sagas. The impression is the land-owning farmers had households of workers capable of multi-tasking, but the jacks-of-all-trades were more likely assistants. While the aristocracy and yeomen owned the forest land and oversaw labor, there were men who had an elevated degree of expertise in various areas of woodworking including the felling of lumber, its preparation and transport. Merchants were also involved in the exchange of timber, and there must have been yards where the prepared lumber was stacked for drying and distribution. It can be argued that the *viðaval, er bezt fekk* "the best wood selection available", as told here, would not involve the high-status Icelander venturing into the woods and chopping down trees. Indeed, in this scene in *Vatnsdæla saga* the king arranged most of the acquisition.

Returning to *Laxdæla saga*, Geirmundr secretly arranged passage on Óláfr's ship to Iceland. Óláfr was not pleased; he had some foresight that it would be better for some to have never set eyes upon him, but he did not kick Geirmundr off the ship or the many things he brought with him - further emphasizing the need for economy of weight. As has been established, there was a limited amount that could be loaded, and the saga text left out the qualities of the cargo of *húsaviðr*. The next instance regarding the wood was it being unloaded after a safe passage: *Lætr Óláfr bera viðu af skipi ok setr upp skipit í hróf þat, er faðir hans hafði gera látit*. "Olaf had the timber unloaded and the ship drawn up into the boatshed which his father had had built". A single sentence tells that Óláfr invited Geirmundr to stay with him, and then what is crucial to this study:

> Þat sumar lét Óláfr gera eldhús í Hjarðarholti, meira ok betra en menn hefði fyrr sét. Váru þar markaðar ágætligar sǫgur á þilviðinum ok svá á ræfrinu; var þat svá vel smíðat, at þá þótti miklu skrautligra, er eigi váru tjǫldin uppi. (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 79)

> That summer Olaf had a fire-hall built in Hjarðarholt, which was larger and grander than men had ever seen before. On the wood of the gables, and the rafters, decorative tales were carved. It was so well crafted that it was thought more ornamental without the tapestries than with them. (*Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 40-41)

The saga text clearly presented a very brief synopsis of the building of the famous *eldhús* while setting up the remaining plot events - the marriage of Geirmundr and Óláfr's daughter and the subsequent feuds and tragedies in the saga. However, based on a close reading and the

examples above, it is possible to fill in the gaps and present a scenario. Óláfr pái, "peacock", as the epithet suggests, had a penchant for finery. Having proved himself on a heroic journey, he returned from Ireland and Norway to Iceland dressed in dashing attire, but perhaps this rich exterior was applied to cover the insecurities he felt as an illegitimate son. He bore the stigma with dignity, and he had proven his mother's royal descent true, but Óláfr repeatedly took means to show his worthiness outwardly through material wealth. This is a trait for all high-status chieftains, such as Ingimundr in *Vatnsdæla saga*, but it applies all the more so for Óláfr. It was quite deliberate, then, that he set off to Norway to acquire materials for an *eldhús* in Hjarðarholt, *meira ok betra en menn hefði fyrr sét* "greater and better than people had seen before". He had seen and had memories of the great halls in Norway and Ireland, and he felt that such a presentation would demonstrate his stature to the folks back in Iceland. The events followed the saga pattern of the Icelander greeted warmly and held in high esteem by whoever was in power at the time in Norway. In this case, significantly, it was Hákon jarl inn ríki who granted the right for Óláfr to "harvest lumber in his woods." As argued above, this phrase must have been an expression for a much more involved process, which the *Laxdæla saga* text otherwise entirely left out. Saga instances never indicated the hero actually went into the woods and cut trees. Rather, it was described how the selection was overseen by the king or central character, and even how a model was carefully measured. Otherwise, the preliminary work was done for the hero, suggesting it was contracted by the protagonist and/or arranged by the king. Logic dictates that there were more complex processes of harvest selection, sizing, transport, drying and storage of timber. The need for keeping the weight to a minimum for shipping suggests that only the necessary quantity of sized posts, beams, planks and boards would be transported. The skilled labor available in Hlaðir would also allow certain fitting of joints to be cut prior to departure, further economizing the cargo load. The high-status Icelander need not lift a finger while his followers or the king had his men load the timber on the ship. All of this can be argued fairly conclusively. With additional background information, one can also take the scenario a step further. It is established in part one that Hákon jarl was a practicing heathen, and with some certainty he had temples and halls featuring wood-carved graven images in various forms. Also, the sagas reveal that wooden *qndvegissúlur*, one specifically with the carved image of Þórr, and other less described structural parts of temples had been brought from Norway to Iceland. The mystical qualities associated with the woodcarvings imbued a certain agency to the objects that must have evoked awe and imparted power to the chieftains who possessed them. The longstanding woodcarving tradition in Norway and descriptions of some items that immigrants brought with them set a precedence for the transport of wood-carved mythic iconography to Iceland. When Óláfr stayed with Hákon jarl he had the opportunity to see first hand the halls and temples at Hlaðir, and while he had in mind to elevate his status in Iceland by building a great hall, he had access to not only the rough material but also the skilled craftsmanship to have one made after those models. How else would he have been able to erect in Iceland the finest *eldhús* anyone had ever seen? And, more specifically, with wood-carved mythic scenes on the paneling where the walls and ceiling met so well crafted that it was reputed people *þótti miklu skrautligra, er eigi váru tjqldin uppi* "thought it was much more ornate, when the tapestries were not hung".

2.2: A Northern Icelandic woodcarving tradition

The focus in previous sections has been primarily on the Norwegian tradition of woodcarving and influences that would have affected the wood-carved mythic scenes in Óláfr's

hall in Hjarðarholt. Scenarios presented in *Landnámabók* and the sagas of the Icelanders describing the inclusion of material objects brought from Norway during the legendary diaspora to Iceland have also been examined. While the transport of timber continued after settlement of Iceland ca. 870 onward, and indeed it became more and more necessary as the meager supplies of wood on the volcanic island diminished, it is apparent from the sagas that certain skilled men, metal and wood smiths, or *smiðar*, were among and descended from the settlers. In this section, the focus turns to those men, along with some of the oldest wood-carved objects that remain from Iceland and the techniques used to execute them, which together form an Icelandic woodcarving tradition. In this study of woodcarving and iconography relevant to the carvings in Óláfr's *eldhús*, it is important to consider the possibility that the panels were carved on location and present findings that inform how factors peculiar to Iceland would profoundly affect the appearance of the engravings. This section also explores how models for woodcarvings found their way to the remote island in the Atlantic and were adapted for local programmes. The extant Icelandic carvings were produced post-conversion and contain Christian content. As such, the placement, function and social engagements surrounding the art objects are also factors examined; even though these aspects differ from carvings of Old Norse mythic themes, the close proximity in time and space of the carving of the panels make the artifacts pertinent to this study.

In his saga, Þórðr hreða was described as the handiest of men. After killing Ormr, one of his sister's arrogant suitors, he drifted around Northern Iceland. A farmer by the name of Þorgrímr, who dwelled at Flatatunga in the upper part of the valley above Skagafjǫrðr, asked Þórðr to build him a hall. After commencing the work that summer, a ship arrived at Gásar in Eyjafjǫrðr with a load of lumber. Þórðr announced that he would ride down and buy the needed timber to finish the job. Þorgrímr sent three "house karls" with him. On the way back, Þórðr was ambushed by twelve men led by Ǫzurr Arngrímsson seeking revenge for the killing of Ormr. In true saga heroic style, Þórðr hreða lived up to his coined name "terror" or "dreaded" and slew many of the opponents who outnumbered him before the others retreated. In any case, Þórðr returned to his work and completed the hall at Flatatunga: *...var þat furðusterkt hús. Stóð sá skáli allt til þess, er Egill byskup var at Hólum*. "It was a remarkably strong structure, and was still standing when Egill was Bishop of Hólar" (*Þórðar saga hreðu* 1959: 207, *Saga of Thord Menace* 1997: 385). This account is not only one of several that record the import of wood from Norway in order to build a sturdy hall, but it is remarkable because the *smiðr*, wood-smith or carpenter, is actually named. Scholars are skeptical about the overall historical value of the saga; nevertheless, there has been a considerable amount of lore indicating that Þórðr and this hall existed. In a paper presented at the Thirteenth International Saga Conference, Hans Kuhn noted that house building and carving are not central to saga heroic narrative, so his story was possibly embellished by feud and conflicts typical of the classical family sagas. However, it is more likely that Þórðr did fit the type of a skillful builder and shipwright, and because of those works his fame lived on in the northwest fjords of Iceland (Kuhn 2006). According to his saga, as a young man in Norway, Þórðr was a follower of Gamli Eiríkssonar, konungr, who Snorri told us was slain in a battle near Fræði (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 181). At that time, circa 955, Þórðr had just taken leave from his retinue at the age of fifteen (*Þórðar saga hreðu* 1959: 165). Some years later, Þórðr and his brother Klyppr slew Sigurðr konungr slefa in order to avenge the rape of Klyppr's wife. Klyppr was killed in the exchange, but Þórðr and the rest of his siblings fled Norway (*Þórðar saga hreðu* 1959: 167, *Heimskringla* I 1979: 219). If we assume that the described events are somewhat accurate and the slaying of Sigurðr konungr slefa took place

sometime during the middle of the reign of Haraldr Gráfeldr in Norway, that would mean Þórðr was in his early twenties when he arrived in Iceland. Hence, the famous hall in Flatatunga was likely built sometime in the second half of the 960's, when Þórðr was in his mid to late twenties. When Óláfr's *eldhús* in Hjarðarholt was constructed circa 982, Þórðr would have been about forty-two years old - very well established as an outstanding craftsman and still alive.

There is nothing in the saga that directly verifies that Þórðr was a woodcarver. However, later testimony makes it clear that he became renowned for the skill. Following *Þórðar saga hreðu* in *Íslenzk Fornrit* XIV, there is a *viðbætir* (supplement) following the *Brot af Þórðar sögu hreðu*. It is a short summary of the life of Þórðr written by Arngrímr "the learned" in 1609. The original was in Latin and it is translated into modern Icelandic, quoted here. He introduced the "younger" Þórðr (he was named after his father and shared the same nickname): *Þórður yngri lét eftir sig mikinn orðstír með Íslendingum, bæði sakir hagleiks í húsasmíði og útskurði svo og vegna annarra íþrótta* (*Viðbætir* 1959: 249). "The younger Þórðr left behind great renown among Icelanders, both due to skill in house building and carving and also on account of other skills." Arngrímr concludes the *viðbætir* with: *Minjar um útskurð hans, sem hann skreytti með súðir eða þiljur í húsum, sjást enn á Íslandi eftir meira en sex hundruð ár* (*Viðbætir* 1959: 250). "Remains of his carvings, with which he adorned overlapping boards or wainscoting in the houses, still are seen in Iceland after six hundred years." That in this three page synoptic Arngrímr twice documents the reputation of Þórðr as a woodcarver and notes that, in the 1600's, his carvings were still intact not only emphasizes the importance of this aspect of his legacy, but also lends credence to the existence of material fashioned by his hands.

Additionally, more recent tradition attributes carved panels found in subsequent buildings in the valley extending up from Skagafjörður to the craftsmanship of Þórðr. In an article about the panels, Kristján Eldjárn noted that his fame implies that he was an unsurpassed master craftsman, and he surmises what made him superior to other builders were his woodcarving skills:

> In the story he is only called 'smiðr', and it is not stated whether he decorated his buildings or not. Yet, the epithet must imply that he was a gifted woodcarver, and it was this faculty that made him superior to all other house-builders; otherwise his craft would not have been worthy of mention. This has always been the conception of the ordinary Icelandic reader. Þórðr Hreða was a house-builder and woodcarver as well, and in the course of time all mediaeval woodcarving in Iceland has come to be ascribed to him (Kristján Eldjárn 1953: 83).

Kristján describes Þórðr as an "Icelandic Waylund," and he states it is no wonder that the carved panels at Flatatunga have without question been attributed to him. However, this is problematic given the dating of his life and the extant panel remains.

According to *Þórðar saga hreðu*, the sturdy hall lasted until the 1300's while Bishop Egill lived (*Þórðar saga hreðu* 1959: 207). The scarcity of wood in Iceland led to the salvage and reuse of available materials. By the late 1800's numerous carved panels dating from the medieval period became rearranged and recycled as roof timbers in various buildings on two farms in the valley, in Bjarnastaðahlíð as well as Flatatunga. Thirteen remaining panels from

Bjarnastaðahlíð were acquired by the Icelandic National Museum in 1924. (fig. 56) Four surviving fragments from the nearby farm at Flatatunga were taken to the museum when an out-building that housed them was torn down in 1952. (fig. 57) Scholars disagree about the origins of the artifacts. Here, some of their findings are presented along with additional observations regarding the relationship between the panels salvaged from the two farms in the valley above Skagafjörður. Earlier scholarship is synthesized in conjunction with what is found in literature, and alternative suggestions are offered regarding the origins of the carvings. Additionally, the pre-production and techniques involved in their fabrication are analyzed. The two partial sets of panels show some considerable differences in style and construction that distinguish them from each other, however, legendary craftsmen, the scope of the work and type of engraving link them to a quite specialized local Northern Iceland district tradition. Although these panels were carved after Þórðr died, given his lifespan corresponds with the assembly of the hall at Hjarðarholt, and the particular techniques used may have originated with him, the analysis of these carvings may be applied retroactively to those described in the poem *Húsdrápa*.

In their works, both Selma Jónsdóttir and Kristján Eldjárn include written and verbal testimony gathered by nineteenth century antiquarians from informants that lived in the Skagafjörður district regarding what had previously remained of the panels during the nineteenth century. These accounts are difficult to reconcile because many of the descriptions of the panels found in the valley do not entirely match the remnants that have ended up in the National Museum of Iceland. The earliest document stems from 1839. Jónas Hallgrímsson, poet, naturalist and antiquarian, wrote a letter to Finn Magnusen of Copenhagen accompanied by a sketch. He indicated that four panels remained from what he believed to be of ancient origin, and they were at that time in the rafters of the living room at Flatatunga. What he describes as originally the "(…) wainscoting was planed and the figures incised in the wood, such as can be seen from the lines on the piece of paper." The sketch by Jónas does not depict the four panels from Flatatunga now housed in the museum, and Kristján notes that these panels that were sketched are not preserved (Kristján Eldjárn 1953).

According to the painter Sigurður Guðmundsson, the founder of the National Museum of Iceland and a native of the Skagafjörður district, when he was growing up in the early 1800's he remembered hearing people talking about the carvings in the famous "Flatatunga Hall." The older people living when he was a child recalled that the hall, which had been rebuilt several times, had carved timbers in it that, although they were not in the original order, depicted legible scenes. Kristján quotes Sigurður at length:

> It is certain that originally stories were carved along the entire length of the wainscoting in this hall, and all the local people whom I heard talk about it, said that they depicted the battles of Þórðr hreða with Miðfjarðar-Skeggi and Össur of Grund. Hjálmar Jónsson told me that the whole of the wainscoting was covered with battle scenes, hands and feet lying everywhere. I remember that he emphasized that the pictures were clumsy and crude and precisely because of this he marveled that the expression on the faces was so vivid. He admired the skill with which anger was shown on the faces of the warriors and the expression of death on those of the dead. Hjálmar saw the hall when a great number of the panels were still in existence and probably in the ancient order in most places, and

> I cannot but place great reliance on his testimony, for he was an able woodcarver himself and therefore keenly observed old halls wherever he went. He is an old and sensible man and takes great interest in these things. (Kristján Eldjárn 1953: 84)

Kristján notes that Hjálmar settled in the Skagafjörður district in 1820, so that particular hall described must have still been standing at that time. However, that instance of the hall which housed some relatively intact scenes must have been destroyed or rebuilt by the time Jónas arrived there and made his sketch in 1839 (Kristján Eldjárn 1953).

Sigurður also reports that he spoke with Jónas who told him he saw foreign horsemen carved and the feet of the horses were cut off similarly to the hands and feet of the men. Although the letter and sketch Jónas had sent to Magnusen in Copenhagen refers to the human body parts, he had curiously not pointed out or included a sketch of any horses or cavalry. Jónas told Sigurður he thought these scenes must have depicted some foreign tales. By the time Sigurður visited Flatatunga in 1856 only a few panels remained in the rafters of the hall, and they were difficult to see. What he describes mostly matches up with the testimony and the sketch by Jónas. However, he did not see any renderings of battle scenes or horses (Selma Jónsdóttir 1959: 40). The question is: were these renderings of scenes indeed carved by Þórðr? It is plausible that those described by Sigurðr were, but for reasons provided in detail below, due to the style and content depicted by the sketch by Jónas and most of the testimony from Hjálmar, it appears those were lost, and the extant panels now in the museum would fit better with the set later recovered in Bjarnastaðahlíð.

In the early 1870's the Danish scholar Kr. Kålund reported seeing five planks in the living room at Flatatunga, but the descriptions of the carvings he provides do not fit the ones that ended up salvaged from that farm by the museum. There were religious figures with crosses in their hands, a naked crouching figure has his thumb in his mouth, two figures seem to be holding scales and another a sword. He also notes some panels with images of severed hands and feet – the most commonly reported depiction among the informants. Kålund mentions being told that many of the panels at the Flatatunga farm had been reused in Bjarnastaðahlíð. Although the specific panels he describes seeing at Flatatunga haven't been found later in Bjarnastaðahlíð, the motifs he describes fit the style of the scene subsequently found there (Selma Jónsdóttir 1959: 42).

In 1886, the archaeologist Sigurður Vigfússon visited Flatatunga and saw five carved panels in the ceiling of the pantry. There were human figures on four of them, some complete with visible folds in their clothes. He added that the farmer living there told him that he had rebuilt the hall the year before and noticed several carved panels among those he reused in the roof of the farm pantry and outbuildings. Daniel Bruun last saw those panels in 1897. He arranged to have them transported to the National Museum, but unfortunately the pantry burned down in 1898 before the removal could take place. Out of all the eyewitness accounts of the panels at Flatatunga, although not rich with detail, the description provided by Sigurður most resembles the extant carvings from Flatatunga (Selma Jónsdóttir 1959: 44).

All of the testimony presents a mystery of what these carved panels originally depicted and where they may have been located. However, the informants provide clues to some of the missing puzzle pieces. Most of the descriptions do not seem to directly describe those that have been salvaged and are in care of the national museum. The most reasonable conclusion is those surviving panels were less visible in the arrangement of the boards in the farm buildings in the nineteenth century and came to light in later reconstruction. The ones actually described, for the most part, resemble those that, as Kålund first reported, were apparently transported from Flatatunga and reused on the Bjarnastaðahlíð farm. Indeed, scholars cited here concur that the panels in Bjarnastaðahlíð were at some point in time housed in Flatatunga. The earliest reports describing battle scenes depicting Þórðr hreða and his enemies remain uncorroborated by any remnants of carvings. It seems varying combinations of carved renderings, including some additional unconfirmed sources of portrayals that were in the older halls, were recycled in several different buildings in Flatatunga and a certain set of remnants made its way to Bjarnastaðahlið. However, through the centuries oral tradition ascribing the carvings to Þórðr could have influenced the informants' interpretations of the scenes. Until the time of Kristján's writing, antiquarians were prone to assign artifacts automatically to references in the sagas (Friðriksson 1994). As related below, some of the gruesome decapitations and body parts described also fit in with the representation of Christian imagery.

Characteristics of the extant carved panels

Selma Jónsdóttir clarified some of the confusion with breakthrough research that led to her book published in 1959 titled *An 11th Century Byzantine Last Judgement in Iceland*. She has shown convincingly that the remaining panels from Bjarnastaðahlíð form pieces of what was once a locally wood-carved depiction of a Byzantine Last Judgment mural. As she describes it, these scenes are typically composed of four horizontal fields divided down the center. Christ is shown sitting within a mandorla in the upper field in the center, with Mary on his right and St. John the Baptist on his left. The twelve apostles, six on each side, flank Christ, and there are angels behind them. A stream of fire descends from where Christ is sitting and engulfs the damned to his left. Peculiar to Byzantine Last Judgments, among the damned are those dead in the sea, whose body parts are being given up by aquatic animals. (fig. 58) Also common to Byzantine scenes, among the damned are skulls and severed heads along with naked figures. The blessed found to Christ's right are a group of saved souls on which surviving panels show their heads and hands. Selma identifies St. Mary wearing a headdress and her hands turned out in prayer. (fig. 59) It is beyond the scope of this section to summarize all the extensive details provided by Selma, and how all the boards fit into the puzzle, but these examples are sufficient to support her claim regarding the depiction, and other scholars concur with her findings regarding the iconography. They do differ, however, with her conclusions regarding the origins of the panels. Before referring to arguments of sources, dating and locations, the extant panels from Flatatunga are presented below and compared with those from the Last Judgment panels from Bjarnastaðahlíð.

The Flatatunga panels are thought to be the remains of a depiction of Christ and his apostles. While in the Bjarnastaðahlíð panels there is no vegetative ornamentation, the Flatatunga remnants contain a rich Ringerike style abstract design. Another obvious difference is that they are carved so the planks are hung vertically. (fig. 60) Other stylistic differences are subtler. In

harmony with the vegetative Ringerike ornamentation with its tendrils, the figures are stylized, whereas the Bjarnastaðahlíð panels are more naturalistic. The faces depicted on the Flatatunga panels are looking forward with almond shaped eyes and noses in profile. The Bjarnastaðahlíð faces have eyebrows, and the heads are in semi-profile, providing a more natural appearance. The Flatatunga hands are strikingly different: the thumbs are arched forming a point, and the fingers are stubbed. The hands carved on the Bjarnastaðahlíð panels are remarkably realistic.

Kristján clearly makes a case, and it is also argued here, that the two sets have so many differences that they were not likely to have been made by the same craftsman nor should be considered part of the same production. In particular, the Ringerike style ornamentation separates them in terms of the inspiration for their creation. The Ringerike style was popular in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic Islands throughout the late tenth and eleventh centuries and has often been seen blended with Christian iconography, primarily in Anglo Saxon or Anglo Scandinavian contexts. Kristján provided examples of the style, such as the Norwegian Heggen weathervane, (fig. 46) which bears similarity to the Flatatunga ornamentation. Kristján stated that no other Scandinavian woodcarving has been preserved from the early Christian period, although he made note elsewhere of a Ringerike influence in the Mǫðrufell carved house-timbers from an adjacent valley, which are described below. However, in regard to the Flatatunga panels, given the exchange of stylistic influence between Scandinavia and Northern England during the tenth and eleventh centuries, Kristján reached further back in time in order to examine what little is remaining of woodcarving in England, and he noticed some similarities between the Flatatunga men and depictions on the coffin of St. Cuthbert dating from 698 (Kristján Eldjárn 1953: 95). (fig. 61)

Ellen Marie Magerøy scrutinized Kristján's conclusion that the Flatatunga carvings have a root in the Northern England school of carving. Although at first glance the figures on the casket bear similarities to those carved in Iceland nearly four hundred years later, she noticed some distinct differences. They are similar in that the carved incisions are V-shaped and the faces are viewed frontally except for the nose. However, on the casket sometimes the eyes feature pupils and they are closer together. The eyes are positioned high up on the face and there are eyebrows above them. The groove of the Flatatunga nose wraps and flows into one of the eyes. The Flatatunga men have no eyebrows. The incision of the St. Cuthbert nose continues into the brow. Magerøy noted the difference in the hands is clearly distinct. The coffin features large, angular fingers, whereas the Flatatunga hands are smaller and, in keeping with the stylistic features, ornamental (Magerøy 1961: 157).

Given these differences, Magerøy looked for other possible influences. She claimed that the figures in German medieval manuscript illuminations produced in St. Gall in the late ninth century and the Reichenau school in the late tenth century bear a closer resemblance to those in the Flatatunga panels than the English. She noted that the manuscripts feature illuminations with tendrils and palmette borders that resemble the Heggen vane, and stylized acanthus with long lobes and rolled ends share characteristics with the Ringerike style (Magerøy 1961: 162).

She also saw greater similarity with the Flatatunga men in the depictions of the robed figures and faces of the Reichenau school illuminations than those of the St. Cuthbert coffin. However, she acknowledged a lack of corresponding pronounced stylization and ornamentation

of the figures in those manuscript renderings. She proposed that a "certain primitivization" of the figures would be expected in remote Iceland, and the transfer of the motifs to woodcarving would lead to a modification of characteristics. Upon further examination, she made a connection between the ornamental figures seen in Irish manuscript illuminations and the Flatatunga stylization. Magerøy contended that many Irish monks resided as missionaries on the continent during the period in question, including St. Gall, which was a "headquarters" for Irish monks. Irish books were among those at the monastery library. In particular she noticed the Irish illuminations exhibit "ornamentalization" of garments, faces without eyebrows and hands that are remarkably similar to those of the Flatatunga panels. (fig. 62) Thereby, she drew a trail of influence by Irish illuminations on the carvings at Flatatunga by placing the source of inspiration of the designs based on the circulation of manuscripts produced in what is now present day Germany. Somewhat ironically, after taking the reader on a tour of illuminations produced in Northern Europe, Magerøy cited Ernst Kitzinger's observation that the artists of St. Gall must have been influenced by the English tradition that produced the coffin of St. Cuthbert. She thereby ultimately validated Kristján's contention that the Flatatunga panels were influenced by English sources, but her investigation provided a link to more contemporary Irish and German manuscripts (Magerøy 1961: 164-68). Indeed, the model for the Flatatunga men could have been a manuscript illumination or perhaps a sketchbook used for the purpose of church decoration as returned to below. Several conditions surrounding the sources of these Christian era panels are pertinent to the study of the missing carvings from Hjarðarholt. The Ringerike style is considered Viking Age art, so the panels from Flatatunga were carved not long after conversion. One does not have to reach very far back in time to explore the potential of similar techniques and avenues for prototypical inspiration. Scholars have shown that the motifs for these panels were inspired from abroad. If the wood-carved mythic scenes in the *eldhús* in Hjarðarholt had been executed in Iceland, there must have been some sort of source for the design, similarly in some form as models. Furthermore, the investigations cited above used by scholars to trace possible source material may be applied inversely; it is possible to look toward Scandinavian and insular artifacts in order to identify sources of iconography circulating in 983 and arrive at hypothetical reconstructions of carved mythological scenes.

Although Magerøy suggested that rather than looking to a Byzantine Southern European source for the Bjarnastaðahlíð panels, as Selma did, one might look to a possible Northern European influence, her contribution to the study of the panels is precisely in helping make a distinction between the two sets. It seems Selma has made a convincing case that the remnants of panels from Bjarnastaðahlíð form a Byzantine Last Judgment mural, yet Kristján and Magerøy have made a compelling argument that the remaining Flatatunga panels represent a religious scene based on artifacts identifiable from further north in Europe. That the two sets have such widely separate sources of inspiration further distinguishes them from each other. While each of these divergent claims regarding outside influences are well researched and valid, they do not address the local techniques based on the experience and particular traditions of North Icelandic woodcarvers. In addition to the investigation as to the source of the motifs, pertinent to this study are the particular qualities and construction of the art objects. Here I present some observations regarding the production of the carved murals.

Technique and a North Icelandic woodcarving tradition

Technical aspects further distinguish the two sets of panels. Upon close examination, the Flatatunga panels show themselves to be selected from a superior quality of wood. The grain is more vertical, less prone to warping, and there are fewer knots and blemishes. Perhaps these were of Norwegian import (Selma Jónsdóttir 1959: 44). The joinery of the boards also differs. The Flatatunga panels meet each other with a rounded groove intended to take a tongue, whereas the Bjarnastaðahlíð panels have wedged shaped upper edges with v-shaped grooves in the lower edges. Each of these tongue and grooves types would have required tools such as planes or scrapers with differently shaped blades. The Flatatunga panels were fastened presumably to boards also running vertically behind them with square wooden nails, and the Bjarnastaðahlíð panels were fastened running horizontally with round wooden nails. With so many differences indicative of material and technique, it is safe to claim that the two sets of panels were made at two different times and most likely by different artists. What the panels have in common, however, is the basic V-groove style carving technique. This type of carving is not frequently seen among the remnants of Scandinavian woodcarving from the Oseberg period stretching forward through time. Essentially, the difference is rather than the common "high relief" carving, which means the ornamentation is left standing and shaped while the background is removed, instead a groove in the shape of a "V" is incised in the wood as one might draw an outline and details with a pencil or stylus. Kristján and Selma contend that a knife with two reciprocating cuts made the incisions in the panels. Selma concludes that the varying depths and widths, along with clean cuts along both edges testifies that a knife was used as opposed to an alternative type of woodcarving tool.

A "V-groove" tool may be described as a "V" shaped gouge or two flat chisel edges that forged together form a single "V" profile. In a contribution to *From Vikings to Crusaders,* Erla B. Hohler argues that during the Viking Age there were chisels and curved gouges but such a "parting tool" (alternate name for V-groove tool) was a later invention, presumably based on the absence of such an instrument in the Mästermyr Viking Age tool chest found in Sweden dating from around 1000 (Hohler 1992). However, the tools in that chest resemble more of what would be needed for a generalist - one familiar with many crafts - and not a specialist in woodcarving. Furthermore, there is no conclusive evidence for want of such a find, and no date is offered for when a V-groove parting tool may have first appeared. The carvings at Flatatunga and Bjarnastaðahlíð were crafted just after the Viking age. It is possible that such a tool was introduced earlier by a craftsman such as Þórðr hreða and was in continued use around Skagafjǫrðr. If so, the tool would provide a link between the sets of panels and a pre-history that further distinguishes them from other remnants of early Scandinavian woodcarving. In circa 983, over the heath in Laxárdalr some local craftsmen could have executed the woodcarvings in Óláfr's hall with such a V-groove parting tool.

This hypothesis has been put to a test. (fig. 63) The fir used in both sets of panels as a species is a somewhat brittle wood and prone to splintering. A key element in woodcarving technique is cutting with the grain of the wood in order to produce a clean cut. If a chisel cuts against the grain, it might lift the fibers causing them to crack. When using a V-groove tool, one edge will always be cutting against the grain; in some cases causing an unclean cut and chipping. Such rough edges can be seen in the Bjarnastaðahlíð panels. Nor does the use of a V-groove tool preclude varying widths of cuts. Sometimes the carver may make multiple cuts to refine the edges. Invariably, when using a knife one of the cuts would dig deeper and leave a

distinguishable mark in the bottom of the trough. Such a mark is absent from many of the cuts in both sets of panels. It is also quite possible that both a V-groove tool and a knife would have been available and used in the production. As was mentioned above, most of the remaining medieval woodcarving from Scandinavia is in high relief, such as the carved portal of the Hylestad church in Norway, creating an almost three-dimensional plasticity in the ornament. (fig. 51) In order to produce that type of carving gouges and chisels are preferred instruments, and must have been to some degree available to the specialist carver. The early Christian Icelandic examples are an exception to high relief carving, not only suggesting a particular local production in Skagafjǫrðr, but also that such a V-groove tool was in circulation in the district and available for use by exceptional craftsmen. *Smiðar* such as the legendary Þórðr hreða could have initiated such a practice during the tenth century, and similar carvings could have adorned Óláfr's hall in Hjarðarholt. That a V-groove technique was used in rendering both the Flatatunga and Bjarnastaðahlíð panels suggests that there was a technical source of inspiration for the carvers of the later sets. The following returns to the question of other sources of inspiration and origins of these murals in order to further a discussion of how the use of models in Christian medieval church programmes may be applied retroactively to pre-Christian designs in Iceland.

Models as prototypes

It was Selma's contention that the descriptions of panels seen by informants at Flatatunga in the nineteenth century and those later found in Bjarnastaðahlið fit together to form a single picture depicting the Byzantine Last Judgment scene. She believed that those panels in Bjarnastaðahlíð were originally together with the other panels in the famous Flatatunga hall built by Þórðr hreða. She suggests they were made based on some sort of picture or rendering of a Byzantine Last Judgment that was brought to Iceland by three Basilian monks who, according to Ári fróði, arrived in Iceland in the late ten hundreds (Selma Jónsdóttir 1959: 84-7). However, as Guðrún Harðardóttir points out, Kristján was the first to observe that the Last Judgment mural, due to its reconstructed width of 9 meters, would hardly be able to fit in a *skáli* built by Þórðr. Excited by Selma's work, the artist and scholar Hörður Ágústsson conducted a historical architectural study and demonstrated that the only building of a size that could possibly fit the reconstructed scene would have been the cathedral in Hólar constructed shortly after the bishopric was established there in 1106 (Guðrún Harðardóttir 2010: 218). (fig. 64) This is a persuasive argument because the newly ordained bishop, Jón Ǫgmundsson, had recently been to Rome. He met with Pope Pascal II in order to receive his blessing for consecration. While Jón was there he surely would have been exposed to, and impressed by, works of medieval religious art including Last Judgment scenes (Þóra Kristjánsdóttir 2010: 232). As Guðrún points out, it would be difficult to identify any particular source of the rendering, such as a church or cathedral, because there have been so many changes made to those buildings over hundreds of years. Selma cites seven extant sources for comparison. Those renderings are: A mosaic in the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello (fig. 65), an illumination in the manuscript Grec 74, an ivory panel in the Victoria and Albert museum, two icons from Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai, a tempera painting in the Vatican Gallery and a fresco in S. Angelo in Formis (Selma Jónsdóttir 1959: 27). In her detailed matching of the Bjarnastaðahlið panel motifs within these sources, she draws mostly from the first two. There are certain elements from each, but none of them are duplicated in their entirety. This strongly suggests a missing model that served as a guide for the carver in Iceland.

How models for religious art circulated in the medieval period is a matter of debate. In his book *Exemplum*, Robert W. Scheller notes that few independent drawings remain that date prior to the Renaissance, and he questions why. Ruling out mnemotechnical ability to recall imagery, certainly drawings or sketches were just as an important part of the process of producing art then as they are now. Scheller suggests two possible avenues of explanation: either the drawings were not considered to have intrinsic value and were therefore destroyed, or perhaps some other means for modeling were used. Among other media he suggests etching in sand or wax tablets would have been reusable and inexpensive. He also notes that trial pieces for ornamental carving in bone have been excavated in Ireland and, "comparable experiments are found in the highly competent graffiti on the walls of Norwegian stave churches" (Scheller 1995: 5). Given a lack of physical evidence, Scheller is quite cautious about making assumptions that sketchbooks were circulating prior to the late medieval period. However, he quotes several literary sources that refer to models used for church decoration. For example, Bede describes *picturae* which "were brought back from Rome by Benedict Biscop between 678 and 682 in order to add lustre to the churches at Wearmouth and Jarrow as small *exempla* to be imitated by local artists" (Scheller 1995: 22). Also relevant to this study is an account of the life of St. Pancras of Taormina written in the eighth century, which tells how St. Peter saw to it that canonical scenes of the life of Christ were circulated between Jerusalem and Antioch, and they were sent to Sicily as models for decorative programs in churches. "The text, which is written in Greek, mentions various supports: codices with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, illustrations on folding surfaces or parchment rolls, and possibly painted tablets as well" (Scheller 1995: 23). Clearly varying forms of models depicting Christian iconography were circulating around Europe prior to the building of the cathedral in Hólar.

Old St. Peter's basilica in Rome, completed during the third quarter of the fourth century and torn down in 1506, was a likely source for subsequent church programs, including Last Judgment scenes. In his segment "Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Medieval Latium" Herbert Kessler asserts that the modelbooks commissioned by St. Peter mentioned in the *Vita S. Pancratii* and sent to Sicily likely contained much of the same program (Kessler 1989: 120). There were clearly some modifications, but the scenes decorating the basilica were reproduced as early as the 400's in St. Paul's Outside the Walls (San Paolo fuori le Mura.) Although there are other early examples, a real tradition of medieval copies of St. Peter's picked up from the twelfth century onward (Kessler 1989: 126). Among these, Kessler mentions a few fresco fragments that survive in S. Felice at Ceri recognizable as a Last Judgment dated to around the turn of the twelfth century. Unfortunately, not enough remains to know exactly what those particular Last Judgment scenes derived from St. Peter's basilica looked like. Nevertheless, Kessler's research indicates that a standard existed for church decoration based on established representations located in and near Rome.

Selma makes an important distinction between western and Byzantine interpretations of the Last Judgment. Byzantine was the prominent empire by the middle of the first millennium, and its influence on Christian imagery spread to Rome. This is evident in the complex finds of icons dating back to the sixth century. Hans Belting writes: "These discoveries certify that Rome in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages must be considered a Byzantine province as regards the veneration of icons" (Belting 1994: 25). He also notes that at the time of iconoclasm Rome

became an asylum for miraculous images from Constantinople (Belting 1994: 63). These artifacts could have included icons depicting Byzantine Last Judgment scenes such as those found at Mount Sinai. Therefore, numerous possibilities exist for the spread of Byzantine models used as church decoration around Rome. Indeed, two of the examples cited by Selma are from the area, a painting in the Vatican from the monastery of St. Stephen and St. Paul in Rome dating from the last quarter of the eleventh century, and a fresco in S. Angelo in Formis, located 190 kilometers south of Rome. What is pertinent in this case study is support for the possibility of models of Byzantine art used as references for church programmes, and more specifically for Last Judgment scenes, available in Rome during the time of Bishop Jón's visit (Guðrún Harðardóttir 2010: 221).

In the introduction to his book titled *Icelandic Art*, Kristján writes: "An invaluable aid to our knowledge of the arts during this remote period is the so-called Icelandic Sketchbook. It dates from the fifteenth century and contains many sketches of biblical subjects, saints, and secular scenes, as well as different kinds of decorative patterns. The book is of particular interest because these sketches were apparently intended as models for large scale paintings, no doubt on the walls of churches, on altarpieces, and in various other places" (Kristján Eldjárn 1957: 9). The manuscript he refers to, *Teiknibókin* AM 673 a III 4to, is currently in the Stofnum Árna Magnússonar in Iceland. (fig. 66) The book consists of twenty-one double-sided parchment sheets with designs drawn in ink. The parchment is decayed and full of holes, and it is in very poor condition. Perhaps it is the case, as suggested by Scheller, that parchment was expensive, and since drawings were valued less than other forms of art or manuscripts they were executed on a poorer quality vellum (Scheller 1995: 6). That would help explain why earlier books of this type are no longer in existence. In spite of all the damage *Teiknibókin* is quite unique and very valuable. It is the only sketchbook that has survived in the north, and it is one of only a few extant in the rest of Europe. Although *Teiknibókin* is from a later period than when the panels from Bjarnastaðahlið were carved, its existence suggests that sketchbooks may have existed earlier and were used for similar purposes.

So, it is entirely possible that Bishop Jón came into possession of some sort of model depicting the Last Judgment scene. It is not inconceivable that Jón was not only inspired to bring back to Iceland religious culture, but also, as Selma conceived with the Armenian monks, he may have brought back with him an intermediary rendering of a Byzantine Last Judgment scene, fully intending to hire an artist to decorate the new cathedral in his new bishopric with impressive Christian iconography. Although Óláfr pái may not have been overtly on a religious quest to Hlaðir, there are some parallels that may be drawn between Jón's pilgrimage to Rome with Óláfr's trip to Norway. Both trips ultimately ended with structures built that featured mythic/religious woodcarvings. The arguments presented in previous sections lean toward the theory that Óláfr brought the woodcarvings with him from Hlaðir and had them installed along with the good Norwegian wood acquired for his hall. Here, the scenario is entertained that Óláfr, as Jón was inspired in Rome by the magnificent Christian art, was impressed by the programme he saw carved on the walls of Hlaðir, and he decided to bring models back to Iceland in order to have local craftsmen render the scenes in his hall. Vellum or paper would not have been in circulation during that period, but as noted by Scheller, wood or whale bone would have been suitable media for scratched or lightly engraved sketches of the desired iconography.

Craftsmen and patrons

Returning to Jón, the notion of his intent to build an impressive cathedral is validated by his having arranged for having wood brought from Norway and his choice of builders. Jón spared nothing in the building of the cathedral, and he hired the most prominent craftsman of the era, Þóroddr Gamlason (Guðrún Harðardóttir 2010, Þóra Kristjánsdóttir 2010). Furthermore, *Þat er sagt frá þessum manni, at hann hafði svá hvasst næmi, at þá er hann var at smíð sinni ok hann heyrði, at klerkum var kennd grammatika, en þat er latínulist, loddi honum þat svá í eryrum, at hann varð inn mesti íþróttarmaðr í sagðri list* (*Jóns saga helga* 1981: 34). This may be translated as: "It is said of this man, that he had such sharp learning (keenness), that then when he was at his smithing (woodwork or woodcarving) and he heard, that priests were being taught grammatica, and that is knowledge of Latin, stuck in his ears, that he became the most masterful in the aforementioned." It is useful to consider here a passage by Giraldus Cambrensis (ca. 1185-90) as he describes the creation of a gospel book. The illuminator dreams of an angel who holds up a tablet and asks if he can render the figure depicted on it. The artist is instructed to pray to St. Brigid so that God can guide his hand. "'And so, with the angel indicating the design, Brigid praying, and the scribe imitating, that book was composed'" (Scheller 1995: 11). The importance of this example of intermediary inspiration is twofold: For one, it encapsulates the notion of "copying" in the medieval worldview. Whether it is provided by an angel or from a collection of religious illustrations, the model is shown to the normally anonymous artist who in turn renders the divine, or traditional, source. Secondly, it sheds light on Þóroddr and his unique position as both a craftsman and a scholar. As Scheller argues, theological discussions involving divine creation would be beyond the grasp of the typical medieval artist, with the rare exception of a highly educated "monastic craftsman" (Scheller 1995: 17). By stressing his ability to procure the "Latin art", the saga text elevates Þóroddr from the commonplace builder to an exceptionally gifted mediator.

Recall Kristján's claim that a *smiðr* – one that is proclaimed an exceptional craftsman – is a reputation based on more than mundane building skills. This passage implies that the master builder Þóroddr was also skillful at rendering, i.e. carving, those tales that he heard. Additionally, Jón provided some sort of model as an intermediate step in the process. Þóroddr had the skill, and it is clear from the saga passage that he had the inspiration to execute a wood-carved replica of the provided decorative church programme. It is conceivable that Þóroddr is another generation and imparts a documented instance from the template of "mythical" master carvers following in Þórðr hreða's footsteps. It is likely such an individual, with his particular tools in hand, would create time-enduring pieces of art based on his exposure to circulating iconography. These circumstances can be applied to earlier halls in Iceland, such as the one erected by Óláfr at Hjarðarholt. In *Laxdæla saga*, the craftsmen who carved the mythic scenes are not mentioned. That follows the custom of anonymous "authorship" in the act of re-presenting tradition (Helmbrecht 2011: 243). It may be true that prior to the renaissance much of the skill in art practice was considered imitative; however, Þórðr hreða and Þóroddr appear to be a couple of exceptions to the rule. It follows that certain Viking Age woodcarvers were not just skilled in representing imagery, but were also "theologians" gifted with mystic knowledge of the cult, such as the Christian Þóroddr. To make an impressive *eldhús* like Óláfr's, it can be argued that exceptional "mystic craftsmen" were involved. With that aura, the agency and legends of the named artists still live on: Þórðr the saga hero who reputedly carved episodes from his life in the

sturdy hall he built at Flatatunga, and Þóroddr, the best smiðr of his day in constructing, and perhaps carving, a cathedral.

Yet, these craftsmen were also hired, and their patrons certainly acted upon the process of the structures and carvings housed in them. In particular it was the vision of Jón, based on his travels and sights that brought the agency of the cathedral and the Last Judgment Scene into being. And indeed later, the antiquarians and local folk as recipients also provided a biography for the remains of the carvings. The carvings are of course not just interesting from the art historic point of view, but also as indices of Christianity. In particular, the Bjarnastaðahlið panels depicting the Last Judgment are a forceful representation of a religious message: either be a follower of the doctrine or be damned. Typically, these murals are placed on the interior west wall above the exit of the cathedral reminding those who exit mass to take with them the fear of God. An account in *Jóns saga* is an example of how the panels could act with powerful agency. Late at night, Guðrún kirkjukerling, "crone of the church" was heard screaming by Hildr, who lived within sight adjacent to the cathedral. Hildr went to investigate, and apparently enhanced by the flickering candlelight they both experienced hallucinations of ghosts and terrible shadows (Þóra Kristjánsdóttir 2010). While it is hypothetical that the Last Judgment was housed in the Cathedral, it is not difficult to fathom how depictions of such terrifying imagery to the left of Christ on his throne could invoke such a response. The mural was indexical, pointed to the prototypes of both the apostles and devils, and this description is a good example of how the art object could have animated and mediated the presence of the demons. A similar channel of relations occur with the icons of saints, albeit without the same fear, as the indices serve as a portal for prayer. The panels from Flatatunga were likely thought to allow the pious recipient access to the saints they depicted, who in turn could act with benevolence upon their lives.

Even though this section focuses on contrast and comparison of the panels salvaged above Skagafjörður, there are remains of another set of woodcarvings, likely predating the ones at Flatatunga and Bjarnastaðahlíð, which stem from Möðrufell above Eyjafjörðr, a valley adjacent to the east. (fig. 67) These remnants are best described as decorative planks that were installed vertically as wainscoting in an early Icelandic hall. A reader of Old Norse sagas will recognize a rendering of one of these planks adorning the spines of the most recent *Íslenzk fornrit* book collections. Magerøy describes them as carvings in raised relief that appear to depict stylized spears or halberds. However, most of the spear tips include cross shapes, which were included in designs during the Viking Age and, of course, after the arrival of Christianity. It is quite difficult to identify the carvings as belonging to any particular style. The spear shapes appear to be Gothic influenced due to their narrow elongated spire tips. Additional ornamentation decorating the spear shapes, including “V-groove” incisions depicting interwoven knotted shapes, lobes and spirals look like Jellinge or Mammen style designs dating from the mid-tenth century. Other incisions resemble the Ringerike style with its plant-like lobes and tendrils. However, with numerous examples Magerøy argues quite convincingly that the motifs are derived from, or are executed in the same style as, certain Swedish rune stones dated to ca. the mid-1000’s. She reasons that some of the stylized incisions appear to be from an earlier period due to the relative isolation of Iceland. It has been demonstrated that artists in Iceland have been steadily conservative in retaining styles; for example, later Romanesque patterns continued to be used in woodcarving long after they had gone out of vogue in Europe and were replaced there by Baroque, Rococo and subsequent motifs. Magerøy ends her article by stating it

is probable that the Möðrufell planks are the oldest among those preserved of Icelandic woodcarving (Magerøy 1953). Again, these remnants are from the neighboring valley next to Skagafjörður above Eyjafjörður, where Þórðr hreða was reputed to have purchased his lumber, and the carving would have been executed just prior to the panels from Flatatunga. For this study what is most interesting is the presence of the V-groove incised patterns on the Möðrufell planks, suggesting yet another link to a local technique and specialized tradition in northern Iceland.

Although the Ringerike stylistic influence could have endured in Iceland, both Kristján and Hörður agree that the Flatatunga panels predate the ones from Bjarnastaðahlíð. The question is: how much time separates the two? In opposition to Selma, who envisioned all of the panels mounted on the wall in the famous hall made by Þórðr hreða in the late ten hundreds, Kristján and Hörður contended that both sets of panels were mounted on the walls of the Hólar cathedral in the early eleven hundreds, with the so-called Flatatunga panels only slightly pre-dating the ones found in Bjarnastaðahlíð (Kristján Eldjárn 1953). An alternative proposal is presented here. It seems reasonable to conclude that the two sets of panels originally could have been installed in two separate locations. There is no conclusive evidence that the panels found in Flatatunga would not fit in the hall built by Þórðr hreða. However, Þórðr supposedly lived in the late nine hundreds, and the dating of the Ringerike style indicates that the carvings would have been executed sometime in the ten hundreds. Therefore, the later dating of the Ringerike style suggests that he was not the woodcarver who produced the extant Flatatunga carvings. Nevertheless, his sturdy hall could have housed carvings representing Christian iconography produced at a later date. There was a tradition in Iceland of exemplary halls with wood-carved ornament dating from the pre-Christian era, such as the one Óláfr pái had built, which provides an example from saga literature. Carvers like Þórðr may be linked to the poem *Húsdrápa,* as it describes the mythic scenes engraved in the timbers of his *skáli*. Oral tradition has it that in the Flatatunga hall Þórðr hreða carved scenes depicting his violent feuds. Heads and body parts adorned the scenes. These were more likely to have been the damned in the Last Judgment mural recognized by Selma, but amidst the confused memories and legends some truth must be present. Although gruesome renderings appear in the Last Judgment scenes, it is not obvious that the battle scenes involving Þórðr described by informants would fit the Christian iconography that has otherwise been identified. Despite skepticism voiced by some scholars regarding the findings of antiquarians, it is tempting to heed some of that oral tradition recorded in the nineteenth century. Although it would be unique compared to extant finds, it may be true that Þórðr carved some scenes from his exploits and some of those carvings also survived until the 1800's. In spite of the pursuits of his enemies, in his saga Þórðr hreða died of old age. As is typical of the sagas of Icelanders, his tale ends with a list of his offspring. Perhaps one of his descendants, or some other talented Icelander inspired by him, carried on the work fitting of the archetype of his mythic presence and the material culture he inscribed, not only in wood, but also in the memory of his people. After the conversion in Iceland in the year 1000, this generation, presumably well travelled enough to be informed of more recent stylistic trends, added the Christian infused Ringerike style iconography to the dwelling of a converted farmer at Flatatunga or a church nearby prior to the establishment of the bishopric in Hólar. These carvings inspired the technique used by Þóroddr Gamlason in his carving of the Byzantine Last Judgment based on a sketch or some other model brought back to Hólar by Bishop Jón from his pilgrimage to Rome. The peculiar tradition that had earlier appeared in late Viking Age and early Christian styles in the

Skagafjǫrðr district developed into the more naturalistic renderings of the Byzantine Last Judgment identified by Selma, and ultimately housed in the cathedral in Hólar.

There is no conclusive evidence that the two quite different remnant sets of Christian iconography recovered from Flatatunga and Bjarnastaðahlíð were ever displayed in the same building. Indeed, stylistically they seem to clash. Yet seen through the V-groove carving renditions and their relative proximity above Skagafjörður they are inextricably linked to a peculiar local Icelandic artistic tradition. In spite of their mysterious origins, these artifacts that have survived hundreds of years provide tangible testimony for what is only peripherally hinted in the sagas passed down through Icelandic literary heritage. The common technique used in execution of the carvings and the oral tradition surrounding their origins lays claim to a local cultural identity in the district surrounding Skagafjǫrðr, and an admiration of exceptional craftsmen exemplified by Þórðr and Þóroddr.

Unfortunately, the carvings Úlfr describes in *Húsdrápa* no longer exist, and we are unable to compare them with those recovered from Flatatunga and Bjarnastaðahlíð for similar technique and execution. However, this section provides examples that demonstrate a tradition that could have reached in time and space to the late 900's in Laxárdalr. Recall that among Óláfr's household were three good carpenters, two brothers Án inn hvíti and Án svarti, along with Beinir inn sterki. It could be that, identified as *smiðar*, one or more of these men possessed a talent for woodcarving. It is conceivable, using the V-groove style of carving, that these craftsmen could have carved the mythological scenes on the wainscoting and ceiling rafters of the hall in Hjarðarholt. Etching the wood in such a manner is much less time consuming than high-relief carving. If the timbers were more or less cut to size prior to shipping them to Iceland, and for sheer economy of weight this is likely, it is possible that the hall could have been both assembled and the iconography engraved in a few months. However, just as it is argued Þóroddr must have had some sort of model for engraving a Byzantine Last Judgment, it is likely in the case of employing a *smiðr* at Hjarðarholt, that the craftsman also required models of the iconography depicting the mythological scenes. These could have been smaller scale etchings on wood or bone as previously described, depicting iconography originating from the halls in Hlaðir, or some other form of sketches elaborated on in this section. Had the carvings been executed on location in Hjarðarholt, all the evidence points to the V-groove tooling and technique seen on the Flatatunga and Bjarnastaðahlið panels in contrast to the high relief carvings seen from Norway. Hence, the results would differ considerably in appearance if the carvings were produced in Iceland rather than Norway due to execution rather than the mythological iconographic content.

With the inclusion of this section, a balanced, comprehensive exposition of the extant sources regarding the possible contexts and origins of the woodcarvings at Hjarðarholt has been presented. Essentially, at this point two scenarios have been explored: the possible import of woodcarvings from Norway along with the crucial lumber needed for the hall, or the woodcarvings were executed on location in Iceland. Both are possible, and it will be up to readers to decide for themselves. However, certain factors stand out. Scholars have argued that settlers in Iceland were actually quite poor. Archaeological evidence does not reveal much in the way of expensive artifacts such as those found on the Scandinavian mainland in graves or excavations of dwellings. There may have been some wealthier land owners among the immigrants to Iceland, but no remains suggest there was an aristocratic population. Hence, some

descriptions resembling grandeur in the sagas appear to have been exaggerated (Vésteinsson 2007). On the other hand, after initial hardships things appear to have improved somewhat as farmsteads became more established. Accounts in the sagas also demonstrate that frequently the more "elite" among the Icelanders sailed to Norway in order to acquire lumber and built impressive halls. Óláfr's *eldhús* ended up with impressive mythic carvings, so that lends itself to the thought that the import of the wooden art objects were part of the journey. If Icelanders such as Þórðr hreða were involved in making the woodcarvings, it seems likely they would have been mentioned by name in the saga. Considering the *eldhús* was the finest anyone had seen, one can reason it would also have exceeded the quality of the dwellings attributed to Þórðr - a *smiðr* and reputed carver of the highest skill level known in Iceland. According to *Laxdæla saga*, the *eldhús* was assembled in a short amount of time prior to the wedding when Úlfr described the carved mythic scenes with poetic diction. Following the descriptions provided, it seems most reasonable to conclude that Óláfr brought finished-to-size lumber, including the carvings for the paneling, back from Hlaðir with him and had his carpenters assemble the hall. Nevertheless, it would be negligent to not take into consideration the Northern Icelandic woodcarving tradition presented in this section. The discussion has included the reports of antiquarianism in relation to literary sources and archaeological evidence. Additional exposition about techniques and tools reveal how different types of woodcarving would affect the appearance of the wood-carved scenes in Hjarðarholt. The potential use of models has a broader implication on the appearance of the carvings, as it has been demonstrated in earlier sections how Viking Age expansion allowed both import and export of design motifs. These factors are further explored in the following sections regarding the appearance of the carvings in Óláfr's hall. Another issue brought up in this section is the function and effect of the woodcarvings in a Christian setting within post-conversion Iceland. This leads to similar questions addressed about the agency of the mythic scenes carved in pre-Christian Icelandic halls and the social relations involved with their presence.

2.3: *Húsdrápa,* quatrain 1: The craft of skaldic poetry, praise, picture, kennings and mythic origins

In this section, exposition is provided about skaldic poetry in conjunction with Viking Age visual art followed by the close relationship of poetry with Old Norse myth, and how skaldic composition was viewed in Norse culture as a craft. The first quatrain of *Húsdrápa,* as grouped and edited by modern scholars, contains most of the elements peculiar to skaldic poetry, and therefore provides an excellent basis for a general overview regarding the mechanics and diction of skaldic verse pertinent to analysis of the remainder of the poem. The *helmingr* "half-stanza" also provides a great example to delve further into the context of the mythological content and cultural aspects of *Húsdrápa* relevant to Úlfr's description of the iconography in Óláfr's hall. The structure of the verse is typical of *dróttkvætt* meter, and the composition is an example of "picture poetry" within this classification. In this section, how these forms came about and fit in the corpus of Old Norse poetry is explored. Noteworthy in the first strophe is the common practice of skaldic poetry for the purpose of praise and the use of a *kenning*, periphrasis, that refers to the mythic underpinnings of the art form - the sacred mead of poetry. As Snorri's *Edda*, a handbook for skalds, presents it, verse is practically inseparable from myth, as knowledge of Old Norse mythology is essential to the use and understanding of the common feature of noun substitution drawn from mythological themes. Old Norse poetry is indeed so embedded in myth that not only its origins but also the facilitators, such as Óðinn and other

mythic entities, are elements in the makeup. For example, certain mythological beings, dwarfs, are literally linked to fashioning poetry out of another mythic person. Here, the myth of the sacred mead is fleshed out along with enough exposition of skaldic verse and diction to provide adequate background for the verses that follow describing mythological scenes in *Húsdrápa*. More specifically, the use of trope in Old Norse poetry provokes vivid imagery, and I argue the kennings, circumlocutions, in "picture poems" are in some cases inspired by objects seen by the poet. The first part of the title of the dissertation, "Crafting Words" comes to the fore in this section, as a substantial amount of lore attributes poetry to being metaphorically and materially made out of things, crafted as if out of metal or wood, and the poet in Old Norse literature is presented as a craftsman. In skaldic diction words are sometimes portrayed as an attribute of material, like a wood shaving, when formed by the poet's tongue, which may also be referred to as a tool with which to craft verse, shaped and contained in "the dwarfs' vessel".

Finnur transcribes the first quatrain based on a version found in Codex Upsaliensis c. 1300-1325. It is also seen in a combination of these forms in Codex Wormianus c. 1350, Codex Trajectinus c. 1595, AM 757 a 4˚(B) c. 1400, and AM 761 a 4˚:

> Hjaldrgegnis ték Hildar
> herreifum Áleifi,
> hann vilk at gjǫf Grímnis,
> geðfjarðar lá[30], kveðja.

His suggested word order:

> *Ték herreifum Áleifi geðfjarðar lá Hildar hjaldrgegnis; hann vilk kveðja at Grímnis gjǫf.*
>
> Danish: Jeg yder den muntre Olaf digterdrikken (et digt); ham vil jeg kalde til at modtage Odins gave (digterdrikken). (Finnur 1908: 128)
>
> English translation of word order: I provide the cheerful Óláfr poetic drink (a poem); I will call on him to receive Óðinns gift (poetic drink).

or, in more detail:

> I provide (grant) the cheerful Óláfr the "mind, soul-fjord" [breast = (soul) CONTAINER] of the wave [LIQUID] of the noise-meeter of Hildr [VALKYRIE = battle] = [ÓÐINN] = [a DRINK OF THE MEAD OF POETRY] = [a POEM]; I will call to him to receive Grímr's [ÓÐINN'S] gift [the MEAD OF POETRY = a POEM].

As an alternate method of editing and translation, here is the quatrain as it appears side by side in *The Uppsala Edda* edited by Heimir Pálsson:

[30] The letter o with ogonek and acute is substituted throughout this section with á

Hjaldrgegnis tel ek Hildar	I utter for host-joyful Óleifr
herreifum Óleifi,	Hildr's (valkyrie's) noise-(battle-)meeter's (Óðinn's)
hann vil ek at gjǫf Grímnis	mind-fiord's (breast's) liquid (a poem);
geðfjarðar lá, kveðja.	I want to greet him with Grímnir's (Óðinn's) gift (poetry).

(*Uppsala Edda* 2012: 138-39)

Here is the first quatrain of *Húsdrápa* as transcribed and edited by Faulkes and his modified English translation based on the Codex Regius manuscript c. 1300-1325, which contains a different version:

Hoddmildum ték hildar
hugreifum Óleifi—
hann vil ek at gjǫf Grímnis—
geð-Njarðar lá—kveðja. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 14)

I bring hoard-kind, heart-glad Óláfr, the mind/soul [BREAST] wave [LIQUID] of the Njǫrðr of battle [OÐÍNN'S] [= MEAD OF POETRY]. I will greet him with Grímr's [OÐÍNN'S] gift [= A POEM]. (modified from *Edda* 1995: 71)

For those who have studied skaldic poetry, these translations and the forms they take are decipherable. For those unfamiliar, the word order and diction would seem very strange. The noun substitutions in skaldic poetry as exemplified by the *heiti* Grímr and *hildr*-Njǫrðr as a kenning for Óðinn, part of an extended kenning for poetry, *geð-Njarðar hildar lá*: "liquid of battle-Njǫrðr's mind/soul" (i. e. liquid of Óðinn's mind, i.e. chest = mead of poetry), are discussed in detail in this section.

Note that three terms differ in the examples cited, although, basically the same overall meaning of the quatrain has been accomplished: The adjective *hoddmildr* "hoard-kind" has been grouped as an attribute of Óláfr with a phrase as it appears in the Codex Regius as translated by Faulkes, whereas in the Codex Upsaliensis the genitive form of the noun *hjaldrgegnir* "noise-meeter" has been grouped with the phrase portraying Óðinn. The inflected adjectives *hugreifr* "heart-glad" and *herreifr* "host-joyful" both carry the general meaning of "cheerful" in describing Óláfr. The genitive form of the compound *geðfjǫrðr* "mind-fjord", as word substitution for "breast" is a bit easier to parse than the combination *geð-Njarðar* because the latter form is split from another determinant, *hildar*, and the base word *lá*, which combined may be translated as "the mind" + "wave" + "of the Njǫrðr of battle" = the mead of poetry. Another difference is the upper case Hildr likely is meant as a Valkyrie name used in a more complex expression for "battle". A purpose of this section is to explain such peculiarities of skaldic diction in detail.

Perhaps one of the reasons Finnur chose the Codex Upsaliensis version of the quatrain is the half-rhyme in the first line rather than a full rhyme fits better with the metrical rules of *dróttkvætt* poetry, the genre in which *Húsdrápa* is grouped. As displayed in each of these versions of the half-stanza, no attempt was made by the first two translators to render in English word-for-word in stanzaic form, and some of the circumlocutions have been simplified. Typical of skaldic poetry, Úlfr has woven together intercalary phrases following canons for metrical count, alliteration, internal rhymes, periphrasis and incorporated subtle nuances within the use of

these parameters. Although translations that mimic stanzaic form are presented in the English translation of the *Uppsala Edda* and in some sagas, one can see from the example above that some rearrangement in prose is necessary. In either case, it is often better to gloss each word in a quatrain, group them in phrases and gain an understanding of the meaning - then, refer back to the untranslated strophe for cadence and the overall "sonic impression". That is the approach taken here, and in the following pages along with a general overview the terminology, categorization and function of skaldic techniques are examined.

The exact dating of the inception of *dróttkvætt* poetry and its original contexts is uncertain. The oldest extant verses in an albeit somewhat irregular *dróttkvætt* meter may be from another "picture poem", *Ragnarsdrápa*, attributed to Bragi Boddason from the second half of the ninth century in which he describes the images decorating a shield he received as a gift from a patron (Frank 1978: 103, Turville-Petre 1976: xix). Indeed, Hallvard Lie uses verses from *Ragnarsdrápa* as examples for his thesis that the origin of the convoluted word order common to *dróttkvætt* poetry is not, as some have argued, largely adapted due to metrical constraints, but rather there is a direct relationship between the "un-natural" imagery that predominated during the Viking Age and the poet's descriptions (Lie 1982: 201). However, this does not fully explain the diversity of situations in which the stanzas have appeared in literature nor why the intricate style flourished so long until it fell out of popularity toward the end of the thirteenth century (Clunies Ross 2005: 4, Frank 1978: 22). The inception of *dróttkvætt* "court meter", cannot be exactly dated, but seems to coincide with the growth of power of kings and aristocracy in Norway, and initially at least, it appears that poems were a medium of propaganda for these rulers (Clunies Ross 2005: 104). Namely, the court skald would compose poems of praise about the deeds of leaders, which would elevate their status. As understood from the king's sagas, the skald would accompany the leader in battle and serve in a way as a historian by accounting the events in verse. The poet would evaluate rulers for their measuring up to cultural values such as leadership in battle and generosity by sharing the spoils of war (Clunies Ross 2005: 40). The obscurity of skaldic diction could indicate *dróttkvætt* initially was limited within the court setting by those elite who could understand it (Lindow 1975). Another theory is circumlocutions used in skaldic poetry could have been derived from taboo - avoiding the potential dangers of naming a person, deity or entity. This would not explain the occasional outright use of a god's name, however, and the multifarious names for Óðinn, for example, seem more about his different personae linked to his abilities to shape-shift or disguise himself while undertaking his deeds. It is unlikely that skalds were highly concerned with taboo. Rather, skaldic poetry developed at least partially as *skemtan*, "pleasure" derived from parsing the verse as in a riddle (Lindow 1975). Snorri mirrors this sentiment when he offers his *Edda* to aspiring poets *til fróðleiks ok skemtunar* "scholarly inquiry and entertainment" (Marold 2012: lxxxiii). As presented in Old Norse literature, Icelanders had a particular flair for the skill, and they often filled the ranks as court skalds in Norway. If the use of the style ever was limited to a ruler's retinue, the Icelanders brought the *dróttkvætt* meter out of the courtly setting, and the verses of certain gifted poets are not only frequently found in the Icelandic family sagas, but some of the poets, with their particular characteristics, are the subjects of sagas written about them.

Unfortunately, no extant saga about Úlfr Uggason remains, but that he composed a "picture poem" in *dróttkvætt* groups him among the tradition. Little is known about the poet Úlfr aside from the references by the saga writer of *Laxdæla saga* and Snorri that he was the

composer of *Húsdrápa*. He is listed in *Landnámabók* only once, as marrying a certain Járngerðr Þórarinsdóttir korna (*Landnámabók* 1986: 111). In *Brennu-Njáls saga* Úlfr is mentioned twice, and in both cases he is portrayed as one who avoids conflict. In the first instance, Úlfr is a defendant in an inheritance lawsuit. When it turns out his opponent, Ásgrímr, had a flawed case, Ásgrímr's ally, the hero Gunnarr, challenged Úlfr to a duel. Rather than fight, Úlfr paid a fine more than the original amount in question (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 2010: 152). The second mention of Úlfr is from when the missionary Þangbrandr was travelling around Iceland. Þangbrandr was either converting inhabitants to Christianity or, in several cases, killing them. One of Þangbrandr's opponents, Þorvaldr inn veili, sent word to Úlfr in a verse that he should attack and kill Þangbrandr. Úlfr sent a verse back stating he would not take action and bad things were in the works. Sure enough, Þangbrandr and his company later cut Þorvaldr to pieces (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 2010: 262). The verses exchanged are duplicated in *Kristni saga*, so the recorded strophes may lend some credence to the events (*Kristni saga* 1953: 258-59). Úlfr's actions can be taken in a few ways. One, that he was shrewd and wise not to oppose Gunnarr and Þangbrandr. Secondly, that his decision not to attack Þangbrandr demonstrated his anticipation of, and compliance with, the conversion of religion taking place. However, coupled with his refusal to duel with these warriors the accounts portray him as a coward in view of the heroic standard of never backing down from a fight. Perhaps the Christian writers, with knowledge of Úlfr's poetry honoring pre-Christian gods, preferred highlighting these incidents that made him seem a less than honorable figure. In any case, other than the poem and the events surrounding the recital of *Húsdrápa*, the little information we have about Úlfr does not help much in further analyzing how he fits a character profile in comparison with other Viking Age skalds.

Prior to looking further into the particulars of the first *helmingr* of *Húsdrápa* and its mythic imagery, a brief overview of Old Norse poetry will assist in placing the *dróttkvætt* poem within the corpus. Modern scholarship generally categorizes two forms of Old Norse alliterative poetry, eddic and skaldic; although, the two classifications are not entirely distinguishable from each other. With some overlap, the two are grouped largely according to function and structure. Eddic poetry is usually anonymous and contains mythological, heroic and gnomic themes. Most of these extant poems are found in the Codex Regius of the "Elder" *Edda* referred to as the *Poetic Edda*, usually dated to c. 1275. These verses are relevant to this study for, in addition to the "craft" of poetry, mythic and legendary exposition. Snorri refers to some of these verses, primarily in *Gylfaginning* of his "Prose" *Edda*, and they are part of the building blocks for our knowledge of Norse mythology. While containing the largest collection, the Codex Regius is not the only source for what is considered eddic verse. In addition to other manuscripts many of the *fornaldarsǫgur*, "sagas of ancient time", in which modern scholars form a genre or sub-genre of sagas based on, as the name indicates, legendary figures who lived in prehistoric times, contain poems of what are considered eddic-type subject matter and meter. Some of these, written down later around the fourteenth century, could be based on poetry that is very old and even pre-date the Viking Age (Clunies Ross 2005: 11). In regard to structure, a characteristic distinguishing eddic from skaldic poetry is meter. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the variants of eddic meter, so it will have to suffice in noting that it is less strict than skaldic.

Dróttkvætt - meter, alliteration and rhyme

Various forms of skaldic meters are used as examples, however, the most common and pertinent meter for this study is *dróttkvætt*, in which *Húsdrápa* is composed. According to the schema laid out by Gade, *dróttkvætt* is an extended development from the eddic *fornyrðislag* with internal rhymes, *hendingar* (from *henda*: to grab, catch) and strict syllable counting[31] (Gade 2012: lx-lxi). Snorri, in the opening statements of part three of his *Edda* in *Háttatal* presents these features. An analogy is much like the tools of the woodcarver and the execution of motifs, the poet has a set of parameters in the *dróttkvætt* structure, and techniques are required in crafting the composition of his poem. Snorri places an emphasis on the distinction of sound:

> Stafasetning greinir mál allt, en hljóð greinir þat at hafa samstǫfur langar eða skammar, harðar eða linar, ok þat er setning hljóðsgreina er vér kǫllum hendingar (...) (*Háttatal* 1991: 3)

> All meaning is distinguished by spelling, but sound is distinguished by having syllables long or short, hard or soft, and there is a rule of distinctions of sound that we call rhymes (...) (*Edda* 1995: 165)

Under discussion here is what Roberta Frank describes as "sonic sculpture". Foremost, the verses composed by skalds that were later recorded by scribes were not just what we think of as an "oral tradition", but also initially an auditory experience. These "sculptures" were shaped by stressed syllables, long and short, "hard or soft" - perhaps indicating a choice of vowel and consonant placement for texture - creating an auditory surface much like the visual effect of a rounded or beveled relief carved in wood or stone. In her monograph on *dróttkvætt*, Frank defines long stressed syllables as:

> In Germanic verse, metrically long syllables were those in which a short vowel was followed by two or more consonants [vǫll, blakkr] and those in which a long vowel - those marked here with an acute accent and the digraphs æ and œ - or diphthong [au, ei, ey] was followed by at least one consonant [jór, fœt]. (Frank 1978: 34)

Based on this description, one may discern that with some exceptions other syllables are short. It is apparent that each line of *dróttkvætt* ends in a trochee, i.e. a long stressed syllable followed by a short one. Otherwise, stress most often falls on a long syllable but not always, and there are variations on the interplay of cadence. Regarding the strict syllable count, some allowance, *leyfi*, for *samstǫfur*, "syllables" apply. For example, two short, *skjótar*, "quick" syllables may take the place of one, including cases of elision, where two short syllable words may combine into one. With generally three stressed syllables per line, aside from the last two syllables lifts and dips vary. The earliest skalds tended to use many of these "rules" more freely (Turville-Petre 1978: xviii). In her exhaustive study of *dróttkvætt* structure, Kari Ellen Gade finds fault in previous studies and, "For the purpose of arriving at a system of graphic representation that will enable us to describe the structure of *dróttkvætt* lines as objectively as possible, I have decided therefore to abandon the concept of stress altogether (...)" (Gade 1995: 45).

[31] For a sampling of cadences and how they are comparably derived from *Fornyrðislag*, see Gade 2012: lxiv-lxvii.

> Perhaps as a result of the strict formal requirements, the word order in *dróttkvætt* stanzas can be convoluted. Scholars have debated to what extent this type of poetry would have been intelligible to the audience and whether the comprehensibility could have been facilitated by the mode of recitation. The information provided by the poetic vocabulary and the sagas is inconclusive, but it seems that skaldic poetry was neither sung nor recited to musical accompaniment; rather, the performance proceeded according to fixed rhythmical patterns, observing metrically marked and unmarked syllables and the quality of internal rhymes. Because the phonetic aspects of recitation cannot be retrieved, only a detailed analysis of these entities and their function in *dróttkvætt* lines can yield information on the relationship between structure, syntax, and general comprehensibility. (Gade 1995: 29)

Gade adds that restrictions of the positioning of syllables in *dróttkvaett* lines are best examined broken down further by mora counting, for which she has developed a quite complex method of analysis. Here, let it suffice that even though we have stanzas from extant texts, we do not know exactly what *dróttkvætt* verse sounded like - comparably, we cannot be certain what missing woodcarvings such as those described in the poem *Húsdrápa* looked like. Yet, as there are clues in the compositions produced in other woodcarvings and extant iconography that may be used to arrive at hypothetical designs, there are elements in the *dróttkvætt* structure and how the strophes are assembled that assist in forming a sonic picture. Snorri continues:

> Hér er stafasetning sú er hætti ræðr ok kveðandi gerir, þat eru tólf stafir í eyrindi, ok eru þrír settir í hvern fjórðung. Í hverjum fjórðungi eru tvau vísuorð. Hverju vísuorði fylgja sex samstǫfur. Í ǫðru vísuorði er settr sá stafr fyrst í vísuorðinu er vér kǫllum hǫfuðstaf. Sá stafr ræðr kveðandi. En í fyrsta vísuorði mun sá stafr finnast tysvar standa fyrir samstǫfun. Þá stafi kǫllum vér stuðla. Ef hǫfuðstafr er samhljóðandi, þá skulu stuðlar vera enn inn sami stafr, (...) (*Háttatal* 1991: 4)

> Here there is one aspect of spelling that determines the verse-form and creates the poetical effect, that there are twelve staves [alliterating sounds] in the stanza, and three are put in each quarter-stanza. In each quarter-stanza there are two lines. Each line contains six syllables. In the second line there is put first in the line the stave which we call the chief stave. This stave determines the alliteration. But in the first line this stave will appear twice at the beginnings of syllables. We call these staves props. If the chief stave is a consonant, the props must be the same letter, (...) (*Edda* 1995: 166)

Below, the first quatrain from *Húsdrápa* is substituted for Snorri's example. The forward slashes indicate syllable division demonstrating six syllables per line, and the underlined letters show the alliterating *stafir*, "staves", of which the *hǫfuðstaf*, "chief stave", is the first letter in the even lines. There are two *stuðlar*, "stave props", in the odd lines. If these are vowels, they may differ, but if they are consonants, the *stafir* are the same letters in each couplet:

> H<u>j</u>aldr/gegn/is ték H<u>i</u>ld/ar
> h<u>e</u>r/reif/um Á/leif/i,

hann vilk at gjǫf Grímn/is,
geð/fjarð/ar lá, kveðj/a.

A syllable is short if it has a short vowel followed by a consonant. In the second to last syllable in the quatrain, the intervocalic *j* in *kveðja* is counted as a consonant otherwise the stressed stem of the trochee would be short (Turville-Petre 1976). It is also considered short if the word is a disyllabic hiatus - such as *búa* where the long vowel is not followed by a consonant, so that form is not used in the trochaic position. As Snorri explains the structure of this genre of poetry, the verse unfolds in a manner that takes shape - such as a vessel or container for expression. The quatrain has spatial qualities as it and each line has boundaries, and within those boundaries certain placeholders for substantial elements. For this study, it is interesting that the terms *stafr* and *stuðill* also mean "stave" and "support" as building parts used in Viking era dwellings (see sections 2.1. and 2.7). The fashion in which they are counted and arranged in couplets may not exactly match the layout of a building, but they are similarly placed incrementally in an orderly plan.

Where Snorri explains rhymes, his examples are substituted with the first couplet analyzed in this section placed in parentheses:

> Ǫnnur stafasetning er sú er fylgir setning hljóðs þess er hátt gerir ok kveðandi. Skal sú grein í dróttkvæðum hætti svá vera at fjórðungr vísu skal þar saman fara at allri stafasetning ok hljóða. Skal í fyrra vísuorði þannig greina þá setning: (*Háttatal* 1991: 4)
>
> There is a second aspect of the spelling that is involved in the rule of the sound which constitutes the verse-form and poetical effect. This distinction in the *dróttkvætt* [court-metre] form requires that the quarter-stanzas have the same arrangement of letters and sounds. In the odd lines this rule is analysed thus: (*Edda* 1995: 166)
>
> (Hjaldrgegnis ték Hildar)
>
> Hér er svá: ('-Hjald- . . . -Hild-'). Þat er ein samstafa í hvárum stað ok sinn hljóðstafr fylgir hvárri ok svá upphafsstaf[r en einir stafir eru] eptir hljóðstaf í báðum orðum. Þessa setning hljóðfalls kǫllum vér skothending. En í ǫðru vísuorði er svá: (modified from *Háttatal* 1991: 4)
>
> Here there is ('-Hjald . . . Hild-'). There is one syllable in each position and each has a different vowel and also initial consonant, but there are the same letters after the vowel in both words. This rule of assonance we call *skothending* [half-rhyme]. But in the even lines it is thus: (modified from *Edda* 1995: 166-67)
>
> (herreifum Áleifi)
>
> Svá er hér ('-reif- . . . -leif-') Þar er einn hljóðstafr ok svá allir þeir er eptir fara í báðum orðum, en upphafsstafir greina orðin. Þetta heita aðalhendingar. Svá skal

> hendingar setja í dróttkvæðum hætti at hin síðari hending í hverju vísuorði, er heitir viðrhending, hon skal standa í þeiri samstǫfu er ein er síðar, en sú hending er frumhending heitir stendr stundum í upphafi orðs - kǫllum vér þá oddhending - stundum í miðju orði - kǫllum vér þá hluthending. Þetta er dróttkvæðr háttr. Með þeima hætti er flest ort þat er vandat er. Þessi er upphaf allra hátta sem málrúnar eru fyrir ǫðrum rúnum. (modified from *Háttatal* 1991: 4-5)

> Here there is: ('-reif' . . . -leif-'). There is the same vowel and all the same sounds following it in both words, but the words are distinguished by their initial letters. This is called *aðalhendingar* [full-rhymes]. The rhymes in *dróttkvætt* meter must be so arranged that the second rhyme in each line, which is called *viðrhending*, this must be in the last syllable but one. But the rhyme which is called *frumhending* [first rhyme] appears sometimes at the beginning of the line - then we call it *oddhending*; sometimes in the middle of the line - then we call it *hluthending*. This is *dróttkvætt* form. This is the form most often used for elaborate poetry. This is the foundation of all verse-forms just as speech-runes are the principal sort of runes. (modified from *Edda* 1995: 167)

As Snorri explains about *dróttkvætt* meter, there is also a specific structure involving rhymes. In the odd lines there are half-rhymes. As mentioned above, this may have influenced Finnur's decision to use the version of *Húsdrápa* from Codex Uppsaliensis - at least the verse cited there exhibits *skothending*, while the Codex Regius does not:

> *Hoddmildum ték hildar*

-mild . . . -hild are full-rhymes, *aðalhendingar* - not expected in odd lines. Another anomaly in both versions is a half-rhyme is absent in the third line, unless *-ann* is taken to complement *-ímn*, which does not follow the rules. As Turville-Petre notes, the more ancient skalds used rhymes in a less regular fashion. Composed ca. 983, Úlfr is not particularly of the oldest times, but it seems in *Húsdrápa* he allowed himself some leeway. However, for the most part Úlfr's choice of words and phrases describing the mythological scenes in Óláfr's hall were consistent in following the conventions of *dróttkvætt* that were later established. Together, alliteration and rhyme create a rhythmic framework that contain the quatrain as a cohesive unit. We can also see some weight in those words comprising these emphasized syllables, which in turn must have aided comprehension as the audience latched on in anticipation of meaning:

> ***Hjaldr***gegnis ték ***Hild***ar
> **her***reif*um Á*leif*i,
> hann vilk at **gjǫf *Grím***nis,
> ***geð***fjarðar lá, *kveð*ja.

It is evident that many of the important syllables receive a certain prominence, and with the added stress from lifts, the poet's delivery must have contributed greatly to the perception of the poem. The stanzaic written form is of course a modern construct. In the manuscripts no line breaks were used; rather, the lines appear in a linear fashion along with the prose. This could be for economic purposes, but it also demonstrates how the written form is arbitrary in regard to the

auditory performance, where a "sonic image" is created from tools of the craft in order to artistically represent meaning. The poet's recital, with the rise and fall of the voice, the pitch and intonation resounding on the contours of the wood-carved hall shaped the form in a manner emphasized by stress, alliteration and rhyme. The reverberating delivery must have had a profound effect on the audience.

As touched on above, typical and often confounding for the modern reader, the word order of skaldic poetry differs considerably from that of linear prose. The highly inflected Old Norse/Icelandic language partially allows for this because even if they are apart, certain words belong together by number, gender and case to form a phrase or sentence. For the non-native speaker, by parsing the words identifying the verbs, grouping subject and object phrases together, etc. allows one to reorder the lines in a more comprehensible way. In some editions, such as the example here by Faulkes, intercalary and divided phrases are separated by dashes.

> Hoddmildum ték hildar
> hugreifum Óleifi—
> hann vil ek at gjǫf Grímnis—
> geð-Njarðar lá—kveðja. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 14, verse 39)

For example, *hann vil ek kveðja at Grímnis gjǫf* belong together in a separate phrase or sentence "Him will I greet with Grímnir's [Oðinn's] gift". It helps that complete sentences are contained within a quatrain, however intercalary breaks of two or more phrases or "complete thoughts" within those confines sometimes also include tmesis, the splitting of compound words, creating further non-linearity. Although it is not exactly a compound word, the words derived from the nominatives *hildr* and *Njǫrðr* form "battle-Njǫrðr". The terms belong together while the former is in the first line and the latter is in the fourth. While puzzling, the non-linear word order certainly adds to the artistic quality of the verse, and must have been motivated in various ways, including mimicking material culture. As Roberta Frank puts it, the poetry as an: "escape from linear, temporally ordered syntactic bonds, seems to be trying to depict two actions concurrently" similar to "the way an image can for the viewer of a tapestry or carving be perceived at a glance" (Frank 1978: 54) Reordering and analyzing the verse in linear fashion can't help but take away from the "sonic picture" created by the artistic composition and delivery of the poet.

As Frank indicates, there may have been "some system of pointing, something in the poet's delivery that we cannot retrieve" (Frank 1978: 50). Indeed, to declaim a poem, *kveða*, can also be translated as "chant", and it is possible that varying phrases or clauses were emphasized with certain notes during recital (Turville-Petre 1976: lxv). Caesura, pauses, could strategically assist in comprehension. Beyond that, a familiarity of the language and style of delivery must have resulted in different levels of ability to open the package containing meaning in the verse. Perhaps loosely grasping the twenty-four syllables and the symbols they represented until the last one was heard allowed the listener to in a moment put it all together and experience the felt meanings intended by the poet.

Dróttkvætt - poetic diction and the use of trope

The peculiar poetic diction used by the skald in *dróttkvætt* compositions further adds to the complexity and potential symbolic associations expressed in the verse. Here an examination of the use of a rich vocabulary of nouns used for poetic language helps unravel not only the first quatrain, but also in subsequent analysis the substitutions, synonyms and circumlocutions used in all of the extant verses of *Húsdrápa*. Modern scholarship tends to divide skaldic poetic language into two groups: *heiti*, as simplex terms used in poetry that are rare in common speech used as appellations for proper and common names, and kenning, periphrasis consisting of two or more substantives that take the place of a noun, one referred to as the base word, with the addition of one or more determinants, usually in a genitive relationship to the base word. (Frank 1978: 43-44, Marold 2012: lxx, lxxxvi). Snorri's definitions are not always consistent. For example, he describes certain types of kennings with some variation in *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*. For example unlike modern scholars, Snorri does not use the term *heiti* strictly for simplex words but at times alludes to kennings (*Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: xxxiv-vii). Not all of these somewhat conflicting terms are discussed here.[32] Nevertheless, his descriptions are the basis for the terms given by modern scholars of the various combinations of intensifiers, synonyms and tropes used in skaldic poetry.

Snorri's category that most resembles the use of the term kenning in modern scholarship is found in his description of *nýgervingar* "new constructions" or "new creations". Also called *nýgjǫrvingar*, in both *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*, it is meant as either the making of new meanings for words (metaphor) or construction of new (metaphorical) kennings. For example Snorri indicates in *Skáldskaparmál*:

> Því er þat kallat nýgervingar alt er út er sett heiti lengra en fyrr finnsk, ok þykkir þat vel alt er með líkindum ferr ok eðli. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 41)
>
> This is therefore called allegory ("new-creations") (*nýgervingar*) when terminology is extended further in meaning than there are earlier examples of, and this is all considered acceptable when it is in accordance with probability and the nature of things. (modified from *Edda* 1995: 95)

Snorri follows with examples of base words with substitution of synonyms or near synonyms for the determinants. By doing so, the meaning of the words is extended from the literal meaning. Snorri does not make distinctions based on metaphor, rather with word substitution. In *Háttatal*, by varying the base-word in kennings; in *Skáldskaparmál*, an additional citation exhibits by varying the determinant and/or base word in extended kennings:

> Skjǫldr er land vápnanna en vápn er hagl eða regn þess lands ef nýgjǫrvingum er ort. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 74)
>
> A shield is a land of weapons, and weapons are hail or rain of that land if one composes allegorically. (modified from *Edda* 1995: 124)

[32] For detailed examinations of Snorri's terms for figurative language, see: Clunies Ross 2005: Appendix 236-245; *Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: xxv-xxxvii; Marold 2012: lxx-lxxv.

Snorri opines that *nýgervingar* should be constrained to a common theme. Using the allegory of a snake as a sword as an example, word replacements used by the poet in a strophe should build on attributes that share associations with that creature and not stray to some other disjointed topic. Otherwise, it is *nykrat* a "monstrosity" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: xxviii). This is Snorri's ideal, not one necessarily practiced by skalds, yet the implied sense of harmony harkens well to a visual rendering where a mix-match of symbols would do little to convey a sense of artfully executed composition. Otherwise, Snorri's pragmatic approach in describing the function and use of kennings only provides a hint of the potential for visual communication and possibilities for referential intermedia. However, sorting out Snorri's terminology is both helpful as a basic overview of skaldic diction and to get an understanding of what was central to his scholarship. Faulkes points out that Snorri differentiates the kenning by the characteristics of its structure while his other categories for word replacement relate to varying content and meaning in relation to referents. In *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal* Snorri's emphasis is on the craftsmanship of poetry and the ways poets embellish their verse. Snorri states his goal that the *Edda* is intended to instruct aspiring poets. His interests are primarily praise poetry (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: xxxvi). As Clunies Ross emphasizes, Snorri's way of describing kennings is conceived as true to the world rather than metaphoric, as being true to the referent in regard to its essential qualities (Clunies Ross 2005: 242). An example regarding Snorri's lack of examples of metaphor is his explanation as to why circumlocutions for men and women are frequently formed around the base word of a "tree". Rather than pointing to the myth that Óðinn and his brothers provided life for humans by animating tree trunks found on a seashore, Snorri explains this by means of *ofljóst*, word play and substitutions with homonyms. In this case the word *reynir*, as someone who "tries" something, as in performing a deed, alongside *viðr*, who can be a "doer" of something, is also a type of tree, *reynir* "rowan" and *viðr* is also a word for tree. Following this system, paradigmatically any word synonymous with tree is a suitable circumlocution. (Clunies Ross 2005: 238, Marold 2012: lxxviii). Hence, it can be inferred from analysis that Snorri's basic categories do not "depend on an opposition between metaphorical and non-metaphorical language, or tropes and non-tropes". Indeed, Clunies Ross adds that the closest Snorri comes to referring kennings to "extended metaphors" is his description of *nýgervingar,* which she would translate as "innovations" (Clunies Ross 2005: 243-44).

Additional terms used by Snorri are introduced here as they become relevant, but what becomes clear as one deciphers Snorri's vocabulary is there were criteria for diction the skald followed in composing his verse. Much like a craft, tools were used in various ways, yet the construction of quatrains involved creative thematic solutions that fit established patterns. Regarding this descriptive language, one can question to what extent it is of value for hypothetical reconstructions of iconography. Aside from the kenning, the terms Snorri presents seem most pertinent to the identification of certain entities with embellishment in the form of adjectival and adverbial attributes more commonly associated with nuances seen in fine art rather than Viking Age artifacts. However, these hints can be helpful in subtle ways for thinking about iconography as well, such as general body positioning, facial expressions, apparel and possessions. Some of Hallvard Lie's observations regarding Old Norse pictorial art also are helpful in thinking about how certain descriptive terms may have been inspired by artifacts the poet gazed upon. Lie coined the expression *ideoplastiske trekk*, roughly "ideo-modulated feature(s)", to encapsulate how the Old Norse artist rendered things as he or she conceived them, such that motifs were depicted differently than how they realistically appeared in a given

situation. For one, the lack of use of perspective freed the artist from size relationships, and variations could be used for emphasis, which also in other ways could be abstracted to show a moral viewpoint inferred by poetic language. Lie also refers to *attribusjonstrekk*, that the artist depicted things by including attributes that otherwise had no function in the scene. A combination of concrete and abstract in the imagery inspired and was expressed in the use of poetic diction (Lie 1982: 136-38).

When taken into context, Snorri's terms are invaluable in thinking about the components skalds use to construct phrases, and indeed is the basis for any further scholarship. In this study, rather than modern categories, Snorri's use of terms are referenced as much as possible. However, modern scholarship can, and does, build on the more neglected part of his analysis regarding the use of trope and how it embellishes the meaning and comprehension of skaldic poetry. For this purpose, Snorri is used as a springboard with a particular emphasis on imagery.

The medieval scholar Óláfr Þórðarson in his Third Grammatical Treatise came closer to recognizing metaphor as fundamental to the Old Norse kenning system. He translated and quoted the classical grammarian Donatus who defined trope as a "transfer of one word from its proper meaning to an improper meaning with a certain similarity, for the sake of [stylistic] beauty or out of necessity"; specifically in regard to metaphor Óláfr states, "All kennings of Norse poetry are composed with this figure, which is thus virtually the origin of poetic diction" (Clunies Ross 2005: 237). However, modern scholars are more prone to recognize the general use of trope in kennings. As Marold notes, metaphoric kennings, "figures of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable", may actually be grouped by the broader term "tropic" kennings because these indeed include other modes of trope (Marold 2012: lxxvi).

Based on a selection of various scholars' definitions of trope, the following categories present a method for analysis. One way to organize the structure of a skaldic kenning is to picture it overall as a "metaphoric image map" (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 94). Each component of the image map may be a word substitution based on a tropic paradigm of numerable similar terms that can be substituted for a referent - a base word or determinant. As I shall outline here, each of these component tropes in their own way lend themselves to evoking imagery. These are some of the building blocks for the inverse claim I am developing here, that the kennings composed by the skaldic poet, when describing mythic scenes as in the case of Úlfr with his poem *Húsdrápa*, were in many cases inspired by the iconography in front of him.

Metaphor can be defined as "a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else through abstraction". Periphrases for Miðgarðsormr, the "World Serpent" as, for example, *stirðþinull* "stiff (net-) rope", *lǫgseimr* "sea-thread", or *hólmfjǫturr* "island-fetter" are metaphoric. As "image maps", the sources rope and thread are from a separate conceptual domain visualized as shapes able to be placed onto the target conceptual domain of serpent. It should be noted that each of these terms produce subtly different connotations. However, as I shall argue further below, these three examples of metaphor are related by association: all three share the capability of binding or wrapping around something. Two are also metonymically related by the sea - the habitat of Miðgarðsormr. In skaldic poetry metaphors such as these are members of certain

groups of terms, *heiti* if you will, and through word substitution used metonymically to form a metaphoric kenning phrase.

Metonym, a word (or expression) used as a substitute for something else with which it is closely associated, is further defined as involving a single conceptual domain - hence, substituted words are from "member to member" (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 103, Sullivan 2006). Metonyms lend themselves to kennings describing iconography because they generally constitute terms of tangible features referring to mythic persons, creatures or things that are members of a similar category. Often visually, a depicted object that is related but not the depicted object is a metonym, such as smoke represents a fire (Chandler 2002: 131). This substitution works in various ways with descriptions of iconography. On the one hand, if a poet were to reference a scene that contained a raven, swapping the term with "swan" from the common association of "birds" could still evoke the mental image of a raven comprehended through the inclusion of a determinant in the kenning. It is unlikely a swan would depict a raven in a pictorial scene, although, a stylized bird could inspire the poet to use such a substitute term, in which case it would suggest traits of a swan in the rendering such as an abnormally long neck. A closer relationship to the referent that takes into account connotation is exemplified by using various terms in substitution for, once again, the Miðgarðsormr. Using the metonymic paradigm of members of creatures that live in the sea, for example, *hrøkkviáll* "coiling eel" could describe in an image the serpent as winding, spiraling or wiggling. In comparison, the kenning *endiseiðr* "boundary-coalfish" or "boundary thread" visually suggests the serpent framing a scene. In such a scenario these metonyms foreground the signified serpent in shape and also provide added value regarding an iconographic depiction.

A synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole (species for genus) or vice versa. Some theorists, such as Marold, define it similarly to a metonym, where the base word and referent fall under a common generic concept (Marold 2012: lxxvi). Lakoff considers it a special case of metonymy (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36). Nonetheless, of the tropes synecdoche is perhaps most visually representative of the referent, so it deserves separate mention. As an example, Snorri lists *faxi* "mane" as a term substitution for horse. The use of such a part for the whole visually forefronts the mane and suggests it would be particularly noticeable as described in an iconographic depiction of the horse. Similarly, when the determinants used in *sólborðs goti*, "horse of the gunwale" and *húna íugtanni*, "greedy-tooth [bear] of the mast head" are used in kennings for "ship" it not only forms a mental image through the animals of a sturdy, weighty ship, but one can imagine those ship parts prominently included in an iconographic depiction.

Often these tropes work in combination, such as when the synecdoche "wave" is used for sea through the mythic metaphor of the nine daughters of Ran (sea-goddess or sea itself) and Ægir, a sea "god". The names of these daughters are used in kennings for waves. Hence, collectively or one or more of the names of these daughters may be selected from a metonymic paradigm to replace the referent "sea". In this instance, in his description the poet provides clues that waves are being used as iconographic representations of the sea.

The modern use of trope analysis does not entirely lend itself to skaldic poetry and kennings. However, borrowing and applying terms used by Lakoff and Turner, I use the

following model. The overall kenning may be viewed as a metaphoric schema comprised of components consisting of metonyms. Schema is used here in the Kantian sense of a conception of what is common to all members of a class; a general or essential type of form. Kennings are metaphoric maps for individual concepts, people or things, such as poetry, warriors, ships. One way to describe this graphically is a syntagm consisting of a simple or extended kenning along a horizontal axis. A certain base word term is selected from a paradigmatic array of associated words. Likewise, placements of terms for one or more or determinant(s) are selected from an applicable paradigm. For each "slot" the paradigms, on a vertical axis, contain terms that are metonymically associated to each other and are able to be swapped out. The terms may not seem like members of the same paradigm to those who are not familiar with the rhetoric. Complexities abound, such as in polysemy of the *heiti*, where the meaning of a term can be associated with various referents. For example, mythic personal names were also appellatives and served as models for synonyms. In *Vǫlsunga saga*, Andvari shape-shifted from dwarf to fish, so his name could be substituted for either (Marold 2012: lxxxix, Gurevich 1992). Individually, these terms often seem obscure and/or may be understood as metaphoric. Again, if the definition provided by Lakoff and Turner is used, in metaphor separate schematic structures are mapped onto another; in metonymy, one refers to one entity in a schema by referring to another entity in the same schema (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 103). As aforementioned, Kari Sullivan refers to this as "member to member" (Sullivan 2006). This use appears to be the case with the individual terms used to build a kenning. Sometimes seemingly unrelated terms become members of the same paradigm based on several criteria, including attributes, contexts and appearance. In other cases as Snorri defines the term *ofljóst*, through seemingly obscure associations made by homonym. Nevertheless, these groups of terms became conventionalized for the poet and probably most of his contemporary audience. With the help of Snorri and familiarity with the corpus of extant eddic and skaldic poems, a modern audience can come to appreciate and comprehend kennings in an albeit, sometimes limited way.

For example, in the first *helmingr* of *Húsdrápa* the kenning *geð-Njarðar hildar lá* uses the familiar "mead of poetry" within the framework of a metaphoric schema. Here, the base word *lá*, a wave or the sea near the shore, is one of an array of terms for mead as a member of a paradigmatic class consisting of liquids. The genitives *Njarðar hildar*, "of the Njǫrðr of battle" are used as a determinant within the paradigm of who is mythically attributed through association with the mead - in this case Óðinn - but the dwarfs who produced it or the giant who had possession of it are also members of the array and among possibilities to choose from. In this case, the kenning is extended by not specifically naming Óðinn but by using a simple kenning, as described by Snorri, where any god could be the base word and any number of attributes credited to the referent could be chosen as pointing to the signified god. Each of those paradigms - the god and the attribute - contain numerous terms available for replacement. Yet another determinant, *geð*, "mind, senses" may be part of a metonymic array of "containers" of the liquid. In this case it could be meant as "the mind" as in the Old Norse concept of *hugr*, extending to the chest and heart through which liquid, blood (another association with the mead) flows. Other members of this "container" paradigm could include any word for vessel or more specifically the names of the vats that contained the mead.

Just as the word order may spread a kenning out in the quatrain, the kenning itself is extended in a non-linear way. For example, the extension by the use of the periphrasis for Óðinn

is a branch from one direction, while the determinant for his mind/body part as container of the liquid forms another. In this way rather than a syntagm and paradigms referred to as on a two dimensional axis, a root system of rhizomes as an analogy is perhaps a better way to map the schema. Not only does this better describe the arrangement of the kenning image metaphor, but it also allows for some variations of the schematic regarding what "shoots" are included as paradigmatic determinants. Indeed, the extended kenning in all its complexity forms a more three-dimensional mental image. Or, as an analogy for woodcarving, a relief carving with multiple tendrils weaving under and over each other surrounding and incorporating representational iconography. The composition of verse in this manner, by selecting and choosing from an array of strongly visual motifs in order to design a conceptual image, certainly helps explain the perception of the skald as a craftsman, using the tools of the measure and the diction to carve aural reliefs stimulating mental images and evoking symbols that rearrange experienced meaning. Not all, but by nature of association, many members of the metonymic paradigms suggest tangible images that represent the referent. In picture poetry, I argue that some of the figurative speech used by the skald would have been directly inspired by what he saw.

It is easy to confuse metaphor and metonymy, and perhaps the terms are less important than the way the kenning functions. This may be a reason Snorri avoided addressing metaphor in lieu of his emphasis on word substitutions. *Nýgervinga*r, "new-creations" as used by Snorri may then be understood as variations of word replacement in creative ways, and in addition, new, not yet conventionalized terms that are related to previously established members of a metonymic paradigm. In some cases then, *nykrat* may have been considered distasteful by Snorri due to breaking the congruence in a strophe by the inclusion of a radical break within the metonymic paradigms. For example, when Markus uses terms related to "bear" as word replacements for "ship", a shift to "fjord-snake" as "ship" as translated by Faulkes might be considered *nykrat*. Frank, on the other hand, interprets "fjord-snake" as "fish" and yields the end result as, the "snow-drifts of the fish" - a circumlocution for "sea" - and that does not create a break of contiguity with a bear as term for ship. Subtle irony through the use of polysemy may get lost in the translations (*Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 274, Frank 1978: 49, Marold 2012: lxxxix, Gurevich 1992).

While *nýgervingar* are the creative expansions of imagery through consistency in kenning development, *nykrat* is then considered a defect by Snorri, which he describes as inconsistency between the relationship of kennings within a stanza "leading to shifting imagery." Scholarship has at times been more critical of the lack of congruity in the skaldic stanza due to the way kennings seemingly stand alone as independent clauses in which the syntax is contextually at odds with the semantics (Marold 2012: lxxxi). Yet, skalds frequently use incongruity as a rhetorical device. "They can deliver an ironic comment or frame a parody. They constitute a sort of second level beyond the simple content domain of a stanza, which gives the poet the freedom to accentuate the plot, to give commentary, to look backward or forward in time and to intimate certain associations" (Marold 2012: lxxxiv). On a larger scale irony, as a fourth mode of trope, is a central mood of the genre.

Irony resembles metaphor as it seems to represent one thing but with the addition of another signifier it actually means something quite different. However, in contrast to the other

tropes, irony, instead of being based on similarity is based on substitution by dissimilarity or disjunction. It may literally mean the opposite of what it says based on binary opposition or by such variations as understatement and overstatement (Chandler 2002: 134). Such an ironic tone is implied in a poem by the skald Egill Skallagrímsson, when he was coerced into composing a praise poem for his arch enemy Eiríkr Blóðøx. The *drápa* is in *kviðuháttr* - not as flattering as *dróttkvætt*. Even though remarking about battle prowess is considered praise, thirteen out of twenty stanzas focus on blood baths as a result of Eiríkr's exploits without emphasis on any particular honorable deed. Only three stanzas address the generosity of the king, and the verbiage in those seem exaggerated in view of the king's unpopularity. The last couplet sums up the irony and is actually an insult to Eiríkr's intelligence when Egill states about his poem: *svá fór þat fram, at flestr of nam*. "and it came to pass, that most understood" (*Egils saga* 2012: 185-92, *Egil's saga* 1997: 124).

As mentioned, the term *ofljóst*, "too obvious" is ironic when Snorri defines it as the use of obscure terms for word replacement. Irony may be included within the isolated kenning, such as when in the poem *Haustlǫng* Þjóðólfr inn hvinverski refers to Loki as *Þórr of rúni* "Þórr's friend" or "confidant/sharer of secrets with Þórr" (*Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 378, *Edda* 1995: 87). The former translation is more ironic as Loki is often and ultimately at odds with Þórr and the gods, while the latter adds meaning to the disjunction because indeed Loki is a co-conspirator with Þórr on many journeys.

Just as some scholars critique skaldic poetry for its lack of overall metaphoric continuity, as a trope, irony is also employed in the seeming lack of congruity between the juxtaposed meaning of the kenning in relation to the extended context of the strophe. Consider this stanza from *Þórsdrápa*:

> Svá at hraðskyndir handa
> hrapmunnum svalg gunnar
> lyptisylg á lopti
> langvinr síu Þrǫngvar,
> þá er ǫrþrasis eisa
> ós Hrímnis fló drósar
> til þrámóðnis Þrúðar
> þjóst af greipar brjósti. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 29)
>
> So that the speedy-hastener of battle [Thor], the old friend of Throng [Freya], swallowed in the quick bite of his hands the raised drink of molten metal in the air, when the sparkling cinder flew furiously from the grip's breast [palm] of the passionate desirer [Geirrod] of Hrimnir's lady towards the one who longs for Thrud in his heart [Thor]. (*Edda* 1995: 85)

Ironic humor runs through this poem about Þórr's journey to Geirrøðr's dwelling in the land of the giants and the resulting slayings. Here, the poet Eilífr Guðrúnarson describes a mock "food fight" as Þórr and Geirrøðr are at table together hurling glowing embers at each other. Kennings for the two in reference to their relationships with women as confidant, object of lust or pining father seem out of context during a mortal battle, but the ironic disjunction also may be seen as

playing with the idea of feminine scornful eyes directed toward the "child-like" behavior in what is culturally the feminine domain - the serving and partaking of food (see also Frank 1978: 113).

Even though there is no hint of objects being described nor does it mention a patron by name, Eilífr's *Þórsdrápa* bears some similarity to *Húsdrápa*. *Þórsdrápa* was composed c. 1000 and is an interesting contemporary of *Húsdrápa* in part due to its mythic content but also because it contains some of the most elaborate use of extended kennings, making it rich in allusions. While the specific use of irony may not provide a lot of clues for iconography, the overall use of trope in *Þórsdrápa* is loaded with imagery and suggests numerable possibilities for content in the depiction of mythic scenes. Consider Faulkes translation of the stanza describing Þórr crossing the river:

> There they pushed shooting-snakes [spears] in the fish-trap forest [river] against the talkative [noisy] fish-trap-forest wind [current]. The slippery wheel-knobs [stones] did not lie asleep. The clanging-file [ferrule] did bang on stones, and the mountains' falling-noise [river] rushed along, beaten by storm, with Fedia's anvil [rock]. (*Edda* 1995: 85)

As opposed to a straight description, the complexity of the circumlocutions lead the mind's eye to see Þórr bracing himself with his staff against the current of the river as a landslide of dangerously rolling rocks bear down on him in the torrent. In a cross-over of the senses one can visually "hear" the stormy wind resulting in a "forest" of texture formed by the white-caps of the current. Such a scene could be carved and enhanced by the rippling wood grain further embellished with Viking Age stylized etched hatching patterns and shapes inspired by snakes, fish-traps, wheel-knobs, ferrules and even anvils. For example, abstracted textures such as these are carved on the figures of the Oseberg wagon.

In addition to the tropic kennings examined above, Marold identifies the typological diversity of kennings and categorizes them. These are useful as a reference and summary. Typifying kennings and antonomasia (substitution of an epithet or title for a proper name) are further itemized as: reference through deeds and accomplishments, through characteristic connections to various objects, through relationships to various other people or mythical beings or through kinship (Marold 2012: lxxviii-lxxx). Marold's lists are not only useful as an overview of how kennings are formed, but also as a means to consider which types are most likely to be inspired by mythic iconographic scenes described by picture poetry. Among these, references through deeds and accomplishments could provide clues to action depicted in a scene. Týr with his hand in the jaws of Fenris wolf is one example. Of course, not only ekphrastic poetry is under consideration by Marold, but for this purpose, I continue to use her categorizations. Depending on the overall context, references through relationships to people or kinship may indicate those individuals are present in a scene. Reference through characteristic connections to various objects, and particularly in the case of mythical beings, are most likely to be present in iconography, as individual body shapes and features may not distinguish one god for another. With the exception of Óðinn missing an eye, one may not be able to differentiate, for example, Heimdallr from some other god if it were not for his horn.

Another category includes personal kennings as paraphrase types, e.g. man, giant or dwarf, or individuals, such as Sigurðr Hákonarson or Þórr, by deed, relationships, kinship or connections to objects. As I repeatedly stress, the latter is most commonly present and identifiable in iconography, in the case of possessions of magical objects or weapons there is a referential cross-over between verse and material image. In certain situations the use of an agentive noun, a word derived from another word denoting an action and identifies an entity that does that action, may be visually telling, such as *njótr hafra*, "user of goats" for Þórr (Marold lxxvii).

Marold also groups uses of *heiti*: as part appellatives, part proper-nouns; nomina agentis; various diverse words which scholars have grouped based on presumed origins: according to loan words, old poetic words, coinages, personal or god-names used as appellatives, nouns derived from adjectives, original metaphors, and words that have a special meaning in poetry. In summary of the categorization according to modern scholarship, *heiti* serve as synonyms for the device of variation, whether in apposition or in substitution, and they also provide a way to satisfy metrical demands. However, *heiti* are not just a list of synonyms from which to choose in order to satisfy syllable count, alliteration and rhyme, but also each may include subtle usage of meaning and emphasize certain themes (Marold 2012: xlii, lxxxviii-lxxxix). In *Alvíssmál*, the dwarf answers what the different terms are for natural phenomena used by the various races of gods, giants, dwarfs, etc. As recited by Alvíss, the human always uses the common term, but the mythological beings use the poetic terms (Marold 2012: lxxxvii). Frank also notes that each heiti may have a different connotation. Not only a choice for the requirements of *dróttkvætt*: "The falling rhythm of the meter and syntax extends into the semantic field as well" (Frank 1978: 41). Consider Grímr in view of *Grímnismál* and the topic of that poem regarding the cultural standard of generosity and hospitality. Óðinn arrives in disguise at a king's hall to test the quality of his reception. Hence, Grímr also means "the masked one". In the first quatrain of *Húsdrápa* "a poem" is referred to as *gjǫf Grimnís* "the gift of Grímr". Not just any alternative name for Óðinn was chosen by Úlfr in this simple kenning, but one that both alliterated and played with the concept of "hidden" meaning. As defined by modern scholarship, *heiti*, as synonyms, even though they may evoke imagery with connotations, seem to provide fewer clues to the appearance of iconography in comparison to extended kennings, but as components of a metaphoric image mapped on a referent add richness to the possibilities for wood-carved depictions.

Skaldic poetry and *dróttkvætt* as a poetic genre

Prior to delving more into the skald as mythic and cultural craftsman, some additional overview regarding skaldic poetry is useful contextually for *Húsdrápa*. Common words referring to encomium were the verb *mæra* "make famous, praise" and nouns *hróðr, lof* "praise" - terms found in *Húsdrápa*, which is also a *lofkvæði*, "laudatory-poem" - in praise of the community leader Óláfr and his hall. This is reflected in the first quatrain cited in this section: in (R) *Hoddmildum ték hugreifum Óleifi* "I bring hoard-kind heart-glad Óláfr" and in (U) *tel ek herreifum Óleifi* "I utter for host-joyful Óleifr", followed by the kenning for a poem mentioned above: *gjǫf Grímnis*. It states in *Laxdæla saga* that Óláfr compensated Úlfr handsomely for his poem. Hence, at this event in Iceland the praise poem remained a cultural phenomenon.

Although each stanza of *dróttkvætt* verse is rather self-contained, naturally poems were composed of various length. *Lausavísur* is the term used for incidental stanzas that appear alone and are not assembled or edited into longer poems. Such *lausavísur* were interspersed among the king's sagas, and as "prosimetrum", the verses were the building blocks for the prose accounts underscoring the skald's role as oral historian, of course not without some manipulation by the saga writers. Some of these individual stanzas were indeed part of longer poems and chosen for a purpose (Clunies Ross 2005: 77-78). Occasional stanzas are also quoted in the Icelandic family sagas, commonly in the sagas featuring the biographies of poets, often as commentary by the protagonists. Scholars have debated the authenticity of the numerable insertions, finding some Viking Age stanzas genuine and others medieval inventions. *Vísur* is a term describing strophes assembled based on a certain theme. Likewise, *flokkr* describes a "flock" of stanzas, a short poem without refrains. The most highly regarded and flattering collection of verse is the *drápa*, which typically contains refrains. The term may be derived from *drepa* - possibly meaning "to inlay" - an interesting cross-reference to material culture (Frank 1978: 37). We have seen a type of refrain, *stef*, in section 1.5 in *Sigurðardrápa*, as the *hjástælt* "tagged on" five syllables that end each *helmingr*. Most common is a couplet at the end of the strophe repeated periodically throughout the poem. A *drápa* preserved in its entirety could consist of an *upphaf* "beginning" followed by several sections divided by a *stef*. Each are referred to as a *stefjabálkr* "refrain-partition" or *stefjamél* "refrain-interval". This form survived in *Hrynhenda* c. 1046, some sixty years after the dating of *Húsdrápa*. The concluding stanzas were referred to as the *slæmr* "last cut" - that term was first used in the 12th-century. A variance in the placement of a *stef* is called a *klofastef* "split refrain", where one line appears in a strophe followed by another completing the refrain in the next (Gade 2012: lxviii-lxix). This may be the case in *Húsdrápa* where only a single line refrain is seen in the extant quatrains: *hlaut innan svá minnum* has been translated in various ways "Thus was the hall adorned with pictures" (Turville-Petre 1976: 69) "Within have appeared these motifs" (*Edda* 1995: 68, 74). It may be that Úlfr favored a single-line refrain over a couplet; there are certainly many variances of the *drápa* structure. However, in comparison with the lengths and components of the *drápa* styled poems that followed, there are many indications that *Húsdrápa* was originally a much longer poem. For example Snorri indicates, *Úlfr Uggason hefir kveðit eptir sǫgu Baldrs langt skeið í Húsdrápu, ok ritat er áðr dœmi til þess er Baldr er svá kendr*. "Úlfr Uggason composed a long passage in *Húsdrápa* based on the story of Baldr, and an account of Baldr's being referred to in this way was written above" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 17-18, *Edda* 1995:74-75). In the extant strophes of *Húsdrápa* there is only an account of Baldr's funeral procession, while the story presented in *Gylfaginning* is quite long and involved about the slaying and events prior to the gathering when Baldr was placed on his pyre.

"Picture poems" may be seen as an extension of the praise poem because among the extant *drápa* style poems the poet commends the patron who owns the things or gave them to the skald, as well as the items described. By praising the quality of a patron's gift or possession it presents the patron in an elevated status, as well (Clunies Ross 2005: 54). Most scholars concur that the oldest extant poem is the aforementioned *Ragnarsdrápa*, composed by Bragi Boddason in the ninth century. Along with *Haustlǫng* composed by Þjóðólfr inn hvinverski, these picture poems describe mythological scenes depicted on shields they have received as gifts. The scenes described in picture poetry are the same as those mythic and heroic themes from eddic poetry. In *Ragnarsdrápa*, four legends and myths are depicted, the attack of Hamðir and Sǫrli against

Jǫrmunrekkr, the never-ending battle between Heðinn and Hǫgni, Gefjun's ploughing of Zealand from the soil of Sweden and, as also described in *Húsdrápa*, Þórr's fishing expedition for Miðgarðsormr. In *Haustlǫng*, the abduction of Iðunn and Þórr's slaying of the giant Hrungnir are the topics. Úlfr is not referring to the gift of a shield or some other object in *Húsdrápa*, but it is clear that the poem fits the picture poem category in other ways, via praise of the owner and the description of carved mythological scenes. As discussed in section 1.5, *Sigurðardrápa* may in part by inspired by mythic depictions and possibly *Þórsdrápa* as well, although, no object and patron are mentioned in that poem or by Snorri.

The description of works of art in poetry is known from classical times and is often called by the Greek term ekphrasis, a rhetorical device in which one medium of art relates to another by defining and describing its essence and form. It is possible that, in a courtly setting, Viking Age rulers and their poets were aware of this type of classical poetry and wished to emulate continental rulers, but this is uncertain, and given the dating of *Ragnarsdrápa*, the mid-ninth century, perhaps unlikely (Clunies Ross 2005: 55). Nevertheless, Russell Poole has argued that Danish skalds may have been exposed to Latin ekphrasis when they accompanied their royal patrons to the Carolingian courts (Poole 2013).

In his 1952 analysis of the origins of *dróttkvætt*, Hallvard Lie claims that the *dróttkvætt* form originated and developed as picture poetry inspired by and imitative of Viking Age art. He critiques and dismisses aspects of the positions taken by previous scholarship. In particular, he disputes the theory of import of meter and diction from Ireland and other regions brought on by Viking Age expansion. He posits that a straight philological analysis of skaldic poetry based on "restraint", most origin theories and a general modern distaste (up to his days) for the "un-natural" skaldic style, does no justice for the inspired *kunstvilje* "artistic-will" of the Viking Age skald. Rather, along with the philological, he outlines a style-historic and psychological method of analysis regarding the development and expressions of *dróttkvætt*. Lie argues that poets were trying to come up with new verse forms while describing objects that were artistic renderings of myths related by Old Germanic alliterative and Norse eddic poetry, and this challenge, inspired by the "un-natural" depictions seen in the Viking Age art they were referencing, led to the development of complex skaldic word order and diction (Lie 1982: 201-55).

Lie sees Viking expansion and a clash of cultures as an impetus for dramatic change in Viking Age art. Indeed, the Christian art the Vikings brought home with them from raids and trade were more likely to resemble classical art that bore designs based in realism as seen in nature when compared to the indigenous Viking Age inheritance of highly stylized and abstracted biomorphic shapes. He presents the artifacts excavated from the Oseberg burial ship site and Shetelig's work as evidence for foreign influence (Lie 1982: 135). Lie focuses on Shetelig's theory that in particular the Carolingian lion was an import into the *Vestfoldskole* of carvers, and created a new development in Viking Age style in the form of a "gripping beast" (see also section 1.1). However, as James Graham-Campbell points out in *Viking Art*, the gripping beast motif pre-dates the Carolingian influence, and this theory has since been disputed as earlier styles demonstrate that the "gripping beast" has indigenous roots (Graham-Campbell 2013: 49-50). Furthermore, the plethora of artifacts found at the Oseberg site with richly carved designs and iconography is tremendously impressive, but it need not be used as evidence for a revolutionary period of artistic fusion. Rather, the find demonstrates the abundance of material

culture that we have lost due to decay and represents only a small portion out of a grand corpus. Nevertheless, this period did open Scandinavia and Norway to continental and insular design influences. Perhaps Lie's point is better demonstrated by some of the more realistic scenes depicted on, for example the Oseberg wagon, where there appear carvings of men and women, or gods and goddesses, in poses that seem to depict specific events. There are fewer extant examples of these types of renderings from the Viking Age, and this representative art may have been due to exposure of realism from abroad. Such representational art is also seen, as discussed in section 1.2, in the Oseberg tapestries. With these examples in mind, Lie's arguments regarding the clash of the "un-natural" indigenous Norse style with the "natural" insular and continental influx of art fit how he imagines the manifestation of the "picture-poem" arose during the same period. If, for example, scenes on a shield were a blend of interwoven abstract shapes, framing a more realistic rendering of an event from a myth, the word order and skaldic diction produced to describe the iconography could indeed have been inspired by what was seen, and the visual elements would have been an impetus for such an imitative form of art.

From a psychological perspective, among other phenomena Lie refers to synesthesia, the crossing of the senses. In one case, he suggests that what is "heard" in the poem *Ragnarsdrápa* may be "seen" as representing the colors in the shield paintings described by the poet. He makes another point regarding the delivery of the poet and how inflections of vocal tones may have indicated which parts of the "un-natural" word order belonged together (Lie 1982: 218-26). Another way of "seeing" this as imitative of the art form is the use of intercalary locutions - broken up phrases - as a concept that has been introduced being temporarily obscured under another part of the verse and reappearing mimicking the weaving under and over in a painting, or in particular a carving in relief, of interlaced tendrils in Viking Age designs.

A more general application of psychological analysis is also helpful in appreciation of skaldic verse. For this I return to the use of the metaphoric image, which is ingrained in the Old Norse concept of poetry through myth. The myth of the mead of poetry ties together nicely the Norse concept of a skald as craftsman and the custom of compensation for his work. In addition, the myth is central to the understanding of the kennings used in the first *helmingr* of *Húsdrápa*, the central topic of this section. For a complete telling of the myth I refer to Snorri's *Edda*, but here let it suffice to highlight the points necessary for analysis.

Crafting words: Myth, skalds and craftsmanship

One interpretation of the myth of the mead of poetry demonstrates a philosophy that creation is made possible through destruction. Symbolically, conception and death are involved in parts of the myth, and the cycle results in manifestation through transformation. The following highlights apply. After warring [destruction], the Vanir gods and the Æsir gods form a truce. As a symbol of reconciliation, they both spit [bodily fluid] into a vat [feminine] and from the spittle form the most intelligent man, Kvasir [creation]. Kvasir is killed by the dwarfs Fjalarr and Galarr [destruction]. Kvasir's blood is put into the pot called Óðrerir, and the vats Són and Boðn [feminine], and the dwarfs add honey, which ferments to mead [creation]. A visit to the dwarfs by the giant Gillingr and his wife lead to both of their deaths [destruction], and their son Suttungr coerce the dwarfs into giving him the mead [compensation]. Suttungr brings home the mead and

has his daughter Gunnlǫð watch over it in her chambers at a place called Hnitbjǫrg [creative potential].

Meanwhile, Óðinn presumably learns of the mead and comes up with a plot to get it. He arrives in a (giant) farmer's field, and tricks nine field workers into killing each other as they struggle, scythes in hand, to grab a honing stone Óðinn tosses into the air [destruction]. The farmer, named Bragi, is the brother of Suttungr. Óðinn, who calls himself Bǫlverkr ("Evil-doer"), arranges to do the work of nine men for Bragi that summer with the condition that Bragi will persuade Suttungr on his behalf for a drink of the mead. Bragi announces that Suttungr will not agree, but Bǫlverkr proceeds and completes the work [creation]. When approached, Suttungr indeed refuses to yield the mead. Bǫlverkr produces an auger called Rati and has Bragi use it to bore a hole through the mountain in order to reach Gunnlǫð's chamber [coerced compensation]. Bǫlverkr shape-shifts into a snake [masculine] and goes through the hole [feminine] to reach the chamber [womb/container]. Bǫlverkr seduces Gunnlǫð and on three consecutive nights drinks all the mead from the containers [fertility/creation]. Bǫlverkr abandons Gunnlǫð [destruction], and he turns himself into an eagle and flies back to Ásgarðr with Suttungr also in the shape of an eagle in hot pursuit. The Æsir arrange containers and Óðinn vomits up the mead into them [creation]. Óðinn let a little slip behind him. Snorri concludes:

> '... Hafði þat hverr er vildi, ok kǫllum vér þat skáldfífla hlut. En Suttunga mjǫð gaf Óðinn Ásunum ok þeim mǫnnum er yrkja kunnu. Því kǫllum vér skáldskapinn feng Óðins ok fund ok drykk hans of gjǫf hans ok drykk Ásanna.' (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 5)

> '... Anyone took it that wanted it, and it is what we call the rhymester's share. But Odin gave Sutting's mead to the Æsir and to those people who are skilled at composing poetry. Thus we call poetry Odin's booty and find, and his drink and his gift and the Æsir's drink.' (*Edda* 1995: 64)

Several parallels to the poet as craftsman may be drawn from this origin myth. By analogy, the cycles of destruction and creation may be likened to the fashioning of material in any trade. In woodworking, the tree is harvested and reshaped into building material. In woodcarving, this material is once again manipulated by chipping away at the surface. None of this would happen if the tree was not harvested and, hence destroyed. Such a practical application of manifestation is reflected in the mystic alchemy symbolized in the myth of the mead of poetry. For example, Kvasir is killed and his intelligence is brewed in the vat. When consumed, it in turn instills this creativity in the poet and enables and/or inspires him to make a poem. In numerable examples of skaldic poetry, the poet literally crafts a poem out of myth. In a sense he chips away at myth as he takes symbols from it to create those kennings that are based on Old Norse mythology. This is self reflexive craftsmanship in regard to the myth of the mead of poetry as the skald refers to himself providing *gjǫf Grímnis*, "the gift of Grímr [Óðinn] = a poem". The skald refashions the content of the myth by combining terms from metonymic paradigms for his intended referents. In this sense, he forms an aural sculpture out of previously existing imagery. This is a philosophical definition of metaphor: to take symbols of previous concepts and create new symbols to express experience in a new form (Gendlin 1962).

Óðinn announced his expected wage for the work of nine men - when he did not get it willingly, he took it. And indeed the poet expects compensation for that gift - very tied to the myth as cultural practice and the practical payment for work. This issue of compensation warrants further analysis. In the myth deception is a repeated theme and plays a large part of the destruction/creation cycle. Murder and lies abound. The methods include trickery by achieving things under the guise of something else or the disguise as someone else, and shape-shifting. The dishonesty is primarily conducted by dwarfs and Óðinn, the principal creators. This suggests that deception is somehow part of the creation cycle, perhaps as symbolic of a certain distrust regarding the ability to manipulate. In turn, it may reflect a certain anxiety that the patron has in relation to his co-dependency with the skald and craftsman (Clunies Ross 2005: 91). Without the objects provided by the craftsman, the leader of warriors would be weaponless, and if the praise of the skald were to turn to scorn, that would be damaging to reputation and legacy. Hence, the patron is bound to compensate, almost to the degree of being held hostage, for the arsenal and praise.

This leads to the position of dwarfs in relation to the Æsir and giants in the mythological schema. In *Gylfaginning*, the Æsir, more specifically Borr's sons Óðinn, Vili and Vé are represented as the beings capable of animating life as they come across two logs and create people out of them. Each had a role in generally providing spirit: breath and life; intellect: consciousness and movement; and senses: face, speech, hearing and sight. Hence, the Æsir are symbols of the life force. From their names, roles and habitats, one may conclude that the *jǫtnar*, giants, represent features and forces of nature, along with a certain source of primordial essence and knowledge. Hence, they may by analogy be understood as "raw material". Under this umbrella, raw material such as stones, clay, ores and trees possess latent possibilities. The Æsir are capable of "breathing life" into tree trunks, and in the beginning of the poem *Vǫlospá* they are described not only creating the earth, but also in verse 7 quite capable smiths:

> Hittuz æsir á Iðavelli
> þeir er hǫrg oc hof há timbroðo;
> afla lǫgðo, auð smíðoðo,
> tangir scópo oc tól gorðo. (*Edda* 1983: 2)
>
> The Æsir met on Idavoll Plain,
> they built altars and high temples;
> they set up their forges, smithed precious things,
> shaped tongs and made tools. (*Edda* 1996: 5)

However, in the following stanzas, perhaps provoked by a crisis involving the arrival of giantesses, the Æsir seem to initiate the creation of a race of dwarfs:

> (...)
> peir manlícon mǫrg um gorðo
> dvergar, ór iorðo, sem Durinn sagði. (*Edda* 1983: 3)
>
> (...)
> human likenesses they

made many, those dwarfs, out of earth,
as Durinn told. (Lindow 2001: 99)

These human likenesses are perhaps the ones that Borr's sons (called Óðinn, Hœnir and Lóðurr in *Vǫlospá*) animate with life (Lindow 2001: 100). As Borr's sons created the known world out the body parts of the giant Ymir, in *Vǫlospá* the lord of the dwarfs was made from "Brimir's blood and from Bláinn's limbs". In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri relates that the dwarfs originated as maggots in the flesh of Ymir. It seems the dwarfs may have more in common with the giants, as they are conceived from their parts and also are related by living in nature, often in mountains or hills (Lindow 2001: 101). Yet, as told in many accounts, they have the ability to create, a trait shared with the Æsir. Although many of the objects they make are imbued with magical qualities, they usually lack the ultimate ability to "animate" and create life. What seems clear though, is from the point of their creation in mythic time dwarfs take over the role as craftsmen. Hence, they occupy an intermediary role in a mythic position. Dwarfs are able to take components associated with the realm of the giants, raw material, and transform it into precious, often crucial goods. They are commissioned to make coveted objects for the gods, including Óðinn's spear and his magic ring Draupnir, Freyr's ship Skíðblaðnir, his boar with golden bristles, and Þórr's hammer Mjǫllnir. As told in *Sǫrla þáttr* Freyja acquires the *Brísingamen* "Brísings' necklace" (a central object in stanza 2 of *Húsdrápa*) from four dwarfs in return for sexual favors. Snorri relates only dwarfs could make a fetter strong enough to restrain the Fenris wolf. Yet, overall dwarfs are not particularly allies of the Æsir. As demonstrated by Fjalarr "Deceiver" and Galarr in the myth of the mead of poetry, dwarfs are portrayed as untrustworthy. The flow of goods moves in one direction - from that of dwarfs to the gods, and the dwarfs are often reluctant to go along with the arrangement (Lindow 2001: 115). At times the dwarfs are coerced or defrauded, but they also are shown to have tremendous power, such as related in *Vǫlsunga saga* when the dwarf Andvari places a curse on the ring that brings down dynasties. From the same saga, Reginn is a dwarf smith who is particularly deceptive, as it is revealed that after mentoring Sigurðr and sending him out to slay the serpent/dragon Fáfnir, he intended on killing Sigurðr afterward to acquire Fáfnir's treasure hoard. Vǫlundr is a dwarf-like figure/craftsman who, after being held captive and mistreated by a king, took his revenge against him.[33]

In addition to the acquisition of the mead of poetry, mystic powers surrounding wisdom and verse are also attributed to Óðinn in the section of *Hávamál* called *Rúnatal*. There, Óðinn seeks the runes from the source of primordial knowledge, the giants, and also gains a draught of the mead. Óðinn brings back the runes and the poet shares some, albeit vague, ritual practices involving their use. Yet, Óðinn as god of wisdom also has a very dark side. As seen in his deception of Gunnlǫð, he is often dishonest in his relations with women. Óðinn mixes with men while in disguise, and woe be to those who cross him or do not follow his advice. He strikes down men indiscriminately, or more likely to include them among his *einherjar*, "lone fighters", the slain gathered as resurrected troops in preparation for ragnarǫk "doom of the powers". That may have been considered an honor, yet clearly Óðinn is associated with death and destruction. The poet is intermediary through the gifts of Óðinn, portrayed in myth as part trickster and a wise shaman who, symbolized by the mead of poetry and runes, brought potential for wisdom and knowledge to other beings. The poet speaking of himself as presenter of the gift associates

[33] For this study, extant Viking Age and medieval iconography of scenes from *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Vǫlundarqviða* are considered references for hypothetical reconstructions of woodcarvings in Óláfr's hall.

himself with this mysticism and was likely seen by his community as having "otherworldly" skills. (Clunies Ross 2005: 91). The skald must have enjoyed such an association of mystic wisdom, yet similar to the mythic representation of Óðinn and the dwarfs, was looked upon as having a potential for deception. It follows that both the skald and material craftsman enjoyed these powers and to some degree were understood as intermediaries to the gods. Typically as a mythic "alchemist", one thinks of the metalsmith transforming matter into gold, but a similar ability would have been projected onto the woodcarver, who transformed from raw material into plastic art those images referenced by the poet.

Reflecting the mythic underpinnings, in Viking Age and medieval social relations skalds were referred to as craftsmen. Saga literature paints a picture of the skald having associations with craftsmen via Odinic qualities and some of the dark characteristics of dwarfs portrayed in the myths. The poet Egill and his father Skalla-Grímr are prime examples. Grímr is, as seen in the quatrain focused on in this section, one of the many names for Óðinn. The saga writer presents Skalla-Grímr as a self-sufficient early settler of Iceland proficient in ship-building and a competent blacksmith. He is quoted in *Egils saga* reciting a *lausavísa* as he works in his smithy. The semi-legendary Egill was an early developer, quoted as reciting his first verse at the age of three and continuing on with a long life as a prolific poet. Perhaps most fitting are the appearance and temperament of father and son. Both are portrayed as ugly and moody. Egill is particularly rebellious, quarrelsome and has a penchant for trouble. These are traits shared to some degree by all of the skalds of the poet's sagas, a sub-genre of the Icelandic family sagas, as shown in the main characters of among others *Gunnlaugs saga, Hallfreðar saga, Kormáks saga* and also *Grettis saga*. They each have some kind of physical abnormality and have difficulties in social relations - some being outlaws. The physical defects have parallels to Óðinn's missing eye and his many less than glamorous disguises, and are also to some degree left to the imagination with associations of the bodies of dwarfs, or more explicitly thinking of them as the maggots in Ymir's flesh. And, these semi-legendary skalds share traits with the mythic figures by being devious, along with having dark and aggressive demeanors (Clunies Ross 2005: 88-90). Clearly, myth, legend and medieval literature overlap in representing the cultural perception of the skald as craftsmen not only through their skills but also in character and personality types.

The First Grammarian makes a comparison between the abilities of skalds and craftsmen:

> Skáld eru hǫfundar allrar rýnni eða málsgreinar sem smiðir [smíðar] eða løgmenn laga.
>
> "Poets are the authorities in all matters of the art of speech (rýnni) or distinction of language (málsgrein), just as craftsmen [are of their craft] or lawyers of the laws". (Clunies Ross 2005: 154)

There are also more direct references to the skills of skalds and craftsmen in Old Norse literature. Óláfr Þórðarson in his Third Grammatical Treatise, ca. 1250, uses ship building construction as an analogy for the use of *stuðlar*, plural of *stuðill*, "alliterating letters in odd lines" and *hofuðstafir* "chief alliterating staves" in skaldic poetry.

> Þessi figura er mjǫk hǫfð í málssnildar list, er rethorica heitir, ok er hon upphaf til kveðandi þeirrar, er saman heldr norrœnum skáldskap, svá sem naglar halda skipi saman, er smiðr gerir, ok ferr sundrlaust ella borð frá borði. Svá heldr ok þessi figura saman kveðandi í skáldskap með stǫfum þeim er stuðlar heita ok hǫfuðstafir.
>
> This figure is much used in the art of eloquent speech, which is called rhetoric, and it is the foundation of that poetical effect that holds together Norse poetry, just as nails hold a ship together, which a [ship]wright makes, and [which] goes in loose order or plank from plank. So too this figure holds together the poetical effect in poetry by means of those staves which are called *stuðlar* ['props, supports', alliterating letters in odd lines] and *hǫfuðstafir* [chief alliterating staves in even lines]. (normalized and translated by Clunies Ross 2005: 87)

This interesting comparison presented by Óláfr actually does more to describe the cultural connection between skald and shipwright rather than present an accurate comparison of technique. Upon examination of the Oseberg ship, for example, one can see that the nailing pattern is highly irregular, whereas of course, if followed, *dróttkvætt* demonstrates rather strict rules for placement of alliterating syllables.

Snorri's use of technical terms that doubled for poetry and smithing reveal how medieval Scandinavians regarded skaldic poetry as a craft. As previously noted, in addition to obscure circumlocutions, word order adds complexity to the *dróttkvætt* stanza. In *Háttatal*, Snorri provides examples of what he terms a *stælt* verse form, where linear word order is not followed. In his sample verse the first and fourth lines form a sentence while the second and third line is "sandwiched" between and belong together in meaning (*Háttatal* 1991: 10). This Snorri refers to as *stál*, literally "steel" and translated by Faulkes as "inlay". These *stælt* "inlaid" intercalary phrases may occur anywhere in a quatrain, and they may also be broken up more into parts of phrases interspersed in the syntax. The ability to arrange the word order in such a matter was assumedly considered a highly developed and respected skill. The *stælt* phrases were used for emphasis, to include a first person comment by the poet or sometimes as a clause containing an ironic remark. Clunies Ross suggests the terms refer to the metal smith's practice of using inlaid strips of wire or decoration called niello, filling engravings with a black amalgam such as silver sulphide. "The different colours establish the pattern of the inlaid ornament contrastively, and perhaps this was also how inlaid clauses were perceived by those who heard them, as clearly marked off by their syntax from their textual surrounds" (Clunies Ross 2005: 86). The inlay of metals is a nice analogy for the use of the term in order to demonstrate the common understanding of poetry and metalwork as craftsmanship. Cleasby Vigfusson defines the use of *stál* as an intercalary sentence, but they do not include "inlay" in the definition. Although not in reference to poetry, they include a metaphoric use of the term as steel wrapped in soft iron before being fused in a forge. Such a technique of "pattern welding" was used for forging swords. The method involved folding metal and forging alternating layers of steel into rods, which would then be twisted to form complex patterns. This is another way of thinking about a *stælt* strophe with its folded, layered syntax. Intercalation is featured in the extant quatrains of *Húsdrápa*, and these phrases will be examined in the following sections. Other labels presented by Snorri that are used for both woodworking and as technical terms for poetry are *bálkr*, which may be a

partition or dividing wall and a skaldic meter, *bálkar lag*. Also, the term *stafr* and *stuðill*, which are alliterating "stave and support" in poetry are terms used for wooden members of building structures. Associations with poetry, myth and the Viking Age hall structure are further examined in section 2.7.

As discussed regarding the first quatrain of *Húsdrápa*, skalds often brought attention to their skills by including extended kennings in their introductory stanzas referring to the mead of poetry, and they frequently compared their craft to other trades. The poet Hallar-Stein, in a fragment of a poem about a woman, compares his tongue or speech with a woodworking tool. Snorri quotes it among examples of men and women as trees, *kona kallask mǫrk* "woman is called forest":

> Ek hefi óðar lokri
> ǫlstafna Bil skafna
> væn mǫrk skála, verki
> vandr, stefknarrar branda. (Finnur 1908: 535) (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 63)
>
> I have smoothed with poetry's plane my refrain-ship's [poem's] prow [beginning], careful in my craftsmanship, for ale-vessel's Bil [the woman], fair bowl-forest [lady]. (*Edda* 1995: 115)

In this *lausavísa* the *nýgjǫrvingar* are consistent in using the material of the forest, wood: a ship's prow, an ale vessel and bowl, and the self-reflexive use of a plane in which to metaphorically craft the verse incorporates the culturally held view of similarity concerning the skald and woodworker as craftsmen.

Bragi is the Norse archetypal skald, and hence ties together the poet as craftsman in myth as reality and cultural phenomenon. It is possible that Bragi Boddason the skald was euhemerized in some way. Snorri provides the explanation that the Æsir migrated to the north and were misunderstood by the Norse population to be gods. It could also be the association between mortal poet and member of the mythic pantheon could have been a result of popular cult tradition in either direction - poet became a god - poet modeled after a god. In any case, the parallels between the two are so strong the distinction is somewhat blurred. In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri describes the individual Æsir, and tells:

> 'Bragi heitir einn. Hann er ágætr at speki ok mest at málsnild ok orðfimi. Hann kann mest af skáldskap, ok af honum er bragr kallaðr skáldskapr, ok af hans nafni er sá kallaðr bragr karla eða kvenna er orðsnild hefir framar en aðrir, kona eða karlmaðr.' (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 25)
>
> 'There is one called Bragi. He is renowned for wisdom and especially for eloquence and command of language. Especially he is knowledgeable about poetry, and because of him poetry is called *brag*, and from his name a person is said to be a *brag* [chief] of men or women who has eloquence beyond others, whether it is a woman or a man.' (*Edda* 1995: 25)

So, even though Óðinn brought the mead to the Æsir, Bragi is apparently the main beneficiary as god of poetry. He is the namesake of poetry as related through the associated noun *bragr*. In the narrative frame of *Skáldskaparmál*, Bragi is the interlocutor who tells us through the visiting Ægir's inquiries about many of the Old Norse myths. Also in *Skáldskaparmál*, in the list of kennings for the Æsir:

> Hvernig skal kenna Braga? Svá at kalla hann Iðunna<r> ver, frumsmið bragar ok hinn síðskeggja Ás; (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19)
>
> How shall Bragi be referred to? By calling him Idunn's husband, the inventor of poetry (*brag*) and the long bearded As. (*Edda* 1995: 76)

These are interesting both because Snorri seems to contradict the myth that Óðinn brought the mead to the Æsir and was hence the originator of poetry, and the compound noun *frumsmið*, which Faulkes translates as "inventor". *Smiðr* also translates, of course, to "smith" or "maker", and as such has a direct correspondence to the concept of craftsmanship under discussion here as "first-maker". Bragi is mentioned in a couple of eddic poems from the Codex Regius, *Lokasenna* and in *Grímnismál*, where he is also declared an acclaimed poet. Bragi is suitably stationed in Valhǫll among the *einherjar*, greeting the dead kings who are the subjects of the poems *Hákonarmál* and *Eiríksmál* (Lindow 2001: 86-7).

Presumably on earthly terrain, in response to a troll woman's demand that he identify himself, Snorri relates that the mortal Bragi Boddason replied:

> 'Skáld kalla mik
> skapsmið Viðurs,
> Gauts gjafrǫtuð,
> grepp óhneppan,
> Yggs ǫlbera,
> óðs skap-Móða,
> hagsmið bragar.
> Hvat er skáld nema þat?' (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 83-4)[34]
>
> 'Poets call me Vidur's [Odin's] thought-smith, getter of Gaut's [Odin's] gift, lack-nought hero, server of Ygg's [Odin's] ale, song-making Modi, skilled smith of rhyme; what is a poet other than that?' (*Edda* 1995: 132)

The encounter encapsulates points made in the latter part of this section regarding the perception of skald as smith, poetry as related by myth culturally understood as craftsmanship and the self-reflexive use of these analogies, concepts and terminology within the verse itself. In this case, the diction is presented as reality within a legendary/mythic frame of a demigod making his way through wild terrain only to be interrupted by a force of nature demanding a toll - compensation to pass by. Bragi's answer is that of an intermediary, like a dwarf takes from raw material and

[34] The meter is an irregular *tøglag*, which corresponds to *Fornyrðislag* with internal rhyme in the even lines, see Gade 2012: lviii.

forges something magical, the skald refashions the lore as if it were ore, shaping Óðinn's gift into a new arrangement with the reply of his verse.

Returning to the first quatrain as the central topic regarding the crafting of words is an excellent way to briefly synthesize some of the points made about the techniques and imagery of skaldic verse.

> Hjaldrgegnis ték Hildar
> herreifum Áleifi,
> hann vilk at gjǫf Grímnis,
> geðfjarðar lá, kveðja.
>
> *Ték herreifum Áleifi geðfjarðar lá Hildar hjaldrgegnis; hann vilk kveðja at Grímnis gjǫf.*
>
> I provide (grant) the cheerful Óláfr the 'mind, soul-fjord' [breast = (soul) CONTAINER] of the wave [LIQUID] of the noise-meeter of Hildr [VALKYRIE = battle] = [ÓÐINN] = [a DRINK OF THE MEAD OF POETRY] = [a POEM]; I will call to him to receive Grímr's [ÓÐINN'S] gift [the MEAD OF POETRY = a POEM].

Skaldic poetry, and more specifically *dróttkvætt*, typically includes lines of fixed syllable length, internal rhyme, along with alliteration following specific guidelines. A quatrain may stand alone, or eight lines form a stanzaic unit. The word order, however, is non-linear and circumlocutions form an overall complex design. An analogy can be made comparing the composition of a *dróttkvætt* quatrain and a relief carving on a wood panel in wainscoting. One can imagine the overall structure of the four lines as a frame made up of interwoven syllables. The stresses and rhymes form a sonic texture of highs and lows forming contoured ridges. These are not random, as the skald executes stylistic patterns in phrases that weave in and out, under and over. This framework contains kennings that serve as templates for the subjects and objects of often mythic representations. Choosing from arrays of terms, the poet crafts circumlocutions based on metaphoric image maps. These the skald shapes creatively from a range of alternatives that are based on certain motifs. In the first quatrain of *Húsdrápa*, we have seen the common one for the mead of poetry and similarly, the gift of a poem. These concepts are made tangible through imagery and are central in the representations of the quatrain, as a mythic scene would be in the wood carved panel.

The use of metaphor in poetry conjures up images, and the use of trope in skaldic poetry does so in a unique manner. Stand alone kennings point to specific subject and object referents rather than a general thematic cross-over of metaphor in the verse. The tropes used in kennings are not conceptual as in "love is like a rose"; even if the word substitutes used seem obscure, they point to types of or specific people, entities or objects, i.e. animate and inanimate things, mythic or otherwise. Yet, since so many kennings make references to aspects of myths, the specific symbols chosen also open up multiple levels of conceptual understanding. Just as the skald searches an array of terms and selects the best one for his purposes, the specific one chosen stimulates the listener's mind's eye to the entire mythic corpus surrounding that term known to

the individual. For example, in *geðfjarðar lá Hildar hjaldrgegnis* the nested kennings not only evoke imagery of Kvasir's blood consumed and regurgitated by Óðinn, but to the overall myth of the mead of poetry referred to above, and also possibly further expanding to myths and legends involving the sea, blood, battles and Valkyries gathering the slain for Óðinn. Which symbols were conjured would depend on the experience of the audience, perhaps someone lived on a fjord and/or lost someone in battle whose memory, through the poem, was brought forth through the instantaneous associations of the imagery. Hence, it should be taken into account the poem's imagery evoked experienced meaning that is highly individual and culturally specific. The cliché a picture is worth a thousand words applies to kennings in this manner, given the multifarious combinations of associations with the imagery and the possibilities of comprehending new arrangements of symbols. Yet, the word substitutions chosen also suggest certain nuances that in the case of ekphrasis may be directly associated with described iconography. In picture poetry, these representations are indeed tangible images, and the kennings provide clues to their appearance. In the case of referential intermedia, when Úlfr uses kennings he points to specific instances drawn from these myths, and in the analysis presented in the following sections I argue the scenes on the walls of Óláfr's hall inspired some of those selections of terms.

2.4: *Húsdrápa*, stanza 2 - the contest over a mythic ornament

With this section, the focus turns to analysis of the poetry describing mythic scenes in Óláfr's hall in conjunction with proposed designs of hypothetical reconstructions of those woodcarvings. Along with the opening and closing quatrains in praise of Óláfr and the hall, the arrangement of *Húsdrápa* as compiled by Finnur, and more currently by the Skaldic Project[35], consists of verses describing three mythic episodes. This section focuses on the iconographic scene related in stanza 2 of the poem interpreted as a struggle between Heimdallr and Loki over a mythic object, understood by some as the *Brísingamen* "Brísings' necklace". Examination and analysis of the myths involving the *Brísingamen* are undertaken in order to provide context for the appearance of the woodcarvings. Additional information about Loki and Heimdallr provided by Snorri and eddic poetry helps flesh out the kennings depicting them in the stanza. Previous discussion of Freyja in part one becomes relevant here through the fertility symbolism of the *Brísingamen*. Scholarship regarding the stanza and the use of ekphrasis in Old Norse poetry helps round out the discussion. Stanza 2 is particularly interesting because there are no known extant artifacts depicting the struggle over the mythic necklace, but the absence of specific iconography presents an opportunity for investigation. Interpretation of the scene provides a practical example illustrating how existing iconography may be compiled in order to diagram the descriptions provided by Úlfr. Specific examples of relevant motifs seen in the Oseberg woodcarvings, and in insular and Gotlandic picture stones are brought to the fore at this point. Examples from additional archaeological finds are applied in order to show how these elements can be used to "graph" a scene, and I present a wood-carved hypothetical reconstruction.

The poem Snorri and the saga writers refer to as *Húsdrápa* is not provided in the extant manuscripts of *Laxdæla saga*, but stanza 2 and the additional *helmingar* that remain of the poem are scattered throughout Snorri's *Edda* where he uses them as examples of kennings. Stanza 2 is

[35] At the time of this writing, April 9, 2015, Volume 3 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Middle Ages*, ed. Edith Marold, is in preparation. The web site for the project displays *Húsdrápa* but states it should not be cited as a reference: http://abdn.ac.uk/skaldic/db.php?id=1492&if=default&table=text&val=&view=

in the Codex Regius, Codex Wormianus and Codex Trajectinus manuscripts but not in Codex Uppsaliensis. The content of this stanza, the second presented by Finnur[36], the struggle between Heimdallr and Loki over what Snorri relates is the *Brísingamen*, is a fascinating account with some variations and numerous possibilities for interpretation:

> Ráðgegninn bregðr ragna
> rein- at Singasteini
> frægr við firna slœgjan
> Fárbauta mǫg -vári.
> Móðǫflugr ræðr mœðra
> mǫgr hafnýra fǫgru
> —kynni ek—áðr ok einnar
> átta—mærðar þáttum. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 20)

> Faulkes translates and reorders the stanza as: Renowned defender [Heimdallr] of the powers' way [Bifrǫst], kind of counsel, competes with Farbauti's terribly sly son [Loki] at Singasteinn. Son of eight mothers plus one, mighty of mood [Heimdallr], is first to get hold of the beautiful sea-kidney [jewel, Brísingamen]. I announce it in strands of praise. (modified from *Edda* 1995: 77)

Much has been written about the mythological subject matter of the stanza and its possible content. Faulkes' translation follows Snorri's information to the extent that Singasteinn is a place (otherwise unmentioned), perhaps a cliff, skerry or island out in the mythic sea. When Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* lists alternate names and kennings for Heimdallr, he mentions the incident. Heimdallr is described as the visitor to Vágasker and Singasteinn, and there he contended with Loki for the *Brísingamen*. Snorri writes, *Úlfr Uggason kvað í Húsdrápu langa stund eptir þeiri frásǫgu; er þess þar getit er þeir váru í sela líkjum*. "Úlfr Uggason composed a long passage in *Húsdrápa* based on this story, and it is mentioned there that they were in the form of seals" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19, *Edda* 1995: 76). One reason to believe Snorri about a longer passage is that only one stanza remains describing this particular myth, yet it is part of a *drápa* - each partition typically consisting of more strophes between refrains in a longer poem. It is helpful that he adds an additional clue regarding the myth: that Heimdallr and Loki transformed into seals as they fought over the necklace. Additional information from the sources regarding Heimdallr, Loki and the *Brísingamen* will help shed light on the possible interpretations of the myth the wood-carved scene described in stanza 2 is based on.

Heimdallr's role in the myth and considerations regarding his depiction

First, a close look at what we can learn about Heimdallr. In the first stanza of the *Poetic Edda* in the poem *Vǫlospá* "Seeress's Prophecy" it states:

> Hlióðs bið ec allar helgar kindir,
> meiri oc minni mǫgo Heimdalar; (*Edda* 1983: 1)

[36] It is important to reiterate that Finnur has taken quatrains from various manuscripts containing *Skáldskaparmál* and listed them in a certain order in his edition (Finnur 1908: 128-30)

Attention I ask from all the sacred people,
greater and lesser, the offspring of Heimdall, (...) (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 4)

This must point to *Rígsþula* "The List of Rig" (*Edda* 1983: 280, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 246), which indicates Heimdallr is the progenitor of "the structures of human society" i.e. the Norse class system of *Þræll* "Thrall" (slave, bond servant), *Karl* "Farmer" (peasant farmer) and *Iarl* "Earl". Heimdallr travels and stops in on three homes, the first that of Great-grandfather and Great-grandmother, secondly Grandfather and Grandmother, and finally Father and Mother. At each residence he lays between the couple for three nights. Their eventual offspring are given the "appropriate" names above. They in turn marry and generate the populations of each class.

Rígsþula is an eddic poem recorded in Codex Wormianus (W). It is included in the *Edda* edited by Hans Kuhn in 1983. The poem not only categorizes classes, but also focuses on the work and roles conducted by each. There is a heavy emphasis that the work of the "earl" class is skills in weaponry and battle *egg at kenna, undir riúfa* "to assess a sword blade, to make red wounds". Of particular interest is Karl and his wife give birth to one called *Smiðr* "Smith". This does not indicate that the craftsman held a particularly high status in Norse society, however, it does support the arguments made in part one section three that the general craftsperson may have conducted seasonal work on farms and otherwise moved about freely. Regarding the status of Heimdallr, with his name included in the first stanza of the *Poetic Edda* and given the epithet of siring all social populations, he is an all-important god with a most certain allegiance to gods and humans.

Also in *Vǫlospá*, stanza 27:

Veit hon Heimdalar	hlióð um fólgit
undir heiðvǫnom	helgom baðmi;
á sér hon ausaz	aurgom forsi
af veði Valfǫðrs -	vitoð ér enn, eða hvat? (*Edda* 1983: 6-7)

She knows that Heimdall's hearing is hidden
under the radiant, sacred tree;
she sees, pouring down, the muddy torrent
from the wager of Father of the Slain; do you
understand yet, or what more? (*Edda* 1996: 7)

The "wager of the Father of the Slain" must reference Mímir's well, where Óðinn placed his eye in speculation that the deposit might bring him wisdom. It seems possible from this stanza that Heimdallr is one-eared, just as Óðinn is one-eyed. However, the reference is not really to his ear and more likely just to his acute hearing, as: *Han heyrir ok þat er gras vex á jǫrðu eða ull á sauðum ok allt þat er hæra lætr*. "He can also hear grass growing on the earth and wool on sheep and everything that sounds louder than that" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 25, *Edda* 1995: 25). Interestingly, Mímir is full of learning because he drinks of the well from what elsewhere belongs to Heimdallr, his most identifiable attribute, the "trumpet" Gjallarhorn - its blast can be heard in all worlds (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 17). Stanza 27 of *Vǫlospá* may be referenced in *Lokasenna* 48, when Loki spitefully says to Heimdallr:

'Þegi þú, Heimdallr! þér var í árdaga
iþ lióta líf um lagit;
aurgo baki þú munt æ vera
oc vaca vorðr goða.' (*Edda* 1983: 106)

'Be silent, Heimdall, for you in bygone days
a hateful life was decreed:
a muddy back you must always have
and watch as guard of the gods.' (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 92)

Han er kallaðr hvíti Áss. "He is known as the white As" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 25, *Edda* 1995: 25), perhaps because of the mud that collects on him. It seems the liquid from the well is hauled above Heimdallr in mythic space, as it also states in *Vǫlospá* 19 that:

Asc veit ec standa, heitir Yggdrasill
hár baðmr, ausinn hvítaauri;
þaðan koma dǫggvar, þærs í dala falla,
stendr æ yfir, grœnn, Urðar brunni. (*Edda* 1983: 5)

I know that an ash-tree stands called Yggdrasill,
a high tree, soaked with shining loam;
from there come the dews which fall in the valley,
ever green, it stands over the well of fate. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 6)

Snorri refers to the stanza above when he informs:

Enn er þat sagt at nornir þær er byggja við Urðar brunn taka hvern dag vatn í brunninum ok með aurinn þann er liggr um brunninn, ok ausa upp yfir askinn til þess at eigi skyli limar hans tréna eða fúna. En þat vatn er svá heilagt at allir hlutir þeir sem þar koma í brunninn verða svá hvítir sem hinna sú er skjall heitir, er innan liggr við eggskurn, (...) (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 19)

It is also said that the norns that dwell by Weird's well take water from the well each day and with it the mud that lies round the well and pour it up over the ash so that its branches may not rot or decay. And this water is so holy that all things that come into that well go as white as the membrane called the skin that lies round the inside of an eggshell, (...) (*Edda* 1995: 19)

It would appear that Heimdallr's frequent position is on the perimeter of the "drip line" of the world tree, and the white mud that runs off onto him could have earned him the epithet "the white god". Snorri also refers to Heimdallr's role as guard and having exceptional sight when he states:

> Hann er vǫrðr goða ok sitr þar við himins enda at gæta brúarinnar fyrir bergrisum. Þarf hann minna svefn en fugl. Hann sér jafnt nótt sem dag hundrað rasta frá sér. (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 25)
>
> 'He is the gods' watchman and sits there at the edge of heaven to guard the bridge against mountain-giants. He needs less sleep than a bird. He can see, by night just as well as day, a distance of a hundred leagues.' (*Edda* 1995: 25).

It seems the edge of heaven is the same as the perimeter below/around the tree. John Lindow notes that Heimdallr is a "boundary figure who sits near the bridge joining earth and heaven and will sound his horn before Ragnarǫk, when one era will give way to another" (Lindow 1997: 73). Even though Heimdallr is clearly one of the gods, he is not situated among them, and this liminal position adds to his mysterious identity. In *Gylfaginning*, Hár refers to the bridge: *Er þér eigi sagt þat at guðin gerðu brú til himins af jǫrðu ok heitir Bifrǫst? Hana muntu sét hafa, kann vera at þat kallir þú regnboga*. "Has no one ever told you that the gods built a bridge to heaven from earth called Bifrost? You must have seen it, maybe it is what you call the rainbow" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 15, *Edda* 1995: 15). Relevant here, in stanza 2 of *Húsdrápa* a kenning with the compound split by tmesis *ragna rein-vári* "'strip of land' 'of the powers' [possibly Bifrǫst] + 'trusty one or defender'" arguably refers to Heimdallr. This translation is based on Faulkes; also, "rein: poët., ragna rein, *the heavenly strip*, i.e. *the rainbow*" (Cleasby Vigfusson 1969: 491). A translation by Fritzner indicates *rein* may also be a green strip of land designating a boundary between two parcels, not to be broken up by plowing or digging. This boundary may also be marked by stones and trees. Sebastian Cöllen argues that *rein* can also translate to the more general sense of "land", and notes it would not be suitable for a border guard to go off in distant lands to fight. Rather than a watchman at the edge, Heimdallr may be understood as the protector of the land of the gods, as a founding father and leader. This fits Heimdallr's role in *Húsdrápa* 2 ensuring the regeneration and future salvation of Ásgarðr. It is primarily due to Snorri's interpretation that we understand Heimdallr as a guard at the bridge (Cöllen 2011: 116-17). As I have indicated above, there are other indicators that Heimdallr, with his keen hearing and horn, could be both a noble, essential member of the gods and a protector who acts on the periphery generating and maintaining order. If *rein* is understood more literally as "strip of land" without the allusion to the rainbow[37], Heimdallr is still the likely referent due to his associations with being a boundary figure.

Vǫlospá 46 denotes Heimdallr's most identifiable attribute, when the events of *ragnarǫk* are described:

Leica Míms synir,	enn miotuðr kyndiz	
at ino gamla	Giallarhorni;	
hátt blæss Heimdallr,	horn er á lopti,	
mælir Óðinn	við Míms hǫfuð	(*Edda* 1983: 11)

[37] A translation by Fritzner indicates *rein* may also be a green strip of land designating a boundary between two parcels, not to be broken up by plowing or digging. This boundary may also be marked by stones and trees.

The sons of Mim are at play and fate catches fire[38]
at the ancient Giallar-horn;
Heimdall blows loudly, his horn is in the air.
Odin speaks with Mim's head. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 10)

Visually, then, we can begin to form somewhat of a composite of Heimdallr. Where color is applied, it is possible to envision Heimdallr as coated white. Snorri adds, *Hann heitir ok Hallinskíði ok Gullintanni: tennr hans váru af gulli*. "He is also called Hallinskidi and Gullintanni: his teeth were of gold" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 25, *Edda* 1995: 25). One can imagine gold paint or even inlay in such a depiction. It is possible his eyes and ears could be exaggerated in size or otherwise in appearance. He may be situated in the vicinity of a tree or rainbow. However, Heimdallr's horn is his most vivid attribute. It is fairly certain that at least two extant stone carvings from the Viking Age depict Heimdallr - identifiable due to his Gjallarhorn - one from Jurby on the Isle of Man (fig. 68) and the other on the Gosforth Cross in Cumbria, England, discussed further below. There is an additional link between Heimdallr and horns. As cited above, Snorri provides Hallinskíði as an alternate name for Heimdallr. Hallinskíði is also in a *þula* as a name for a ram (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 131). Other gods and goddesses are associated with animals: Þórr and his goats, Freyr with his boar and Freyja with her cats - but examples of these are primarily used for transportation. Although there is little else to substantiate the claim, some have posited the correspondence with the alternate name Hallinskíði indicates Heimdallr is a "ram god", and he may have been envisioned in a ram shape (Simek 1993: 136). There are a lot of other references to gods shape-shifting. Even if there is no record of a myth of Heimdallr taking on a ram appearance, Snorri indicates he can change into a seal, so it seems within the realm of mythic possibility that his horn attribute could become a bodily one.

In *Gylfaginning* it states there is verse recited by Heimdallr, and it is cited: "*Níu em ek mæðra mǫgr, níu em ek systra sonr*". "Offspring of nine mothers am I, of nine sisters am I the son" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 26, *Edda* 1995: 25). The remainder of *Heimdalargaldr* is lost. However, as mentioned above these sisters are referred to in *Skáldskaparmál* where Snorri provides kennings for Heimdallr and his brief prose description about the struggle between Loki and Heimdallr in the shapes of seals over the *Brísingamen*. Even though they are not specifically cited, I contend the most likely candidates for Heimdallr's mothers are the nine daughters of Ægir, a personification of the ocean, and his wife Ran (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 41), listed among the Ásynjur, or *þeim næst talið* "reckoned next to them" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 115). In a list of kennings for the sea, Snorri lists *heimsækir guðanna* "visitor to the gods", *verr Ránar* "husband of Ran" and *faðir Ægis dætra* "father of Ægir's daughters". Ran is considered a sea goddess, as Snorri also lists her and her daughters in kennings for the sea: *land Ránar ok Ægis dætra* "land of Ran and of Ægir's daughters" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 36, *Edda* 1995: 91). As another example, the skald Snæbjǫrn uses the kenning *skerja núu brúðir* "the nine skerry-brides" as a referent to Ægir's daughters pointing to the term "waves" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 38, *Edda* 1995: 92). Snorri lists the names of the daughters twice in *Skáldskaparmál*: Himinglæva, Dúfa, Blóðughadda, Hefring, Uðr, Hrǫnn, Bylgja, Drǫfn, Kólga (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 95). Hrǫnn literally translates to "wave".

[38] An alternative translation: *but the Meotud* ['Meter', Dispenser] *is kindled, lighted,* where it seems to be applied to the god Heimdal, (the dawn in the Eastern sky, the morning star?...) (Cleasby Vigfusson 1969: 434)

Verses 35-37 in *Hyndluljóð* indicate that the nine mothers of a certain one with enormous power were daughters of giants. Ægir is listed as a giant in *Skáldskaparmál*, so this does not necessarily refute that these daughters are conceived as waves because giants and giantesses may be personifications of natural elements and features. The etymology of some of the giant names listed along with Ægir reveal this: Eld "fire", Vindr "wind", Vindsvalr is in the kenning as father of winter *þenna mǫg Vind-svals* "this winter", as interpreted by Faulkes (*Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 360). Snorri includes Vindr "Wind" as the brother of Ægir and Eld "Fire", who is respectively listed as a brother of Ægir. A kenning features a giant name listed among the group with Ægir, Viðblindi: *Viðblinda svín* "Viðblindi's boars" [whales] (*Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 517, *Edda* 1995: 115) makes an association with giants and the sea, as does the giant name Leifi, which is also the name of a sea-king and is used in the kenning *Leifa lǫnd* for the sea. (*Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 488). Hence, the elements wind, fire and water are included in the same verse listing giants along with Ægir (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 111). In this particular list, seemingly missing is earth, but the giant named Aurgelmir among them may be considered to include all of the elements, as it states in *Gylfaginning* about Ymir: *En hrímþursar kalla hann Aurgelmi...* "but the frost giants call him Aurgelmir..." (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 10, *Edda* 1995: 10). As indicated by both *Gylfaginning* and *Vafþrúðnismál* verse 21, Ymir is the primordial giant in the Norse myth of creation, from whose body parts made up the world. Among the elements, the earth was made of his flesh, as was the sea from his blood (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 11-12, *Edda* 1995: 12).

However, there is a discrepancy between Snorri and *Hyndluljóð* 37 regarding the names of the nine giantess daughters. There is not even any overlap, which suggests two quite different traditions. Heimdallr is not explicitly mentioned in *Hyndluljóð* 35 as the son of the nine mothers in question. In addition, there is no indication elsewhere that Heimdallr would be called a *naþgǫfgan mann* "spear-magnificent man"[39] as in the subject of this stanza. Hilda Ellis Davidson tells that an Old English poetic name for the sea is, *garsecg* "spear-man" (Davidson 1964: 129), and the Old English *gar* equals Old Norse *geirr*. It may be that this and even mythic tales of Poseidon with his trident had become knowledge of the composer of *Hyndluljóð*, in turn associating Heimdallr with the ocean. However, Heimdallr has the attribute of his horn, but Óðinn is the possessor of the spear Gungnir. The term *naddgǫfugr* appears in the poem *Grógaldr* as an obscure reference to a giant. Davidson translates the compound term as "nail-resplendent" and identifies the giant as the father of the maiden Menglǫð "necklace glad" (Davidson 1964: 175). She must be referring to the giant watchman in a following poem *Fjǫlsvinnsmál*, Fjǫlsviðr, who guards the entrance to Menglǫð's golden halls. The protagonist of both poems, Svipdagr, enters into a "wisdom" dialog with Fjǫlsviðr that is reminiscent of many accounts of encounters with Óðinn. Indeed, Fjǫlsviðr is one of the many names of Óðinn. It is not a big leap to associate Menglǫð with Freyja due to the attribute of possessing the a necklace and Óðinn posing as Fjǫlsviðr. Unlike world religions where there are "central" texts, Old Norse cults certainly varied

[39] In *Edda* 1983: 294, the use of the term *nað-gǫfugr* adj. and its variants is obscure. La Farge, Tucker, as a critical apparatus define the term as "gracious", used for Heimdallr, and *nadd-gǫfugr*, also as a critical apparatus "magnificent with (his) spears" (La Farge, Tucker 1992: 190). Larrington follows suit with "spear-magnificent man" (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 258). Turville-Petre translates *naddgǫfgan* as weapon-glorious (with a question mark added) (Turville-Petre 1964: 147). Cleasby Vigfusson translates naddr to "stud" or "nail" and nadd-göfugr "stud-glorious" as an epithet of Heimdal (Cleasby Vigfusson 1969: 445)

in their mythic accounts. The discrepancies between the poet's possible conception of Heimdallr in *Hyndluljóð* and Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* along with the borrowings in *Grógaldr* and *Fjǫlsvinnsmál* illustrate how a search for data may lead to choices that favor speculative claims. I prefer the testimony supporting information provided by Snorri over that of the names listed in *Hyndluljóð*. In stanza 2, Úlfr uses the kenning "son of eight mothers plus one" as a circumlocution for Heimdallr. Arguably then, a struggle for the *Brísingamen* is likely to have taken place in or by the sea, as Snorri also reports that Heimdallr and Loki were in the shapes of seals. As Úlfr is describing the woodcarvings, it is quite conceivable he formulated the kenning as he gazed upon waves that represented Ægir's daughters actually depicted in the scene.

Norse mythic space is ambiguous. In his explanation of why gold is called Ægir's fire, Snorri tells how when Ægir left the Æsir he invited them to visit him in three months. When the Æsir arrived, Ægir lit the banquet by placing glowing gold in the middle of the hall. Since Ægir and his relations are also terms for the sea, Snorri reasons that this is the background for the allegory gold is the fire of the sea and hence, *gull er kallat eldr eða ljós eða birti Ægis, Ránar eða Ægis dœtra* "gold being called fire or light or brightness of Ægir, Ran or Ægir's daughters" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 41, *Edda* 1995: 95). Snorri informs that another name for Ægir is Hlér, and that he lived on an island called Hlésey. Since he is indeed a "giant", knowing the strong associations of those entities with the elements and as the personification of the ocean, such a location is fitting. The event described by Snorri is the topic of the poem *Lokasenna*, where Loki crashes the banquet, murders a servant and verbally bashes the gods. Although there is nothing in the poem to support the contention that Ægir's hall is out at sea, it does state in the prose introduction that Þórr was not present because he was *í austrvegi* "in the east" (*Edda* 1983: 96). If Norway were the metaphoric image map for the mythic space, the east would be the mountainous interior region and terrain associated with the giants. Hence, the west would be the long coastline and out into the North Sea. Prior to the banquet, Ægir needed a cauldron large enough to brew beer for the festivity. The poem *Hymisqviða* tells how Þórr went to fetch one from the giant Hymir. (Embedded in *Hymisqviða* is the tale of how Þórr goes out with him and fishes for the Midgard serpent - the topic of the next section.) Þórr is able to bring back a cauldron so large that only he can carry it. Thus, Ægir is able to host the Æsir for their winter celebrations. Here I offer the interpretation that the cauldron represents the ocean basin, and the brew the liquid that fills it with all its bounty. This notion is supported by another myth involving Þórr - his visit to Útgarðaloki - where the giant challenged Þórr to empty a horn. No matter how hard he tried, Þórr could not finish the drink. It was later revealed to be an illusion cast by Útgarðaloki, and Þórr was trying to swallow the entire ocean, but he consumed so much that he was able to create the tides. It seems the gods are so mighty that in the long run it could take an entire sea to satisfy their thirst. Such a cauldron as the one represented in *Hymisqviða* could provide that supply. Ægir, as personification of the ocean, hosts the Æsir as both the originators and beneficiaries of the aquatic "terrain" within the Norse cosmos. Heimdallr, as offspring of the nine daughters of Ægir, would feel quite at home there. Simultaneously, as watchman of the gods, he has a vested interest in maintaining the order of that domain.

Descriptions of the sly and cunning thief

Loki, on the other hand, is portrayed as destined to disrupt the order set in place by the Æsir. His role as a friend but mischievous trouble-maker among the pantheon escalates as mythic

time unfolds until he finally leads the charge at the "doom of the gods". Loki is the trickster of Norse mythology, as he displays many of the attributes of that role. Snorri informs:

> Loki er fríðr ok fagr sýnum, illr í skaplyndi, mjǫk fjǫlbreytinn at háttum. Hann hafði þá speki um fram aðra menn er slœgð heitir, ok vælar til allra hluta. Hann kom Ásum jafnan í fullt vandræði ok opt leysti hann þá með vælræðum. (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 26-27)

> Loki is pleasing and handsome in appearance, evil in character, very capricious in behavior. He possessed to a greater degree than others the kind of learning that is called cunning, and tricks for every purpose. He was always getting the Æsir into a complete fix and often got them out of it by trickery. (*Edda* 1995: 26)

When he performs his antics, Loki frequently shape-shifts. Often as an outcome he brings gifts to the Æsir. His "evil" deeds are a catalyst for change in the cosmology. Perhaps for these reasons, he is mentioned to a much greater extent in the myths than his opponent Heimdallr. Son of the giant Fárbauti and the Ásynja Laufey, he is a transgression of the norm. The Æsir males reproduce with giantesses, but few giants father children with goddesses. He is listed among the Æsir, albeit last (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 114, *Edda* 1995: 157). The list of kennings Snorri provides for Loki encapsulate most of his roles in the mythology:

> Hvernig skal kenna Loka? Svá at kalla son Fárbauta ok Laufeyjar, Nálar, bróður Býleists ok Helblinda, fǫður Vánargands (þat er Fenrisúlfr) ok Jǫrmungands (þat er Miðgarðsormr) ok Heljar ok Nara, ok Ála frænda ok fǫðurbróður, sinna ok sessa Óðins ok Ása, heimsœki ok kistuskrúð Geirrøðar, pjófr jǫtna, hafrs ok Brísingamens ok Iðunnar epla, Sleipnis frænda, verr Sigynjar, goða dólgr, hárskaði Sifjar, bǫlva smiðr, hinn slœgi Áss, rœgjanda ok vélandi goðanna, ráðbani Baldrs, hinn bundni, þrætudólgr Heimdala<r> ok Skaða. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19-20)

> How shall Loki be referred to? By calling him son of Farbauti and Laufey, of Nal, brother of Byleist and Helblindi, father of Vanargand, i.e. Fenriswolf, and of Iormungand, i.e. the Midgard serpent, and Hel's and Nari's and Ali's relative and father, brother, comrade and table-companion of Odin and the Æsir, Geirrod's visitor and casket-ornament, thief from giants, of goat and Brisingamen and Idunn's apples, relative of Sleipnir, husband of Sigyn, enemy of the gods, Sif's hair-harmer, maker of mischief, the cunning As, accuser and trickster of the gods, contriver of Baldr's death, the bound one, wrangler with Heimdall and Skadi. (*Edda* 1995: 76-7).

Among these references, Snorri mentions Nál is another name for Laufey (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 26, *Edda* 1995: 26). Loki is referred to as Býleistr's brother in *Vǫlospá* stanza 51, as he steers a ship in attack against the Æsir during ragnarǫk. Helblindi is one of the names by which Óðinn identifies himself in *Grímnismál* (stanza 46). Snorri mentions a Helblindi as brother to Loki twice but with no explanation. Perhaps this is why Óðinn is listed as his brother. *Lokasenna* 9 also confirms the relationship when Loki says:

'Mantu þat, Óðinn, er við í árdaga
blendom blóði saman;' (*Edda* 1983: 98)

'Do you remember, Odin, when in bygone days
we mixed our blood together?' (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 86)

This leads one to conclude that Óðinn and Loki are "blood brothers". Loki sires three of the children mentioned above with Angrboða, a giantess, and each of these play significant dark roles in the mythology. One of them, Jǫrmungandr, the Midgard serpent, is a topic of the next section. The Fenris wolf is bound by a magic fetter made by dwarfs until he breaks free, joins the attack during ragnarǫk, and devours Óðinn. Hel is outcast to Niflheimr and receives those who die of sickness and old age. Loki's two other children are by his wife Sigyn, an Ásynja. There is some confusion about the name Ali. Snorri says that prior to ragnarǫk Loki is captured and bound. The Æsir fetch his sons, turn Váli into a wolf, who in turn tears Nari (or Narfi) into pieces. The Æsir take Nari's entrails and bind Loki with them (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 49). Hence, he is the "bound one". As discussed further below, this is how he is typically displayed in extant iconography.

Many other stories as told by Snorri are referenced by the kennings. In some of them Loki is a comrade, and in others he is clearly "an enemy of the gods". As examples of the former, Loki gave birth to the eight-legged horse Sleipnir after distracting a stallion that belonged to a giant. The Æsir had contracted the giant to build a wall around Ásgarðr in exchange for Freyja and the moon. The deadline was approaching when Loki turned himself into a mare. The work could not be completed without the stallion and disaster was averted. As a visitor, Loki joined Þórr when he went to Geirrøðr's "courts" to challenge the giants there. Loki's role in regard to being the "thief of Iðunn's apples" and "wrangler with Skaði" is more arbitrary. Loki was coerced by the giant Þjazi to abduct the goddess Iðunn, along with her apples that provided longevity for the Æsir. When the Æsir found out, they in turn forced him to retrieve her. Loki borrowed Freyja's falcon suit and flew to get her. He turned Iðunn et al into a nut and flew back with her in his talons. Þjazi flew after them in pursuit, but he was burned to death when he crossed into Ásgarðr. When Skaði came to avenge her father Þjazi, Loki diverted her wrath by making her laugh. Loki is called "Sif's hair harmer" because, as a maker of mischief, he cut of all of her hair. Yet, after Þórr made some threats to his well-being, Loki went to some dwarfs, Ívaldi's sons, and not only had a hairpiece of gold made for Sif, but also a couple of other magical goods for the gods: Óðinn's spear Gungnir and for Freyr Skíðblaðnir, a ship that always caught fair wind and could be folded and placed in a pocket when not in use. In order to double the gain, Loki wagered his head with a dwarf named Brokkr that he and his brother Eitri could not make precious items that would surpass the first three. The dwarfs succeeded in making the gold ring Draupnir, from which every ninth night dripped eight new rings, a boar with golden bristles and Þórr's hammer Mjǫllnir. Loki lost the bet, as the Æsir deemed Mjǫllnir to be the most precious object. Loki, with his trickery managed to keep his head, but with the assistance of the dwarfs' brother Alr, (a personification of) "Awl", they sewed his lips shut[40]. During this episode, in order

[40] For more discussion about dwarfs as smiths, see section 2. 3. A dwarf as personification of a tool supports the concept that dwarfs craft items from the elements of raw material personified by giants, which in turn fits an overall mythic schema for creation parallel to the technical manifestation of goods.

that Brokkr and Eitri would not be able to win the bet, Loki tried to disturb the smith Brokkr by shape-shifting into a fly. As seen in many of his escapades, this is a frequent trick used by Loki, which lends credence to Snorri's telling about how he and Heimdallr took on the shapes of a seals.

More unmistakably as enemy of the gods, Snorri informs that Loki contrived the death of Baldr by finding out the only thing to which he was vulnerable, and he tricked Hǫðr, a blind son of Óðinn, to slay Baldr with a mistletoe dart. This action set up the events that lead to Baldr's funeral, covered in section 2.6, followed by a continued deterioration of relations that further polarized Loki from the rest of the Æsir and ultimately to the calamity of ragnarǫk. These very brief accounts are redundant for those who are familiar with the *Edda*, but they are mentioned for a few reasons. One is to expand a bit on the kennings above as examples of the rich amount of material from which the skald had to craft his verse. In their brevity, the highlights only touch on tales that include many more details from whence kennings bring forth larger mythic schemas to the imagination. More specifically, the background presents short character analyses from which to comprehend the roles of the players, in this case Loki and Heimdallr, in both the mythic content and the potential for reconstructing iconographic descriptions recited by Úlfr. For example, as defined by Snorri, *sannkenningar* are adjectival and adverbial attributes used by the poet to identify entities. When Úlfr uses the terms such as *firna and slægr* "terribly sly", knowing about Loki's character leaves little doubt about who Úlfr is referring to. Such attributes may also add subtle information regarding the depictions Úlfr is describing. The simple kenning *Fárbauta mǫgr* "son of Fárbauti" added to the phrase makes it certain who Heimdallr is contending with in the mythical scene. Although a very incomplete summary, the fragmentary tales above are necessary to inform a comprehensive analysis of stanza 2, for which the kenning *þjófr Brísingamens* "thief of the *Brísingamen*" directly points to Snorri's presentation of the myth.

Tales of the *Brísingamen*

In *Gylfaginning*, it states that: *Freyja átti Brísingamen* "Freyja owned the Brisings' necklace" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 29, *Edda* 1995: 30), and in *Skáldskaparmál* she is the possessor of, among other things, *Brísingamen* (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 30, *Edda* 1995: 86). It is made clear in *Þrymsqviða* that Freyja is strongly identified by the necklace. The giant Þrymr steals Þórr's hammer, and he demands Freyja as a bride if Þórr is to get it back. When Þórr approaches Freyja about accompanying him to giant-land:

Reið varð þá Freyia	oc fnásaði,
allr ása salr	undir bifðiz,
stǫcc þat iþ micla	men Brísinga:
'Mic veiztu verða	vergiarnasta,
ef ec ec með þér	í iotunheima.' (*Edda* 1983: 113)

Freyia then was angry and snorted in rage,
all the halls of the Æsir trembled at that,
the great necklace of the Brisings fell from her:
'You'll know me to be the most sex-crazed of women,
if I drive with you to the land of the giants.' (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 98)

When Freyja refuses to go along, Þórr poses as her by dressing in drag and wearing her necklace:

> Bundo þeir Þór þá brúðar líni
> oc ino micla meni Brísinga, (...) (*Edda* 1983: 113)
>
> Then they dressed Thor in a bride's head-dress
> and in the great necklace of the Brisings, (...) (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 99)

It is of course absurd that Þórr could pass for Freyja, but the *Brísingamen* is used as a convincing attribute of hers to make the trick. This also happens to be a journey where Loki is a travelling companion of Þórr, and by dressing as Þórr's bridesmaid he assists in actually pulling the stunt off.

At a point in mythic time, mostly due to the slaying of Baldr and perhaps best indicated at the end of *Lokasenna*, Loki prompts Þórr and the rest of the pantheon to turn against him. Loki becomes Heimdallr's mortal enemy, as they cause each other's death at ragnarǫk. In stanza 2, the event described seems to occur early in mythic time and is likely to be one of many incidents contributing to the animosity between them. In *Skáldskaparmál* Snorri refers to Heimdallr as *Loka dólgr, mensækir Freyju* "Loki's enemy, 'recoverer' of Freyia's necklace" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19, *Edda* 1995: 76). Snorri is certainly informed by the *Poetic Edda* regarding the overall hostile relationship between the two adversaries, yet he also presents himself as quite competent regarding the context of the encounter between Heimdallr and Loki in *Húsdrápa*.

Interpretations of stanza 2

Several scholars depart from Snorri in their interpretation of stanza 2. For example, Edith Marold does not consider the struggle between Loki and Heimdallr over the *Brísingamen*, rather, she makes a literal reading of *rein* as an object, and Heimdallr succeeds in taking that "land" away from Loki at Singasteinn. She understands the kenning *hafnyra fǫgru* as a referent to "earth" and for the first quatrain arrives at the following:

> 'Der ratkluge, berühmte Wächter der Götter nimmt beim Singasteinn das Land
> vom überaus schlauen Sohn des Fárbauti weg'. (Marold 2000: 296)
>
> 'The council-clever famed watchman of the gods takes the land away from the
> supremely sly son of Fárbauti at the Singa-stone.' (North 2007: 376)

Marold's reading follows Kurt Schier, who also contends the myth concerns a struggle over land. Schier proposes that Heimdallr raises the land out of the sea, but Loki retains some of it, and Heimdallr takes the land from him (Schier 1963). Both Marold and Schier point to comparative myths, known from among other places in Eastern Europe, that the earth was created from a primordial ocean (Marold 2000: 298, Schier 1963: 586).

In his linguistic analysis, Sebastian Cöllen begins with the second quatrain. The thrust of his argument is temporal regarding the interpretation of *áðr* in relation to *ráðr*. For example, he

indicates that Schier translates *áðr* as *bald* "soon" and most take *áðr* to mean *zuerst* "first". This leads to the interpretation that Heimdallr gains control of the sea-kidney "presently". Cöllen prefers Heimdallr *áðr* "previously or hitherto" had control over the sea kidney, and hence, is being described in the stanza as having lost it rather than regained it (Cöllen 2007: 63). In the first quatrain, Cöllen understands a spatial element of the stanza differently than most scholars. In regard to *bregða við*, most translate *við* as "against", following Snorri, with *bregða* meaning "to struggle", i.e. Heimdallr and Loki are struggling against each other. Here, Cöllen prefers interpreting *bregða við* as "moving toward" *rein* "a strip of land". Rather than "at Singasteinn" Cöllen reads *at* "in order to", i.e. retrieve the Singasteinn: Heimdallr has lost the "sea kidney" on account of Loki and is in pursuit of "the sly son of Fárbauti" He arrives at:

> Der ratkluge, berühmte Wächter der Grenze der Götter begibt sich wegend es sehr schlauen Sohns Fárbautis nach dem Singastein (d. h. um den Singastein zu erringen) (Cöllen 2007: 69).
>
> The wise of council, famous guard of the border of the gods sets out on account of the very sly son of Fárbauti toward the Singasteinn. (in order to regain the Singasteinn).

In his article, Cöllen uses a comparative mythology to interpret the myth as stealing fire from the gods. He merges the "sea kidney" and Singasteinn as symbols for fertility and the creation aspects of fire. Hence, Cöllen argues that Heimdallr and the gods hoarded fire, and Loki stole it. In the stanza Heimdallr has not prevailed over Loki for the "sea kidney", but because of Loki he must leave Ásgarðr in order to retrieve the "shining stone". Cöllen does not dismiss the inclusion of the *Brísingamen* as part of the symbolism, but otherwise he rejects most of Snorri's information regarding the stanza (Cöllen 2007: 72-6).

Most analysts agree that Heimdallr and Loki are competing, as in Faulkes' translation of *bregðr*, however, as noted by Richard North, the reflexive form of the verb *bregða sér* may also mean to transform or change shape. He argues this would require an ellipse but otherwise fits with Snorri's additional information about shape shifting. North sees the myth as renewal through a changing of the seasons, as Heimdallr retrieves the sun and brings the end of winter. In order to arrive at this he departs from Snorri and speculates that Singasteinn is not transparent as a place name, but it is a kenning for the sun. This is quite problematic because there is no cognate in Old Icelandic for *singa* and it requires that *singa* is a miscopy of *signa*, borrowed from the Latin *signum*, to bless or sign over (see also Pering 1941). In that case, the kenning could refer to the sun as a jewel (*steinn*) blessing creation. North's interpretation of the stanza reads, "... as the jewel hits the water, Heimdallr turns into a seal to save the *Brísingamen* from sinking out of reach" (North 2007: 380). Although the shape-shifting part of his translation is interesting from a visual point of view, the interpretation seems unsubstantiated. Clearly, Heimdallr is having some kind of encounter with Loki as indicated with the kenning *firna slægjan Fárbauta mǫgr* "Farbauti's terribly sly son" and not alone retrieving a sinking sun.

Returning to the topic of the necklace, it is unknown who the *Brísingamen* is named after. Larrington suggests the Brisings may be an unknown tribe (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 301). In *Haustlǫng* Þjóðólfr inn hvinverski uses the possible kenning construction *goða Brísings*

girðiþjófr "the thief of the girdle of Brísingr's gods" as a referent to Loki (*Edda* 1995: 87). Faulkes suggests, "if Brísingr were a dwarf or a dwarf's dwelling, these would be the dwarfs, one-time possessors or makers of the Brísingamen" (*Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 292). The topic of a coveted necklace made by dwarfs and owned by Freyja is in a *þáttr* found in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar in *Flateyjarbók*. In *Sǫrla þáttr* Heimdallr has no part, but Loki remains the thief as an agent of Óðinn. Freyja is portrayed as a mistress of Óðinn. She spies a beautiful necklace being made by four dwarves. Freyja offers to buy it, but they agree only to let it go if she spends a night with each of them. She complies and brings it back to her bedchamber. Loki tells Óðinn about the necklace, and Óðinn orders him to steal it. In order to enter unnoticed, Loki turns himself into a fly. Freyja, however, is lying in a position such that he cannot release the clasp. Next, he changes into a flea and bites her. That disturbs her enough that she repositions herself, and it allows Loki to remove the necklace. When she awakens and misses the necklace, Freyja confronts Óðinn. He consents to return it to her only if she agrees to a condition: she must arrange that two kings struggle in an endless conflict. It is indicated that this is the origin of another legendary myth, also a topic of the picture poem *Ragnarsdrápa*: *Hjaðningavíg* "battle of the Hjaðningar". As a result, each day two armies destroy each other, yet they are continually resurrected in order to battle anew. The tale of *Sǫrla þáttr* is vaguely reminiscent of the participants in *Fjǫlsvinnsmál*, discussed above. There, Fjǫlsviðr may be understood to be Óðinn, who guards the entrance to the golden halls of Mengloð "necklace-glad", a possible stand-in for Freyja. Loki and the theft of the necklace are not involved in that poem, but Óðinn as a "patron" and Mengloð/Freyja as a lover/goddess seems to be the running theme.

In all of these accounts there are interesting parallels to *Húsdrápa* 2. Freyja, as one of the Vanir, is linked via those entities in a general sense with fertility (see also section 1.2). In a more specific way, Freyja is also associated with the promiscuity she so fervently is in denial of in *Þrymsqviða*. Like Þórr's hammer and Heimdallr's horn, the necklace is a strong attributable identifier of Freyja - enough to disguise Þórr when it is worn. Exchanging sex for ownership loads the necklace with symbolism of a fertility act or rite. Following Birger Pering, Clive Tolley notes that *hafnýra fǫgru* may refer to *vettenyrer*, kidney shaped molluca beans that are washed up on shore throughout the North Atlantic and were used as birth talismans (Tolley 1996, Pering 1941). This coincides with the view that the *Brísingamen* is a fertility symbol. The theft of the necklace may be seen as a threat to the natural order. As mentioned above, among kennings listed for Heimdallr he is "the necklace 'recoverer' - seeker/fetcher" (*Edda* 1995: 76). In the *Sǫrla þáttr* version, Óðinn is the one who is behind the theft of the necklace, and this fits with his role as seeker of knowledge, often of feminine nature. In other sources, he also learns seiðr from Freyja, an art of trance and prophecy with feminine connotations. Óðinn's desire for the "fertility necklace" may be seen as an appropriation of creativity associated with the feminine, which Clunies Ross would describe as an act of pseudo procreation (Clunies Ross 1994: 144-186). Instead of Heimdallr retrieving the necklace, Óðinn agrees to return it. His role, actions and demands point to an odd portrayal of resurrection, but nevertheless bear similarity to a theme of creation and transformation contained in stanza 2 – with the added element of death. The stipulation for an everlasting battle where the slain rise again each morning to fight alludes to natural rotation. This Christian infused story hints at a possible primordial mythic source representing cyclical renewal. In the stanza in *Húsdrápa*, Snorri informs that Loki has stolen the *Brísingamen*, which may be interpreted as disrupting Freyja's status as fertility goddess. But also,

perhaps inadvertently by filling the trickster role, his theft of the necklace provides symbolism for a primordial myth of creation.

The kenning in stanza 2 *hafnýra fǫgru* "the beautiful sea-kidney" is then arguably a reference to the *Brísingamen*, but this has generated a lot of debate. Although Snorri does not explicitly make the connection, in his description of the encounter between Heimdallr and Loki, it seems he is inferring that the *hafnýra fǫgru*, "beautiful sea-kidney," is indeed one of the kennings for *Brísingamen*, "Brísings' necklace." Snorri adds about Heimdallr as a visitor to Singasteinn: *þá deildi hann við Loka um Brísingamen*. "on that occasion he contended with Loki for the Brisingamen" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19, *Edda* 1995: 76). As indicated above, Kurt Schier posits that Snorri somehow read into the myth regarding the *Brísingamen* and the seals, and he suggests that *hafnýra* is a simple kenning for "island". While I surmise Snorri had that additional information from oral tradition and now missing verses from poetry, I concur with Schier that stanza 2 involves a creation myth where the struggle results in the first part of the cosmos to emerge from the sea (Lindow 1997: 79, Schier 1976). Following the lead of Marold and Schier, Clive Tolley also understands the stanza as representing a primordial creation myth. He speculates that the sea-kidney is a kenning for an island, but tracing different problematic etymology, *Singasteinn* is the necklace, "hence the fight is over the Gleaming Stone which is also conceived as an island raised from the ocean" (Tolley 1996: 88). He argues that the two kennings are parallel as symbols for the earth, and like Schier, that Heimdallr is instrumental in bringing the land up out of the water. This idea partially corresponds with *Vǫlospá* 4:

> Áðr Burs synir bioðum um ypþo,
> þeir er Miðgarð, mœran scópo;
> Sól scein sunnan á salar steina,
> þá var grund gróin grœnum lauki. (*Edda* 1983: 1)

> First the sons of Bur brought up the earth,
> the glorious ones who shaped the world between;
> the sun shone from the south on the hall of stones,
> then the soil was grown over with green plants. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 4)

It seems that there is substance to the claim that mythic primordial creation involved raising the earth, perhaps out of the sea. Identifying Heimdallr as one of the sons of Burr is more complicated. Clunies Ross notes that Heimdallr's father is never made clear by the surviving source material (Clunies Ross 1994: 174). In answering, "How shall Heimdallr be referred to?" Snorri ends with *ok sonr Óðins* "Also son of Odin". (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19, *Edda* 1995: 76). However, this is confused by stanza 15 in *Þrymsqviða*:

> Þá qvað þat Heimdallr, hvítastr ása,
> vissi hann vel fram, sem vanir aðrir... *Edda* 1983: 113

Clunies Ross translates this as, "He was well able to see into the future, like the other Vanir" (Clunies Ross 1994: 176). The statement that Heimdallr is of the Vanir gods may be dismissed as an anomaly, or it may be understood that he is the son of Njǫrðr. Snorri tells us *Eigi er Njǫrðr Ása ættar. Hann var upp fœddr í Vanaheimum (...)* "Niord is not of the race of the Æsir. He was

brought up in the land of the Vanir (...)" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 23, *Edda* 1995: 23). Davidson refers to Njǫrðr as the "god of ships" due to his many associations with the sea (Davidson 1964: 132). Njǫrðr's home Nóatún "Enclosure of ships" would indicate the sea or its edge. As Njǫrðr lives by the sea, it would fit the possibility of Njǫrðr's mating with the giantesses known as Ægir's daughters. Given emphasis on the patrilineal in Norse society, in spite of being born of giantesses the father of Heimdallr must have been a god. This stands in opposition to Loki, whose father was the giant Fárbauti and mother was the goddess Laufey. In a mythic world of negative reciprocity, where gods were allowed to mate with giantesses but giants mating with goddesses was strictly taboo, it is no wonder that Loki is portrayed as anti-social, and indeed, the ultimate leader of doom. It appears that Heimdallr is not only the watchman for the gods, but also the guardian of the earth. Loki, on the other hand, as Heimdallr's mortal enemy and combatant at ragnarǫk, ultimately destroys those realms. As stanza 2 makes clear, Loki has a long history of contesting with Heimdallr. Yet for all the destruction, something new arises. Keeping these interpretations in mind, the myths are obscure, but the *Húsdrápa* stanza 2 seems to represent the cycle of life with an emphasis on fertility as catalyst resulting in birth, through transformation by the struggle between these opposing gods. Heimdallr may be seen as ruling over the world order, but the challenge by Loki reveals the volatile productivity of nature. As Heimdallr rises victorious with the *hafnyra fǫgru* (representing fertility and creation), land emerges like a skerry at low tide, and the "earth is brought up," or born.

Lindow's translation of stanza 2 differs from Faulkes and supports two of the arguments made above:

> The council-wise, famous guardian of the gods' edge [of land] contends against the shockingly sly son of Farbauti at Singasteinn; the valiant son of eight and one mothers soon rules the kidney of the sea; I make it known in sections of the verse. (Lindow 1997: 78)

Rather than a kenning insertion referring to Bifrǫst "Rainbow bridge", the notion of Heimdallr being the "famous guardian of the gods' edge [of land]" situates both Heimdallr and the event by the sea. This location also reinforces that the kenning "valiant son of eight mothers plus one" refers to Ægir's daughters. By also not inserting *Brísingamen* as the referent of "kidney of the sea" it leaves open the possibility that the mythic necklace is not involved and the organ shape in question symbolizes land. I would like to suggest that these perceptions are not mutually exclusive in a visual depiction. Namely, a rainbow could drop down at or arch over a kidney shaped land mass that resembles a necklace. These depictions could have both inspired Úlfr's kennings along with Snorri's interpretations of the stanza and ultimately the translation forwarded by Faulkes.

In summary, I prefer the translation by Faulkes, as it most closely follows Snorri. While interpretations of the diction and linguistic variations provided by Schier, Marold, Cöllen, et al are interesting and of value in visualizing the scene, most assume to varying degrees that Snorri misunderstood the stanza. Contrary to that position, I argue that Snorri was close enough in time and location to provide what these scholars would never otherwise have access to - the primary sources of oral tradition - which he presented in prose. Communication of any type may suffer

some inaccuracies through multiple informants. However, it seems that Snorri provided the data rather than interpretations of what he gathered to provide the mythic background for his exposition of poetry. The exception to this is seen in his Prologue and where he inserts his ideas regarding the origins of the myths stemming from Asia, Greece and Turkey. Hence, there seems to be a rather clear division between the unmediated Old Norse myths and Snorri's assertions. Therefore, in stanza 2, I understand Heimdallr and Loki *bregðr við*, "contest over" *at Singasteini* "at (a mythic location called) Singasteinn" the *hafnyra fǫgru*, as a kenning the symbolic representation of *Brísingamen*, and that Heimdallr *ræðr áðr* "controls before", or "prevails". There is no doubt that *firna slœgjan Fárbauta mǫgr* is a referent for Loki, and *mǫgr einnar ok átta mœðra* points to Heimdallr. The arguably least substantiated element of Faulkes' translation *ragna rein-vári* "watchman of the powers' strip of land" representing Heimdallr through association with Bifrǫst is nevertheless plausible, as Snorri places Heimdallr guarding the bridge in *Gylfaginning* (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 25, *Edda* 1995: 25).

A hypothetical reproduction of the scene

So, what did the woodcarving look like? Conducting a close reading of the stanza describing the struggle between Heimdallr and Loki over the *hafnýra fǫgru* "beautiful sea-kidney" in relation to relevant Old Norse literature and by examining archeological finds of Viking Age art, I both present these findings and offer a visual representation by constructing an ornamental wood carved depiction of the mythological scene. In addition, I have considered the nuances suggested by scholars and subtly applied them in my depiction of the gods in the woodcarving. It seems most plausible that the struggle between Heimdallr and Loki is in the water, and the idea that the encounter is a creation myth involving dueling forces seems most reasonable. Therefore I have depicted the two gods in two positions, or stages, rising from the depths toward the surface of the sea. The surface consists of nine waves, as a direct reference to the kenning in the stanza referring to Heimdallr as the son of nine mothers. The struggle, seen literally between the two gods as they interlock their arms as "clutching beasts", lifts a mythic intertwined kidney-shaped abstraction which may be perceived as the *Brísingamen* and begins to emerge out of "Ægir's daughters." The result is Heimdallr in pursuit of Loki and land being lifted from the depths. In the carved rendering, the outcropping is integrated into the top frame with a depiction of Singasteinn, and above it the *ragna rein-vári* "defender of the powers' strip of ground, or way", according to Faulkes' translation of the kenning pointing to Heimdallr as the watchman of Bifrǫst the "rainbow bridge". In the remaining pages of this section, I provide details as to how I arrive at this design. (fig. 81)

A complete lack of surviving wood-carved items from the period of question regarding *Húsdrápa*, the late tenth century, poses significant problems for recreating how the carvings in the *eldhús* may have appeared. However, ornamentation found on other media provides clues regarding the talents of Scandinavian sculptors and patterns that also could have been executed in wood. As seen in previous sections, most of what does remain of ornamented objects from the ninth and tenth centuries comes from pagan graves, usually in the form of metal objects such as weapons, armor and items of everyday use. There are also artifacts made of amber, bone and walrus ivory. Due to durability, stones are an important source of ornamentation. Some of the stone carvings introduced in previous sections, as well as additional ones featuring applicable iconography are examined here for clues as to the appearance of woodcarvings. Aside from

much older rock pictographs, stone-carving was relatively rare in Scandinavia until the later part of the tenth century. The Gotland picture stones are an exception (Karnell 2012, Kopár 2012, Nylén, Lamm 1988, Lindqvist 1941). There are older slabs dating from the beginning of the Viking age and some seem to provide a mythic narrative, but it is largely speculation as to what myths or tales may be signified or their meaning, as there is no extant documentation providing contemporary literary versions. Some of the iconography resembles accounts provided by Snorri and eddic poetry, but disparities of themes also lend credence to an oral tradition with varying versions. The Ardre image stones are of particular interest for this study because of the mythological content depicted. The Ardre VIII stone, dated to the eighth or ninth century, is thought to portray scenes from *Vǫlundarqviða*, Óðinn riding on Sleipnir and perhaps Þórr on his fishing expedition. Lindqvist identified figures as the bound Loki with his wife Sigyn next to him on what is a very worn section of the stone on the lower right quadrant (Kopár 2012, Lindqvist 1941). (fig. 69) Although a considerable distance from Norway and Iceland, the iconography was circulating due to trade and expansion, and therefore the Gotland picture stones provide a source as to how other mythic scenes would have been represented.

Based on its enduring presence, I find it likely that the "gripping beast" motif prominently seen in the Broa and Oseberg finds would appear as part of the iconography depicting Heimdallr and Loki contesting for the *Brísingamen* on the artifact described in *Húsdrápa* from the late tenth century. The Broa find on Gotland consists of twenty-two bridle mounts from the early Viking age. (fig. 70) The designs on the mounts are frameworks that contain abstract elongated animal forms in profile with twisted bodies. The body is pierced through with tendrils. Sometimes these animals appear as a bird. However, the main feature of the motif is the gripping beast:

> These vigorous animals are the new invention in Scandinavian art. They take their name by their most obvious characteristic - the paws that grip the frames around or under them, that grip themselves, or even each other (several beasts may be interlocked together in compositions resembling wild melees.) They appealed so greatly to Viking taste that they enjoyed wide popularity and even survived as a motif into the 10th century. (Graham-Campbell and Kidd 1980: 155)

As discussed in detail in section 1.1, this motif is prevalent in the Oseberg woodcarvings. The "clutching man" pattern carved on the prow of the Oseberg burial-ship is an important clue to how the gods may have been arranged facing forward and grasping. (figures 3, 3a, 3b, 4) Indeed, in spite of dating from the early 800's, the prow carvings are a primary source contributing to my interpretation of stanza 2. For an illustration of how the Oseberg prow carvings are a source inspiration for my hypothetical reconstruction of the myth described in stanza 2, see Animation 3. Other "Viking head" artifacts help inform the facial features, including the sculpted heads that terminate on the trusses of the Oseberg wagon. (fig. 10) The face carved on a furnace stone found in Jutland, Denmark may depict Loki due to its stitched lips. It has almond shaped eyes and features a moustache (see Lindow 2001: 216). The cone-shaped helmeted Sigtuna warrior has similarly fashioned eyes with more detail, a moustache and a beard. (fig. 71) Analysis of numerous Viking Age "masks" assists in forming a composite.

Elements of the Borre style, based on the barrow-burial find in Vestfold, Norway dating from the mid-ninth century were still circulating when Úlfr composed *Húsdrápa*. The Borre motif of importance to this study is the "ring-chain" - an interlace pattern made up of multiple ribbons forming a series of rings. The Borre ring-chain appears on stone sculpture on the Isle of Man and there is evidence that the designs are due to Scandinavian influence. Prior to the ninth century, the Isle of Man was inhabited by Celts, but during the Viking period it became an important strategic island for raiders and later settlement. Names show the extent of the Scandinavian arrival and sway. Among the Manx stone sculptures is a cross at Kirk Michael which boasts "Gaut made this cross and all on Man." In *Viking Expansion Westwards* Magnus Magnusson informs:

> From another cross at Kirk Andreas we learn that his full name was Gaut Björnsson, and that he lived at Kuli, possibly the farm of Cooill or Cooley in the parish of Michael, or else the Scottish island of Coll. His work is dated to the period 930-950, and he seems to have been the first Scandinavian to introduce and adapt Celtic crosses in Man. His grave-slabs were relatively simple interlaced bands in a Norwegian ring-chain motif. (Magnússon 1973: 61)

The Borre style ring-chain executed by Gaut appears similar to ones seen in northern England, although each area presents a different version. For example, the Gosforth Cross in Cumbria, dated to the first half of the tenth century, features ring-chains, some with terminating serpent heads. (fig. 72) The link to Hlaðir may not be a direct one; however, there is little doubt that the Borre style originated in Scandinavia and was introduced into England during the Viking period. In *Viking Age Sculpture*, Richard Bailey notes that perishable media like wood and fabric were brought from Scandinavian to England, so the Borre ring-chain motif could have been brought to the sculptors in the form of other media (Bailey 1980). What is most important is that there was contact that spread the style to the North Atlantic where it remains documented by the stones. The Borre ornament provides dates, partially based on its occurrence on coins, from the mid-ninth century up through the tenth century, the period of the composition of *Húsdrápa*. In my hypothetical reconstruction, I have used a ring-chain motif with a tendril offshoot that binds together the crossing of two interlacing strands on the vertical members of the frame as produced by Gaut on Man. (fig. 74) Similar patterns of ring chains surround some of the picture stones on Gotland, including Tängelgårda I. (fig. 73) For an illustration of these stone carvings as source inspirations for the framework around a hypothetical reconstruction of the myth described in stanza 2, see Animation 4.

Mythological scenes also appear on many crosses and hogbacks in England during this period, and these are of particular interest. Bailey uses the similarity of iconography on the Ardre VIII stone and a cross from Leeds, Yorkshire depicting the Vǫlundr myth as an example of how designs spread from Scandinavia to England: "It was presumably on wood carvings and tapestries that the Wayland layout was carried to Britain, and we can get some impression of the type of models which might have been available both from the surviving archaeological evidence and from the literature." In regard to *Húsdrápa* he adds, "It is material like this which bridges the wide geographic and chronological gap between the Ardre stone and the Yorkshire sculptures" (Bailey 1980: 106). Inversely, North Atlantic stone carvings help reconstruct the iconography missing elsewhere in Scandinavia and in Hjarðarholt, Iceland, which at one time adorned Óláfr's

hall. Just as Bailey mentions that the tenth century poem *Húsdrápa* may have inspired the North British stone sculptors, they likely produced similar depictions to those described by Úlfr. None of the stones have been identified to depict the struggle between Heimdallr and Loki over the *Brísingamen*. Both of these gods are identified, however, on the Gosforth cross (Kopár 2012, Bailey 1980). The episodes carved on the cross are primarily scenes from ragnarǫk, another point in mythic time. It is thought that the eschatological parallels between the crucifixion, the second coming of Christ and the final battle of the Norse gods made these events seem analogous as seen in certain iconographic depictions on carved Anglo/Scandinavian grave stones (Kopár 2012: 94-104). Among the characters depicted are Heimdallr, recognized by his horn. (fig. 75) There is also an engraving that is considered a rendering of the bound Loki, with Sigyn standing over her husband catching poison in a bowl so it will not drip on him. (fig. 76) Yet another slab at the graveyard appears to be a rendering of Þórr, which is a source referred to in the next section. As Bailey puts it, "The 10th century church at Gosforth is decorated with a continuous line of narrative, analogous to (…) the wooden carvings of Icelandic halls" (Bailey 1980: 131). The figures in my carving are partially designed based on the Gosforth cross depictions of the gods. They are frontal (not in profile). They are dressed in tunics with belts. Heimdallr is shown with his horn. (See Animation 5)

Here I return to ekphrasis as it informs a summary of considerations for the design of a hypothetical reconstruction of the mythic scene referenced by stanza 2. In her article "Stylistic and Generic Definers of the Old Norse Skaldic Ekphrasis", Clunies Ross lists the Skaldic poems that fall into the category. She defines the genre of ekphrasis as: "(...) verbal representations of pictorial subjects that would have been recognizable depictions of specific heroic legends or myths to contemporary audiences" (Clunies Ross 2007: 162). In her table of poems, pictures and evidence, Clunies Ross notes that there is no extant image representing the stanza in question (Clunies Ross 2007: 167). Signe Horn Fuglesang concurs. In "Ekphrasis and Surviving Imagery in Viking Scandinavia", she writes, "Verse 2 tells of Heimdallr and Loki racing each other for Singasteinn. This story has no surviving illustration" (Fuglesang 2007: 200). However, as mentioned above, the Gotland picture stones at minimum provide some clues. The eternal battle of Hjaðningavíg, referred to in *Sǫrla þáttr* has possibly been identified on the Stora Hammar stone. (fig. 77) The battle may also be represented on Smiss I. If this mythic battle associated with Freyja's necklace is represented on the image stones, perhaps the contest between Heimdallr and Loki are also present but obscure enough to be overlooked. Scholars agree that a scene engraved on Ardre VIII represents the pan-Germanic story of the smith Vǫlundr, including a smithy, tools and his headless victims. It has been suggested that Þórr's fishing expedition also may be depicted (see section 2.5). After her discussion of numerous representations, Fuglesang concludes that the images on the stones often seem to be a composite of scenes that belong to several different myths, perhaps related more to theme than a single narrative: "Representations do not normally seem to have developed a story in chronological sequence, but to have juxtaposed single scenes from several different myths and heroic lays, each focusing on a dramatic climax" (Fuglesang 2007: 219). That being noted, the images on Ardre VIII could also fall under a theme of shape-shifting. For example, Vǫlundr is shown outside his smithy in the shape of a bird. Some might possibly represent Heimdallr and Loki in states of transformation as they face off. A struggle is depicted above the chamber that Lindqvist thought framed the bound Loki. Continuing above are contiguous morphing shapes of two figures contesting, which appear

to be positioned in a way that depicts motion – animating a story in succession as the shapes are slightly altered. (fig. 78)

It is North's conclusion that Úlfr would have been describing two carvings: "In this case we can presume one human image with a definer, such as a horn, to give an idea of Heimdallr before his transformation; and another of two seals adjacent to a necklace, one of them right next to it" (North 2007: 384). This could be the case if we accept Snorri's added information. In view of the hints from Snorri, there are more stanzas describing a longer version of the myth that is missing from what we now call *Húsdrápa*. Otherwise, based on what we have, one image may suffice for representing the stanza. It would have been unnecessary for someone familiar with the narrative to see single images of Heimdallr and Loki in two or more separate panels. If the elements on Ardre VIII may be taken for representing motion and transformation, then multiple images of the two in one panel could be perceived as the entire depiction of the narrative. With these factors in mind, I have "animated" Heimdallr and Loki by depicting them in two positions of their struggle within the same frame. Even though Úlfr does not mention seals in the extant *Húsdrápa* stanza describing the incident, it seems reasonable to hint at a seal-like shape in my imagined rendering of the scene. Hence, in my carving there are two depictions of each character, as the figures in the woodcarving move up instead of two legs they have a merman lower bodice. In imagining the look of the stanza, the wave motif on the Klinte Hunninge I picture stone is also of interest. (fig. 79) There are roughly nine waves, and this is the same number as Heimdallr's mothers. This is likely a coincidence, but as discussed above, there is reason to think that there is a link to these mothers as the giant daughters of Ægir, the giant associated with the sea. (Animation 6)

Otherwise, the iconography is depicted influenced by the gripping beasts seen in the Oseberg and Broa finds. I have transferred the "gripping beast" design to the clutching of the *hafnýra fǫgru*. The beards and moustaches fit well within the motifs of the Borre style with interweaved tendrils. Jewelry of the time provides additional clues to the shape of the form of the necklace. With some imagination it is possible to perceive an abstract visual of a kidney shape. (fig. 80, see also North 2007: 384). These shapes are also being clutched and are integrated into the design. (Animation 7) When these additional stylistic elements are taken into consideration, I have arrived at the following arrangement in the reconstructed carving:

The framing is made in the Borre ring-chain style based on examples from the Isle of Man along with the terminating serpent heads seen on the Gosforth cross. Framed borders such as these could have been used as members of the wainscoting between and above various panels depicting the mythological scenes described in *Húsdrápa*. The terminating serpentine heads would not necessarily need to represent ragnarǫk – the world serpent motif may be considered a common pattern to tie things together. The poet weaves his words in a complex manner to fit the form and meter of his art form; and, the inverse: the intertwining patterns are complex in design inspiring the obscure skaldic poetry that describes the iconography. Essentially, the twisted phrases and the woven chains are verbal and visual expressions of Norse representational style.

The gods are figuratively engaged in a struggle for the *hafnýra fǫgru* with their arms entwined with it and thereby each other. The "sea-kidney" is an obscure object and hence depicted as abstract kidney shapes between the two gripping deities. Along with the nine mothers

in the shape of waves, I argue shapes such as these inspired the kennings composed by Úlfr as he gazed upon the woodcarvings in Óláfr's hall. To reiterate, Heimdallr, identified by his horn on the lower left, emerges slightly above Loki in his top position, as my preferred interpretation of Úlfr's stanza describes him as the victor in the struggle. Yet the scene is not static, and consideration is given to Cöllen's assertion that Heimdallr is in pursuit. The nine mothers of Heimdallr used as a kenning to identify him are depicted at an imaginary waterline in the top of the panel, as I imagine the scene to take place under the water. The top kidney shape is emerging from the sea, like land as proposed by Schier and Marold, et al, suggesting birth implied by the fertility symbolism associated with the necklace. Directly above, integrating the top frame with the panel, is a depiction of Singasteinn as an island or skerry woven in the ring chain and rising out of it. It is crowned by a rainbow shape, as Úlfr also uses a kenning as a potential referent to Bifrǫst, the "rainbow bridge", to identify Heimdallr as the watchman of the gods. (fig. 81)

Regarding other considerations for the rendering, I have chosen Linden wood because it is very suitable for carving. It is a hardwood, but lightweight and not dense, nor does it splinter easily. One of the primary commodities of trade in the region was lumber. The species grew as far north as Hlaðir, and the craftsmen of the day must have been aware of its favorable properties. If indeed the application of the ornament was on the paneling and trim, structural elements would not require a different choice of material. Suitable for integrating in wainscoting, I have made a smaller frame and panel depicting the scene, like a *bríkr*. In *Kormáks saga* it is told how one night he and Steingerðr rest on each side of a panel: *Um nóttina hvíldi sínum megin bríkar hvárt þeira* "During the night they slept on two sides of a screen" (*Kormáks saga* 1939: 272, *Kormak's saga* 1997: 211). Cleasby Vigfusson define *bríkr* as properly a square tablet, but in the sagas frequently a low screen between the *stafir* "pillars" separating the *hvílurúm* "bedrooms" from the chief room. They add that in modern usage *bríkr* means a small tablet with carved work. There is no indication Óláfr's *eldhús* had partitioned sleeping quarters, and indeed there may have been a previously built structure remaining on the farmstead for such a purpose. The *eldhús* was probably used as a large, open hall where the fires were kept going, food was prepared and served daily and for feasts, i.e. functioning as both a profane and sacral space. Nevertheless, such a *bríkr* would fit above the benches that were situated along the long walls of the building. A reading of *Laxdæla saga* implies such a panel would have been high up where the wall and ceiling meet, and the carvings would be partially obscured if the festive decorative textiles were hung. The hypothetical overall layout of the carvings within the hall is explored in section 2.7. For the example, the frame and panel construction I have made uses slots in the frame that the panel slips into. Such a technique could have been used in the assembly of wall and ceiling paneling with carved stiles and rails framing the scenes. Although I have not found any evidence of this joinery technique during the period in question, it has been in use for centuries. Otherwise, I have used hand planes, chisels and gouges for the woodcarving. As I have argued in previous sections, the woodcarvings were likely imported from Norway, and the woodcarvers in Hlaðir would have employed a technique and style consisting of incisions of the motifs in high relief.

The impact of this (hypothetical or actual) woodcarving on the contemporary audience cannot be entirely assessed in isolation of the other designs in Óláfr's hall, the overall space or situation in which it was viewed. I envision the complete programme as an arching display combining the other mythic scenes discussed in the next two sections. In this sense, the order of the edited compilation of *Húsdrápa* seems intuitive, and the primordial creation myth referenced

in stanza 2 by Úlfr and executed by the woodcarver would be a natural starting point for contemplation. Although there certainly existed a perhaps mixed reverence for, and knowledge of, the Æsir, there is little evidence via place names or otherwise of a specific cult of Heimdallr or Loki. Hence, this wood-carved scene may not have the same effect as the Oseberg ship carvings, for example, where I have argued in section 1.1 that those patterns could have been intended as a cult mechanism to allow access to a deified Oseberg priestess. Rather, as in the case of kennings, the individual motifs in the present woodcarving allude to a greater corpus of mythology, some of which were pointed out for the purpose of character analyses of Heimdallr and Loki in the beginning of this section. The woodcarving would have evoked these myths in the mind's eye of the contemporary audience in a similar way as so eloquently expressed by Úlfr in his referential stanza. Like the skald choosing from an array of terms in order to formulate a kenning, the woodcarver chose from a range of circulating motifs in order to represent entities and things. Part of the skill and artistry was to take known symbols and arrange them in different ways to convey new experienced meaning.

Regarding the effect of this particular woodcarving, certain qualities would have endowed it with agency. Part of the fascination with the frame pieces enclosing the middle board is a captivating delay as the eye follows the interminable patterns of the ring-chain designs. As the eye circles the perimeter, attention inevitably spirals inward to the central "action" seen in the panel. Both representational, through the actors, yet also composed of a decorative pattern, the intertwined kidney shapes emanating from and grasped by Heimdallr and Loki become animated via a part to part relationship of translation from one to the other, which in turn makes the scene come alive as a whole. The woven limbs and tendrils continue to captivate and lead through maze-like paths toward perceiving not just the form, but allowing pause for conceptualizing the greater mythic corpus. Yet, the eye is ultimately led upward, "birthed" out Ægir's daughters with knowledge and comprehension of this primordial creation myth as the spectator continues to gaze upon other carvings in the hall.

2.5: *Húsdrápa*, strophes 3 - 6 - Þórr's fishing expedition

The topic of this section is Úlfr's poetic description of Þórr and a *jǫtunn* in a boat as the god hooks and stares face to face with one of Loki's monstrous offspring, Jǫrmungandr. Unlike stanza 2, the myth of Þórr's encounter with Jǫrmungandr, also called Miðgarðsormr "the Midgard serpent" by Snorri, is hardly obscure - parts of the larger tale were the subject of several poems and images from which Snorri has apparently summarized to produce his prose version found in *Gylfaginning*. In contrast to stanza 2, of which there is no conclusive evidence of representations seen in Viking Age iconography, there are arguably four extant stone carvings showing Þórr in a boat - presumably set about the task of hooking and hauling up the enormously long serpent. This section brings together existing iconography samples and prose/poetry sources in order to compose a wood-carved scene as it could have appeared in Óláfr's *eldhús*. The following is an investigation of how this myth as known from the corpus informs the descriptions presented in the poem. The organization of the section begins with the prose overview of the myth as presented by Snorri, followed by the extant *Húsdrápa* strophes 3 - 6. As edited by Finnur these quatrains are based on the *Skáldskaparmál* versions seen in the Codex Regius (R) and Codex Wormianus (W) manuscripts. Variants seen in Codex Uppsaliensis (U) and Codex Trajectinus (T) are noted. In order to provide contextual background and perform a comprehensive analysis,

a pertinent exposition regarding the characters in the myth - Þórr, Jǫrmungandr and the giant Hymir, is offered. The character analysis is broadened by kennings as referents to the actors and other poems mentioning Þórr's fishing for Jǫrmungandr. Scholarship regarding the mythic episode is presented along with my own analysis regarding its place in the poem *Húsdrápa* as well as in Óláfr's hall. Each strophe is examined in relation to other versions offering a range of interpretations with a focus on the visual nuances of the scene(s). Primarily from the descriptions provided by Úlfr, but with additional clues offered from other poets and texts, examples from archaeological remnants from the Viking Age are synthesized with impressions from the literary sources to hypothetically graph the scene. I develop and present my arguments supporting the claim that the mythic topics of the extant poem and its lost pictorial carvings form part of a Norse cosmic cycle of which Þórr's fishing expedition is, as in the edited poem, located in the middle - symbolizing life, its challenges and rites of passage.

In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri devotes a large portion of his exposition to the journeys of Þórr. In response to Gangleri's inquiry whether Þórr had ever encountered such great power and might that he could not manage to overcome the adversity, Hár tells of many chains of events. He begins with a long and detailed account of an expedition to land occupied by giants, and how Þórr was tricked by magical illusions. Among three feats that Þórr was unable to accomplish was lifting a cat off the floor. However, upon leaving, Þórr was told by the giant Útgarða-Loki:

> 'Eigi þótti mér hitt minna vera vert er þú lyptir upp kettinum, ok þér satt at segja þá hræddusk allir þeir er sá er þú lyptir af jǫrðu einum fœtinum. En sá kǫttr var eigi sem þér sýndisk: þat var Miðgarðsormr er liggr um lǫnd ǫll, ok vansk honum varliga lengðin til at jǫrðina tœki sporðr ok hǫfuð. Ok svá langt seildisk þú upp at skamt var þá til himins'. (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 43)

> 'It did not seem to me any less impressive either when you lifted up the cat, and to tell you the truth everyone that was watching was terrified when you raised one of its feet from the ground. For that cat was not what it appeared to you: it was the Midgard serpent which lies encircling all lands, and its length was hardly enough for both its head and its tail to touch the ground. And so far did you reach up that you were not far from the sky'. (*Edda* 1995: 45)

After being told about how he was tricked, Þórr lifted his hammer to smash the skull of Útgarða-Loki, but the giant vanished. As he made the return trip home, Þórr made up his mind that he would seek out Miðgarðsormr. Indeed, this is the topic of the next tale, and the following is a synopsis of the most important details as relayed by Snorri. Þórr's intent was to redress the humiliation from his previous journey, and he left in such haste that he did not take with him his goats, chariot or companions. He went across Miðgarðr in the appearance of a young boy. He arrived at the abode of the giant Hymir and spent the night. At dawn, Hymir got ready to row out fishing, and Þórr asked to accompany him. Hymir insulted Þórr stating there would not be much advantage to taking him along since he was small and just a lad, and he would get cold if he stayed out as long and as far as Hymir was used to. Þórr considered smashing his skull just then, but decided to hold off since he was planning on testing his strength elsewhere. After inquiring about bait, Hymir told Þórr to go find his own. Þórr responded by tearing off the head of one of Hymir's oxen. Þórr went aboard, seated himself in the well of the boat and began to row. Hymir

sat in the bow, was impressed by Þórr's rowing, and he joined in as they moved out to sea at a brisk pace. Hymir twice indicated that they had rowed far enough, and the second time declared that it would be dangerous to be further from shore due to Miðgarðsormr. Nevertheless, Þórr continued rowing on a bit, and this made Hymir unhappy. The rest follows the strophes in *Húsdrápa* closely and with vivid imagery, so it is worth quoting at length:

> '... En þá er Þórr lagði upp árarnar, greiddi hann til vað heldr sterkjan ok eigi var ǫngullinn minni eða óramligri. Þar lét Þórr koma á ǫngulinn oxahǫfuðit ok kastaði fyrir borð, ok fór ǫngullinn til grunns. Ok er þá svá satt at segja at engu ginti þá Þórr minnr Miðgarðsorm en Útgarðaloki hafði spottat Þór þá er hann hóf orminn upp á hendi sér. Miðgarðsormr gein yfir oxahǫfuðit en ǫngullinn vá í góminn orminum. En er ormrinn kendi þess, brá hann við svá hart at báðir hnefar Þórs skullu út á borðinu. Þá varð Þórr reiðr ok fœrðisk í ásmegin, spyrndi víð svá fast at hann hljóp báðum fótum gǫgnum skipit ok spyrndi við grunni, dró þá orminn upp at borði. En þat má segja at engi hefir sá sét ógurligar sjónir er eigi mátti þat sjá er Þórr hvesti augun á orminn, en ormrinn starði neðan í mót ok blés eitrinu. Þá er sagt at jǫtunninn Hymir gerðisk litverpr, fǫlnaði, ok hræddisk er hann sá orminn ok þat er særinn fell út ok inn of nǫkkvann. Ok í því bili er Þórr greip hamarinn ok fœrði á lopt þá fálmaði jǫtunninn til agnsaxinu ok hjó vað Þórs af borði, en ormrinn søktisk í sæinn. En Þórr kastaði hamrinum eptir honum, ok segja menn at hann lysti af honum hǫfuðit við grunninum. En ek hygg hitt vera þér satt at segja at Miðgarðsormr lifir enn ok liggr í umsjá. En Þórr reiddi til hnefann ok setr við eyra Hymi svá at hann steyptisk fyrir borð ok sér í iljar honum. En Þórr óð til lands.' (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 44-45)

> '... And when Thor had shipped his oars, he got out a line that was pretty strong, and the hook was no smaller or less mighty-looking. On to this hook Thor fastened the ox-head and threw it overboard, and the hook went to the bottom. And then it is true to say that Thor fooled the Midgard serpent no less than Utgarda-Loki had made a laughing-stock of Thor when he was lifting the serpent up with his hand. The Midgard serpent stretched its mouth round the ox-head and the hook stuck into the roof of the serpent's mouth. And when the serpent felt this, it jerked away so hard that both Thor's fists banged down on the gunwale. Then Thor got angry and summoned up his As-strength, pushed down so hard that he forced both feet through the boat and braced them against the sea-bed, and then hauled the serpent up to the gunwale. And one can claim that a person does not know what a horrible sight is who did not get to see how Thor fixed his eyes on the serpent, and the serpent stared back up at him spitting poison. It is said that then the giant Hymir changed colour, went pale, and panicked when he saw the serpent and how the sea flowed out and in over the boat. And just at the moment when Thor was grasping his hammer and lifting it in the air, the giant fumbled at his bait-knife and cut Thor's line from the gunwale, and the serpent sank into the sea. But Thor threw his hammer after it, and they say that he struck off its head by the sea-bed. But I think in fact the contrary is correct to report to you that the Midgard serpent lives still and lies in the encircling sea. But Thor swung his fist

and struck at Hymir's ear so that he plunged overboard and one could see the soles of his feet. But Thor waded ashore.' (*Edda* 1995: 47)

The question addressed by Snorri regarding the fate of Jǫrmungandr - whether the beast survived the encounter or not and the potential consequences - has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. This is returned to below, but at this point Snorri's prose description helps present an overall sequence of events, which are captured as a few key moments expressed by Úlfr's strophes. The following are in the order edited by Finnur; with the exception of strophe 4, modified translations and word order are by Faulkes:

3
Þjokkvǫxnum kvað þykkja
þikling firinmikla
hafra njóts at hǫfgum
hætting megindrætti.[41] (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 16-17)

The stockily built stumpy one [Hymir] is said to have thought tremendous danger in the goat-possessor's [Þórr's] enormous heavy haul. (*Edda* 1995: 74)

4
Innmáni skein ennis
ǫndótts vinar banda;
áss skaut ægigeislum
orðsæll á men storðar.[42] (Finnur 1908: 128 w/ normalized spelling)

The in-(laid) moon of the forehead [eye] of the fierce friend of the gods [Þórr] shone. The famous god [Þórr] shot awful glances toward the necklace of the land [Miðgarðsormr]. (modified from Finnur 1908: 128-9)

5
En stirðþinull starði
storðar leggs fyrir borði
fróns á fólka reyni
fránleitr ok blés eitri. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 65)

But the stiff earth-rope [Miðgarðsormr] with a piercing-look stared over the gunwale at land-bone-[rock-] folk's [giant's] tester [Þórr] and blew poison. (modified from *Edda* 1995: 135)

6a[43]

[41] This strophe is attributed to Bragi in the R and W manuscripts: *Svá kvað Bragi* "Bragi said this". In U it states: *Svá kvað Úlfr Uggason*. It does not appear in T.
[42] This quatrain appears in Codex Wormianus as examples of kennings for eyes, see: AM 242 fol (Codex Wormianus): Snorra-Edda, the four grammatical treatises, Rígsþula, Maríukvæði, and ókennd heiti : an electronic edition. p. 148. The strophe is not included in R, T or U.

Fullǫflugr lét fellir
fjall-Gauts hnefa skjalla
—ramt mein var þat—reyni
reyrar leggs við eyra. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 17)

The most mighty fell-Gaut's [giant's] feller made his fist crash on the reed-bed-bone [rock] frequenter's [giant's][44] ear. A mighty hurt was that. (*Edda* 1995: 74)

6b
Víðgymnir laust Vimrar
vaðs af fránum naðri
hlusta grunn við hrǫnnum.
Hlaut innan svá minnum. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 17)

Viðgymnir of Vimur's ford [Þórr] struck the ear-bed [head] from the shining snake by the waves. Within have appeared these motifs. (modified from *Edda* 1995: 74)

In these verses, Úlfr emphasizes certain aspects from the myth found in the summarized version by Snorri. Listed numerically:

1) The stocky giant expressed his fear as Þórr pulls up the mighty Jǫrmungandr.
2) Þórr's terrifying glance at Jǫrmungandr.
3) The stare-down as Jǫrmungandr returns the glare and blows poison.
4) Þórr hit the giant forcefully on his temple.
5) Þórr knocked off the serpent's head.

Of course, this does not rule out that the iconography reminded Úlfr of some of these aspects of the myth without the action actually being depicted. However, if we accept Faulkes' translation of *Hlaut innan svá minnum* "Within have appeared these motifs", we have strong starting points for the composition of these particular designs in the hall. Each of these strophes and the kennings used by Úlfr and how they may agree or disagree with Snorri's version are revisited below. At this juncture, with the listed motifs in mind, a deeper look at the characters as described by Snorri and how other poets have portrayed the myth will provide context for interpretation and help inform the appearance of the imagery.

Þórr situated in the myths

---

[43] Verse 6 is offered only in U as a cohesive verse, rather than in R, W and T as two separated quatrains, so I have labeled them a and b respectively.

[44] Faulkes interprets the kenning as a referent to Hymir. Kurt Schier understood the kenning as a reference to the serpent rather than Hymir. Edith Marold finds it hard to imagine that Þórr would hit the serpent on its ear with his fist even though the kenning using a reed as a determinant for a giant is unusual (Marold 2000: 292). Reeds are associated with water, as is the serpent, but giants in general also inhabit watery environments, such as Hymir by the sea. It seems more likely that Þórr punched the giant sitting next to him on the boat and threw his hammer after the sinking serpent as described in the next quatrain.

Þórr is introduced in *Gylfaginning* as the first son of Óðinn and Jǫrð. She is the personification of, and literally "Earth". Jǫrð is named as both the daughter and wife of Óðinn. Jǫrð is listed as "among" the *ásynjur* "goddesses" along with Rindr, (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 30), but they are outside the previous list of fourteen *ásynjur* which suggests Jǫrð is understood to be a giantess as they are set apart from the main group. *Móðir Þórs* "Þórr's mother", is used as a kenning for land (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 35). It is interesting to think of Miðgarðsormr as *allra landa umgjǫrð* "'encircler' of all the lands" in the context of being Þórr's nemesis. It brings to mind a desire to free his mother from bounds in addition to his overall role as protector of the earth, i.e. its inhabitants. Earth as an entity also follows the theory that giants represent "raw material" and the elements, which would make her the embodiment or gestalt of those substances. It is reasonable that in the mythology Snorri presents the offspring of the all-father and the planet as possessing the power and strength to overcome all living things (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 13).

Þórr is not known to ride horseback as he walks from his hall Bilskirnir in Þrúðvangar to the Æsir court, and as seen in several situations, wades rivers. These often may be understood as boundaries or thresholds he crosses over to the realm of giants in his missions to conquer them. But it is also related he crosses rivers daily:

> Kǫrmt oc Ǫrmt oc Kerlaugar tvær,
> þær scal Þórr vaða,
> hverian dag, er hann dœma ferr
> at asci Yggdrasils, ... (*Edda* 1983: 63, similar to Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 17-18)
>
> Kormt and Ormt and the two Kerlaugar,
> these Thor must wade
> every day, when he goes to sit as judge
> at the ash of Yggdrasil, ... (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 56, similar to *Edda* 1995: 18)

This frequency suggests water is more than just a boundary between realms and there is something repetitive in Þórr's movements. Snorri informs us that Þórr waded ashore after his encounter with Miðgarðsormr. This identifying quality may be alluded to by Úlfr in the kenning *Viðgymnir Vimrar vaðs* "Viðgymnir [giant, i.e. Þórr] of Vimur's ford", as Þórr wades across the river Vimur when he seeks out the giant Geirrøðr. It is worth noting that his goats Tanngnjóstr and Tanngrisnir draw his chariot, and from that he has the name Ǫkuþórr "driving-Þórr". As Snorri relates, Þórr does not take them along when he seeks out Hymir at the seashore, nor are they brought when Þórr otherwise crosses water boundaries. Nevertheless, Úlfr uses the expression *hafra njótr* "goat-possessor" or "user of goats" as a kenning for Þórr.

Hár describes Þórr second after Óðinn as the most outstanding among the Æsir, and the strongest of all gods and men; however, his strengths are not just bodily. He has three special possessions: his hammer Mjǫllnir, a girdle of might and a pair of iron gloves, which according to Hár, he must wear when he grips Mjǫllnir (*Edda* 1995: 22). Occasionally in the tales it is told that he is with or without these possessions, but by far we hear most about the employment of Mjǫllnir. Myths reveal that the hammer has multiple purposes: quite evidently to smash the skulls of giants, but also to hallow, consecrate or bless. En route to Útgarða-Loki, it is told how

Þórr may slaughter his goats, consume them and revive them the next morning by laying the bones on their skins and gesturing over them with Mjǫllnir (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 35, 37). The use of the hammer as a fertility symbol may date back to the Bronze Age. Rock carvings, such as the one at Vitlycke show a phallic figure holding a hammer above a couple, and it has been interpreted as an act of consecration. (fig. 82) As mentioned in section 2.4, in the burlesque poem *Þrymskviða*, Þórr's hammer is stolen by Þrymr, and the giant demands Freyja in exchange for its return. Þórr arrives posing as her with her necklace and dressed in wedding regalia, and during the marriage ritual Mjǫllnir is laid in his lap. In spite of the comic rendition of the poem, the act implies there was a ceremonial use of the hammer for hallowing and blessing of the bride (Simek 1993: 322, Davidson 1964: 80). There are many extant representations from the Viking Age of Þórr's hammer that are potential models for the wood-carved scenes at Hjarðarholt, along with more reasons that Mjǫllnir points to the sacral qualities of Þórr's character discussed further below.

Þórr's hammer also conjures images of sparks as it strikes its "elemental" targets, which calls up associations with lightning, and hence his conceived role as a "sky-god" and in control of the weather. Simek traces the etymology of Þórr to the Proto-Germanic *Þunraz, meaning "thunder" (Simek 1993: 322). Cleasby Vigfusson substantiates the translation with a list of many cognates. Þórr causes a profound effect on the weather as he drives his chariot toward his giant foe Hrungnir in the poem *Haustlǫng* composed by Þjóðólfr ór Hvini:

> Knáttu ǫll, en Ullar
> endilág fyrir mági
> grund var grápi hrundin,
> ginnunga vé brinna
> þá er hofregin hafrar
> hógreiðar fram drógu
> - seðr gekk Svǫlnis ekkja
> sundr -at Hrungnis fundi (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 23)
>
> All the hawks' sanctuaries [skies] found themselves burning because of Ull's stepfather [Þórr], and the ground all low was battered with hail, when the goats drew the temple-power [Þórr] of the easy-chariot forward to the encounter with Hrungnir. Svolnir's widow [Jǫrð, earth] practically split apart. (modified from *Edda* 1995: 80)

One can visualize the sky "burning" from lightning, and along with the hail, hear the earth splitting thunder. Adam of Bremen describes Þórr's statue and significance at the temple in Uppsala: *'Thor', inquiunt, 'presidet in aere, qui tonitrus et fulmina, ventos ymbresque, serena et fruges gubernat...'* "Thor, they say, presides over the air, which governs the thunder and lightning, the winds and rains, fair weather and crops" (Schmeidler 1917: 258, Adam 2002: 207). It is central to the thesis of *Thor the Wind-Raiser* by Richard Perkins that Þórr was thought to control the wind and weather. It is also argued that by bringing the fertile rains, Þórr stands for a protective side of fertility in the pre-Christian religion. In addition, he defends the world against destruction by the forces of chaos, and he maintains the cosmic order (Bertell 2003). For this study, these aspects of the depth of Þórr's character add dimension to his role in the poetry and

carved scenes known as Þórr's fishing expedition. I will later return to the argument that, as his influence over the weather demonstrates, Þórr's image was considered an agent in social relations; namely, it was believed by some that summoning the deity through his image for certain purposes could impact events.

Þórr the giant slayer

In regard to Þórr's career in the slaying of giants, these encounters make up many of the tales in Snorri's *Edda*, skaldic poetry from the ninth and tenth centuries and the *Poetic Edda*. As Davidson indicates, much can be learned about Þórr from his adversaries (Davidson 1964: 89). A brief overview of the sources describing these encounters informs not only about Þórr's character, but also how the likenesses of the god and giants may have been perceived and represented.

In *Gylfaginning*, a certain builder offered to build a rampart surrounding Ásgarðr, and he and the Æsir agreed on a contract. Upon learning that the builder who had nearly completed the defensive wall was a mountain giant, the Æsir *kǫlluðu þeir á Þórr, ok jafnskjótt kom hann ok því næst fór á lopt hamarrinn Mjǫllnir, galt þá smíðarkaupit ok eigi sól ok tungl, heldr synjaði hann honum at byggva í Jǫtunheimum ok laust þat hit fyrsta hǫgg er haussinn brotnaði í smán mola ok sendi hann niðr undir Niflhel*. "they called upon Thor and he came in a trice and the next thing was that Miollnir was raised aloft. Then he paid the builder's wages and it wasn't the sun and moon, instead he stopped him from living in Giantland and struck the first blow so that his skull was shattered into fragments and sent him down beneath Niflhel" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 35, *Edda* 1995: 36). Indeed the most common method of Þórr's death blows is a strike to the head. As described by Úlfr, Þórr struck, with the kenning *hlusta grunnr* "the ear bed" i.e. "the head", off the serpent. In regard to the giant builder, the killing is one of prevention. If he were to complete the contract he would have also demanded Freyja in addition to the heavenly bodies. In a dialog with Óðinn in *Hárbarðzlióð* 23 Þórr states:

> (...)
> mikil myndi ætt iotna, ef allir lifði
> vætr myndi manna undir miðgarði. (...) (*Edda* 1983: 82)
>
> (...)
> great would be the giant race if they all lived,
> mankind would be as nothing on the earth. (...) (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 73)

It may be obvious, but Þórr - not known to be the wisest of the gods - nevertheless states that if the giants were not thinned out, there would be too many of them, and that would mean fewer people (Steinsland 1986: 218). This is an example indicating how Þórr, as a mythological figure, protects the gods and mankind through maintenance of the cosmic balance and order (Meulengracht Sørensen 2002). Visually, the passage from *Gylfaginning* regarding the master builder points to two poses for Þórr, one capturing his hammer raised aloft and the other with Mjǫllnir meeting its target smashing a giant skull.

Answering *Hvernig skal kenna Þór?* "how shall Thor be referred to?" among the kennings Snorri lists *vegandi Hrungnis* "killer of Hrungnir" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 14, *Edda*

1995: 72). This is confirmed by quoting a kenning by Bragi, *haussprengir Hrungnis* "Hrungnir's skull-splitter" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 16, *Edda* 1995: 73). In the prose version of the tale in *Skáldskaparmál*, it is told that the giants consider Hrungnir the strongest of them. He wields a shield and has a whetstone as his weapon. When Hrungnir and Þórr met for a duel, Hrungnir was told by Þjazi that Þórr would attack from below, and he was tricked into standing on his shield. (As a reference to this part of the episode, Hrungnir is in many kennings for shields.) Þórr took Hrungnir's life, as they simultaneously threw their weapons at each other. Þórr's hammer broke Hrungnir's whetstone in two - one of those pieces became forever lodged in Þórr's forehead. Mjǫllnir did not stray from its mark, and: *kom í mitt hǫfuð Hrungni ok lamði hausinn í smán mola* "hit the middle of Hrungnir's head and shattered his skull into small fragments (...)" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 22, *Edda* 1995: 79). The poet Þjóðólfr ór Hvini speaks of this story in his poem *Haustlǫng*, cited above in regard to Þórr's advance in his chariot creating electrical storms. Another interesting phrase from that poem could relate to Þórr's appearance in iconography, in modified word order: *í hjarna mæni, svát stála vikr, eðr ólaus í hausi Óðins burar, stóð þar* "the steel-pumice [whetstone] still stuck in Odin's boy's brain ridge [skull]" (Finnur 1908: 18, *Edda* 1995: 81). Þjóðólfr states that he "clearly" sees these deeds on the shield he presumably received from his patron. This indicates a very representational depiction of Þórr in front of him, perhaps with the embedded whetstone as an attribute. The description included with a simple kenning for Mjǫllnir in *Lokasenna* 61 that includes Hrungnir provides a material clue. Þórr states: *hendi inni hœgri / drep ec þic Hrungnis bana* "with my right hand I'll strike you, with Hrungnir's killer" (*Edda* 1983: 108, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 95). Bragi also makes a vivid reference:

> Hamri fórsk í hœgri
> hǫnd þar er allra landa
> œgir Ǫflugbarða
> endiseiðs of kendi. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 15-16)
>
> Oflugbardi's terrifier [Thor] lifted his hammer in his right hand when he recognized the coal-fish that bounds all lands [the Midgard serpent]. (*Edda* 1995: 73)

Picture stones seem to confirm that Þórr was perceived to be right-handed (Altuna fig. 83, Gosforth slab fig. 84). Of general interest in regard to iconography, it states in the prose version of the tale: *Hrungnir átti hjarta þat er frægt er, af hǫrðum steini ok tindótt með þrim hornum svá sem síðan er gert var ristubragð þat er Hrungnis hjarta heitir*. "Hrungnir had a heart that is renowned, made of solid stone and spiky with three points like the symbol for carving called Hrungnir's heart has ever since been made" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 21, *Edda* 1995: 78). Perhaps at one time three pointed abstract shapes represented Hrungnir, or more generally may have symbolically represented giants. Such a shape referred to as a triquetra, thought to represent the Christian trinity, appears on many rune stones including one of the Funbo stones currently in Uppsala (Bertelsen 2006: 37, 48). The triquetra is surrounded by a serpent. Wood-carved triquetra designs are also seen on an Oseberg sled dating from the early ninth century (Shetelig 1920: 165). (fig. 85) The ancient symbol was appropriated by Christian artists, just as pagan myths like ragnarǫk were portrayed on stones intended to be analogous to Christian eschatological narratives. In pre-Christian carvings, three-pointed symbols may have been

incorporated in the ornament surrounding anthropomorphic depictions of giants, much like a tool as an identifiable attribute to a god.

Þórr does not slay the giant Geirrøðr with his hammer. The tale about their encounter is referenced above and in section 2.3. It is related in prose by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* followed by the presentation of the poem *Þórsdrápa*. This tale has a direct correspondence to the kenning for Þórr mentioned above in verse 6b of *Húsdrápa*: *Víðgymnir Vimrar vaðs* "Viðgymnir of Vimur's ford". Snorri adds after citing the verse: *Hér er hann kallaðr jǫtunn Vimrar vaðs. Á heitir Vimur, er Þórr óð þá er hann sótti til Geirrøðargarða*. "Here he is called the giant of Vimur's ford. Vimur is the name of a river that Þórr waded when he was on his way to Geirrod's courts" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 17, *Edda* 1995: 74). Snorri explains that Viðgymnir is a giant name used as a referent for Þórr. This is a variant of using a different name for an entity who is nevertheless identifiable due to the addition of descriptive deeds. In the prose version of the tale and also related by Eilífr Guðrúnarson in *Þórsdrápa*, Þórr wades the river, and when he later is invited to the giant's court they proceed to throw glowing embers at one another. Without his hammer, Þórr does not smash the giant's head, but when he throws the ember it goes right through a pillar and subsequently Geirrøðr. As mentioned above, this poem features some of the most complex extended kennings known in extant sources. Most of the referents for Þórr highlight his skills and fame for killing giants. Kennings related to this section of *Húsdrápa* include one in the first verse of the poem: *lǫgseims faðir* "The sea-thread's [Midgard serpent's] father, as a referent to Loki (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 26, *Edda* 1995: 83). The use of eyes as a determinant found in *Húsdrápa* 4 is similarly used in a kenning in *Þórsdrápa*: *himinn brá tungls loga* "the sky of the eyelash-moon-flame-[eye-]" as part of an extended kenning for "skull" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 28, *Edda* 1995: 85). Heavenly bodies are frequently used in kennings for eyes, and in *Skáldskaparmál* in the Codex Wormianus manuscript there is a section that provides examples. Visually, this is particularly interesting in a kenning for Þórr because much emphasis is placed on his intense glare (see also below). In stanza 4 of *Þórsdrápa*, the kenning *sef-Grímnis mágar* "rush-Grímnir's [giant's] kinsmen" resembles the one referring to Hymir in *Húsdrápa* 6a, *reyrar leggs reynir* "frequenter of the bone of the reeds [rock]" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 26, *Edda* 1995: 83) i.e. giants are "rock residents" (Schulz 2004: 126). *Reyrr* "reed" is a synonym for *sef(-rein)* "rush, sedge-land, meadow"[45] perhaps also indicating that particular shape may be superimposed on a giant, e.g. standing tall in the landscape. Indeed, as frequently seen in skaldic poetry, there are many kennings in *Þórsdrápa* that include features of the land and sea as referents to giants, often in combination. For example, there are some interesting visuals, such as the term *stophnísa* "mountain-porpoise [giantess]"[46] (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 27, *Edda* 1995: 84) and *jótrs vegtaugar þrjótr* "tooth of the fishing-line's-way [sea] [rock] villain [Geirrøðr]" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 29, *Edda* 1995: 85). In the former, arguably the base word dolphin is selected from the paradigm of "large creatures", here of the sea, and placed juxtaposed in a land formation; and the latter similar to *Húsdrápa* 6a alludes to giants dwelling among rocks, here as a "tooth of the sea". In addition, the kenning *hǫfuð Heiðreks breiðu* "Heidrek's broad head" is used as a referent pointing to Geirrøðr. Overall we can form a picture of giants in some ways similar to the troll in Scandinavian folklore, standing tall with large head and body parts, animal-like and seemingly growing out of the landscape. Indeed, a giant is sometimes referred to as a *trǫll* "troll" in Old Norse.

[45] *Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 382-83
[46] *Skáldskaparmál* II 1998: 403

Þórr shows the giant Þrymr no mercy, as the poet informs at the end of *Þrymskviða*: *Þrym drap hann fyrstan, / þursa dróttin / oc ætt iotuns / alla lamði* "he struck Þrymr, lord of ogres, / and battered all the race of giants" (*Edda* 1983: 115, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 101). As referred to above, in this burlesque poem, Þrymr stole Þórr's hammer and demanded Freyja as his bride in exchange for Mjǫllnir. After tricking the wedding party by donning his humiliating disguise, Þórr made Þrymr and company pay for his deceit. There are some verses in *Þrymskviða* that reinforce some of the other references to the character and appearance of Þórr. Upon learning his hammer was missing in stanza 1: *scegg nam at hrista, / scǫr namat dýia* "his beard bristled, his hair stood on end" which also points to his fierce gaze when angered (*Edda* 1983: 111, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 97). Stanza 27 reveals that he is able to disguise himself except for his eyes:

Laut und líno, lysti at kyssa,
enn hann útan stǫcc endlangan sal:
'Hví ero ǫndótt augo Freyio?
þicci mér ór augom eldr of brenna.' (*Edda* 1983: 115)

He bent under the veil, he wanted to kiss her,
but he sprang back instead right down the hall:
'Why are Freyia's eyes so terrifying?
It seems to me that fire is burning from them.' (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 100)

As discussed further below, one of Þórr's most distinguishable features is his eyes, in addition to Mjǫllnir. Stanza 30 refers to using the hammer in order to hallow the bride:

Þá qvað þat Þrymr, þursa dróttinn:
'Berið inn hamar, brúði at vígia,
leggit Miollni í meyiar kné,
vígit ocr saman Várar hendi!' (*Edda* 1983: 115)

Then said Thrym, lord of ogres:
'Bring in the hammer to sanctify the bride,
lay Miollnir on the girl's lap,
consecrate us together by the hand of Var! (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 101)

Vár is the goddess of promises, invoked at marriage (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 277, Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 29) When the hammer is laid on Þórr's lap, his next act is to slay all the giants. This may point to why Mjǫllnir was used to consecrate and make hallow oaths - its presence was both sacred and threatening: follow through on this act, or else!

Listing the giants slain by Þórr leads the discussion to Hymir, who in nearly all of versions of the tale is on the boat with Þórr on his fishing expedition for Jǫrmungandr. Although Hymir is not named explicitly in the extant verses of *Húsdrápa*, the numerous kennings for a giant present on the boat point to him. The passage from *Gylfaginning* quoted at length in the beginning of this section confirms his presence, as does the eddic poem *Hymisqviða*, but in that

poem the events leading to Hymir's slaying differ. In *Hymisqviða*, Ægir demands a cauldron large enough to brew beer for his Æsir guests (see also previous section). Týr tells Þórr that Hymir possesses one large enough to fit the requirement, so they set out to acquire it. Upon his arrival to Hymir's abode "at the end of heaven", Þórr endures several trials of strength. One of these tests is Þórr's fishing expedition for *sú er goð fiá umgiǫrð allra landa* "The one whom the gods hate, the All-Lands-Girdler", (Jǫrmungandr is only referred to as kennings) which is embedded in this poem (*Edda* 1983: 92, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 77). However, unlike the event described in *Húsdrápa*, Þórr does not bash Hymir aboard the boat. Rather, after Þórr engages in additional tests to acquire the cauldron, Hymir and a host of giants pursue him as he leaves, and he slays all of them.

In *Hymisqviða*, several stanzas provide clues for a hypothetical appearance of the scene. Regarding Hymir, in stanza 10: *Gecc inn í sal /glumðo ioclar, / var karls, er kom, / kinnscógr frørinn*. "He went into the hall, the icicles tinkled / when he came in: the man's cheek-forest was frozen" (*Edda* 1983: 89, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 79). Here he is clearly conceived with a beard. In stanza 12: *Sundr stǫcc súla / fyr sión iotuns, / enn áðr í tvau / áss brotnaði*. "Asunder broke the pillar at the giant's gaze, and the cross-beam broke in two." Stanza 13: *Fram gengo þeir, / enn forn iotunn / siónom leiddi / sinn annscota*. "Forward they went, and the ancient giant turned his gaze on his enemy." Although it is somewhat contradictory to display such a fierce look due to Hymir's fear regarding hauling up Jǫrmungandr, it seems not only Þórr and the serpent possess a characteristic gaze, and indeed all three sets of eyes are important for the visual depiction of the encounter. In stanza 16, Hymir is referred to as *három Hrungnis spialli* "the grey-haired playmate of Hrungnir" and perhaps in addition to his beard Hymir was thought to have long grey locks (*Edda* 1983: 90, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 80). Stanza 21 provides clues to where Þórr was thought to be situated in the boat: *en aptr í scut / Óðni sifiaðr, / Véorr, við vélar / vað gorði sér*. "back in the stern the kinsman of Odin, / Thor, cunningly laid out his line" (*Edda* 1983: 92, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 81). This is somewhat conflicting from other accounts, as we shall see, in stone monuments Þórr appears to be sitting in the center or the bow (Ardre VIII, Gosforth slab, Hørdum, Altuna, see below). Stanzas 23-5 describe the scene a bit differently than Úlfr does in *Húsdrápa*. The text is defective, and the fate of the serpent is not entirely clear. I return to this below, but, at least the way Finnur arranges the stanzas in *Húsdrápa* the giant is punched in the head (presumably because he cut the fishing line). This would allow time for the serpent to sink down before the hammer was thrown after it, miraculously not slowed down and keeping its lethal force before meeting its target and knocking off the head of Miðgarðsormr by the seabed, as Snorri in the Codex Regius relates "some believe". Snorri must be referring to a lethal blow in *Húsdrápa* here, and that is a central consideration for the appearance of the scene(s). In the Uppsala *Edda* there is no such statement, and instead it appears to relate the fate of Hymir: *En Þórr kastaði hamrinum ok laust við eyra jǫtninum svá at hann steyptist at borðinu ok laust af honum hǫfuðit við háunum*. "But Þórr threw his hammer and struck at the giant's ear so that he was hurled against the gunwale and struck off his head by the rowlocks" (*Uppsala Edda* 2012: 74-75). The fate of both Jǫrmungandr and Hymir are certainly conflicting in the sources. In any case, Hymir is an important player in the myth, as all the extant textual versions include him on the boat with Þórr.

Based on descriptions of giants above, some preliminary features may be considered regarding any such depiction of Þórr and Hymir in Óláfr's hall. Þórr would likely be shown with

his hammer aloft in his right hand. Due to the injury suffered by the whetstone, Þórr could have a crease or some other visible deformity on his forehead. Predominantly his intense eyes would be featured, as is explored further in the discussion below regarding extant iconography. A beard would be featured, and as will be provided by other examples, additional facial hair. Due to the giants' ties to large animals, reeds, bones, rocks and other features of the landscape, Hymir might have had some hint of "growing" out of nature. Yet it is important in a hypothetical reconstruction to resist the allure of nineteenth century folklore depictions of trolls and remain in the era of Viking Age art. From extant sources, Hymir likely would have been large and anthropomorphic. In addition, he probably would have been old looking with grey hair and a beard. His eyes would be intense but probably expressing fear due to the situation on the boat. I reason that in all the depictions the boat appears small because Þórr and Hymir are large and of comparable size - Þórr due to his summoned *ásmegin* "divine strength", and Hymir because, as we have seen in the discussion of giants, many of them are large. Indeed, Úlfr describes the *jǫtunn* as a *þiklingr* "stumpy person" and *þjokkvaxinn* "thick-set".

Jǫrmungandr

Most of those giants slain in the tales may be imagined as large anthropomorphic figures, but Þórr's greatest nemesis - his adversary in *Húsdrápa* - and perhaps the mightiest of all the *jǫtunn* race, is in quite a different form. There are so many poems and kennings about Þórr in relation to Jǫrmungandr, that it is appropriate at this juncture to relay what these and Snorri have to inform us about the beast and add some observations. In *Gylfaginning*, after the introduction of Loki, Hár informs that Loki had three children with the giantess Angrboða. They were being raised in the land of the giants, and the Æsir learned of prophecies that they would bring about disaster:

> 'Þá sendi Alfǫðr til guðin at taka bǫrnin ok fœra sér. Ok er þau kómu til hans þá kastaði hann orminum í inn djúpa sæ er liggr um ǫll lǫnd, ok óx sá ormr svá at hann liggr í miðju hafinu of ǫll lǫnd ok bítr í sporð sér.' (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 27)
>
> 'All-father sent the gods to get the children and bring them to him. And when they came to him he threw the serpent into that deep sea which lies round all lands, and this serpent grew so that it lies in the midst of the ocean encircling all lands and bites on its own tail.' (*Edda* 1995: 27)

There, the serpent lay as a potential menace until that point in mythic time when all hell breaks loose. Aside from Þórr's fishing expedition, Jǫrmungandr has its biggest role in ragnarǫk, the doom of the gods, when the serpent and Þórr cause each other's bane: *þá snýsk Miðgarðsormr í jǫtunmóð ok sækir upp á landit*. "The Midgard serpent will fly into a giant rage and make its way ashore." (...) *Miðgarðsormr blæss svá eitrinu at hann dreifir lopt ǫll ok lǫg, ok er hann allógurligr, ok er hann á aðra hlið úlfinum*. "The Midgard serpent will spit so much poison that it will bespatter all the sky and sea, and it will be very terrible, and it will be on one side of the wolf." The combatants advance to the field called Vígríðr, including Jǫrmungandr. *Þórr berr banaorð af Miðgarðsormi ok stígr þaðan braut níu fet. Þá fellr hann dauðr til jarðar fyrir eitri því er ormrinn blæss á hann*. "Thor will be victorious over the Midgard serpent and

will step away from it nine paces. Then he will fall to the ground dead from the poison which the serpent will spit at him." (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 50, *Edda* 1995: 53-54) Snorri cites *Vǫluspá*:

> Hrymr ekr austan
> hefisk lind fyrir.
> Snýsk Jǫrmungandr
> í jǫtunmóði.
> Ormr knýr unnir,
> ǫrn mun hlakka,
> slítr nái niðfǫlr,
> Naglfar losnar.(Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 51)

> "Hrym drives from the east holding his shield before him, Iormungand writhes in a giant rage. The serpent churns the waves, the eagle will screech with joy, darkly pale it tears corpses, Naglfar is loosed." (*Edda* 1995: 53-54)

As mentioned above, the name Miðgarðsormr does not appear in poetry, it is only used by Snorri. Poets refer to *ormr*, *naðr* "serpent, dragon", and as seen in *Vǫlospá*, the proper name Jǫrmungandr "Mighty snake" (Lindow 2001: 229, Simek 1993: 215). Also Bragi said:

> Vaðr lá Viðris arfa
> vilgi slakr er rakðisk,
> á Eynæfis ǫndri,
> Jǫrmungandr at sandi. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 14-15)

> Vidrir's [Odin's] heir's [Thor's] line lay by no means slack on Eynæfir's ski [boat] when Iormungand uncoiled on the sand. (*Edda* 1995: 72)

In addition, many kennings, some of which have already been cited, reveal the nature and appearance of the beast. Following Faulkes' translations, Bragi refers to: *úri þafðan jarðar reist* " the water-soaked earth-band", where *úr* is "moisture, water", the past participle of *þafðr* is "stirred", i.e. *úri þafðan* "water-beaten" and *reistr* means "serpent" as in something "twisted", or "curved" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 11, *Edda* 1995: 69). He also referred to Jǫrmungandr as *hrøkkviáll Vǫlsunga drekku* "the coiling eel of Vǫlsung's drink" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 50, *Edda* 1995: 106). Additionally in a kenning, *rǫngum vágs ægir* where *rangr* means "twisted, coiled", *vágr* "bay" and *ægir* "terrifier" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 96, *Edda* 1995: 142). As an act of referential intermedia, Bragi is understood to be describing the iconography on a shield in front of him. It seems likely from his words that at least part of the serpent is depicted as wound, curved and/or plaited. When Úlfr refers to Jǫrmungandr in quatrain 6b of *Húsdrápa* as *naðr fránum við hrǫnnum* "shining serpent by the waves" he may be referring to the intense effect of gazing upon the interlaced pattern depicting the beast's plaited body.

Many kennings confirm Snorri's description that Jǫrmungandr circles the earth. Ǫlvir hnúfa said: Œstisk allra landa / umgjǫrð ok sonr Jarðar. "The 'encircler' of all lands [Midgard serpent] and Iord's son became violent" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 15, *Edda* 1995: 72). Eysteinn

Valdason refers to *brattrar brautar baugr* "the steep-way's [land's] ring", and once again Bragi, *inn ljóti hringr* "the ugly ring" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 15-16, *Edda* 1995: 73-4). As part of an extended kenning, Haraldr is cited using the term *hólmfjǫturr* "island-fetter" as a likely referent to Jǫrmungandr, which also suggests a complete loop (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 86, *Edda* 1995: 134-5). These kennings from other poets confirm the image created by Úlfr in quatrain 4 of *Húsdrápa* with the use of *men storðar* "necklace of the earth". The "land's ring" kenning type is a good indicator that the serpent would encircle the rest of the scene in a visual depiction - such as seen on many runic/picture stones along the perimeter outlining inner compositions.

Extant Viking Age images relevant to Þórr's fishing expedition

Although there are no extant woodcarvings, there are many probable depictions of Þórr from the Viking Age that are helpful for this study. Four picture stones are mentioned by scholars, with varying degrees of certainty and in various combinations of motifs, that seem to depict Þórr in a boat fishing. There are also some picture stones in Sweden that likely depict the face of Þórr and his hammer. These engravings are worn, mostly with shallow relief and some are fragments, therefore, they provide hints as to what were likely more detailed motifs. Fortunately there are also miniatures that are arguably images of Þórr, and hammers considered to represent Mjǫllnir made out of metals, amber, walrus ivory and whale bone. Many of these are preserved with fine details. In combination with the stones, they provide excellent models for hypothetical wood carved depictions of the scene(s) described by Úlfr in *Húsdrápa*.

I shall begin with some observations of the Hørdum stone, located in Denmark and broadly dated by Nationalmuseet to between 800 - 1250. (fig. 86) It is comprised of simple outlines but nevertheless features some aspects known from the various versions of the myth. The stone shows two figures in a boat. One is holding a fishing line and another appears to be holding a hook-shaped instrument hovering above that line. Although it is an odd shape for an axe or fishing knife, it does appear that the figure could be poised to cut the line. The fishing line sweeps down at a curve and ultimately terminates forming a graceful spiral. Unfortunately, the middle part of this sweep is worn and partially missing, so it is not possible to determine for certain where the line ends and where a serpent may begin. There are some natural fractures on the stone that once more clearly may have been utilized to depict the biting head of the serpent (Dansk Nationalmuseet). (fig. 87) Assuming that Þórr bashes Hymir in the ear for cutting the line, all of these elements are included in Úlfr's description of the scene. The figure with the line is sitting in the center of the boat; this matches Snorri's information that Þórr seats himself in the well of the boat, i.e. the deepest point where water may be bailed out. This begs the question if Snorri has seen such iconography and uses imagery to inform his prose accounts. Another feature mentioned in the prose version of *Gylfaginning* is depicted on the Hørdum stone - Þórr's foot is seen sticking out below the boat. However, Þórr's hammer is not clearly visible.

The Altuna stone, Sweden eleventh century, also depicts Þórr in outline but with a bit more detail. (fig. 83) He is clearly holding a hammer in his right hand, has a round head and a marked rectangular nose. Þórr's left arm extends into what is presumably a fishing line of the same thickness. Úlfr does not mention the ox head bait, but several versions of the myth, including Snorri and *Hymiskviða* do, and a round object with what may be intended as a face and horns appears attached to the end of the line. It looks like both legs protrude the bottom of the

boat. Of the four stones discussed here, this is the only one that features Þórr alone in the vessel placing it at odds with the others and those versions which have survived in texts. Of great interest here is the depiction of the serpent. Unless they are meant to be appendages, it appears to have four or five heads swarming the bait. The other end of the body terminates in a spiral shape away from the bait, and this may be taken for the tail. A serpent full of runic inscription covers another side of the stone, and this one is shown biting its curled tail - also forming a spiral. This serpent is more reminiscent of the Urnes style, its head shown in profile with curled tendrils extending from its body. While multi-headed giants are mentioned in the mythic corpus, there are no descriptions in the extant texts of Jǫrmungandr having more than one head. However, this is a visual clue to how the serpent may have been depicted, and it aids in deciphering the iconography seen on the other two under discussion.

Currently mounted on an interior wall of St. Mary's church, Cumbria, there is a stone fragment known as the Gosforth slab, or "fishing stone" dated to the tenth century (Kopár 2012: 65, Bailey 1980: 131). (fig. 84) There were likely pictures carved on adjacent stones, but these are missing on each side and below. At least four fish shaped objects surround an ox head shaped bait. The head on the lower right (facing the stone) appears to have a "neck" that curls back before being cut off by the missing fragment on that side of the slab. That could be a sole serpent head, while the others depict whales, given that Hymir fishes for them in *Hymiskviða*, but there is another possibility. The other fish shaped objects checking out the bait are cut off by the potentially missing fragments, and their tails are not visible. Although they are a bit more elongated than those heads that are arguably on the Altuna stone, they could in fact be heads similarly extending from an unseen serpent's body. A serpentine interwoven ring-chain styled body actually hovers above the boat, with a single band extending from each side into the unknown portions of the scene. This suggests that the worm-like body may have at one time wrapped around the circumference of the central content. One or both of these extensions could have led to one or more heads and tails returning into the depiction as seen below. In the boat itself, it appears Þórr sits to the left (again, facing the stone) because a thick line extends from the figure's left hand down to the bait. Þórr's right arm is extended out to the edge of the stone, where it is also quite worn, but it is easy to imagine in the context that he is holding his hammer. This figure also has hollowed out round eyes, which may suggest the powerful gaze of Þórr. An object standing upright in the middle of the boat is curious, as it is a hammer shape. However, it appears too far away from the figure on the right to be thought as held by, what may be supposed as a representation of the giant Hymir. This figure's arm is extended in that direction, but whatever he may be holding, e.g. a knife or axe, is now mostly worn off. It is possible to distinguish the direction of the boat, as the fishing line is bent slightly back suggesting forward motion. In that case the figure taken to be Þórr would be sitting in the bow of the boat, and Hymir at the stern. This would require an orientation, for example, of looking from the south toward the north at the boat, as the occupants rowed west out to sea. This mimics the long coastline of Norway as mapped onto the mythic imagination. While the texts and stones vary in the placement of Þórr and Hymir in the boat, I prefer the positions depicted on the Gosforth slab. Out front in the bow, he is the aggressor in his quest. While contemplating the overall appearance of this stone, it is striking that this and other stones at Gosforth have a deeper relief than the picture stones seen in Gotland, Sweden and Denmark. It has also been suggested that in Northern England gesso and paint could have been applied to the rather crude shapes that remain (Bailey 1980: 26-7). That would have given the Gosforth stone carvings a more refined plastic

form, as I also imagine the woodcarvings of the Viking Age were more contoured and detailed in comparison to how the stones have survived to this day.

The final stone under discussion that may depict Þórr's fishing expedition is the most questionable of the four, namely, the Ardre VIII stone from Gotland, which is thought to represent many mythological scenes (see previous section). (fig. 88) Sune Lindqvist identified a series of pictures in the lower left of the stone that could be part of the fishing narrative, including a man entering an enclosure containing a possible representation of an ox and then carrying what could be an ox head towards the right. Across, but to the left, this man and another are pictured in a boat with one of them harpooning a fish. Above, the same figure seen entering the enclosure is replicated facing a multi-headed anthropomorphic figure. Although it is not shaped like a serpent, it is interesting in view of the Altuna, and possibly the Gosforth stone, rendition of Þórr confronting a creature with many heads. Above these figures facing off is another view of the two "men" on the boat with an extended line from the vessel toward a multi-pointed object. This has been taken to represent Þórr with Miðgarðsormr on the hook (Lindqvist I 1941-2: 95-6 22, Kopár 2012: 62, Meulengracht Sørensen 2002: 130). From what remains, it is difficult to decipher, but it does not resemble an enormously long serpent. The perimeter of the stone is encircled with a serpentine interwoven chain, and in a worn spot, it is possible the body of the band-like form could have been depicted breaching the double edged border with its head in order to snatch the bait. However, other than two figures in what appears to be a small boat, possibly suggesting the occupants are mighty and giant-sized, these depictions seem inconclusive as to what narrative it might represent. Nevertheless, one substantial hint from Ardre VIII informs a hypothetical reconstruction of the scene in Óláfr's *éldhús* - a sequence of images may capture the crucial points of the account within a serpent that frames the depictions - in a sense animating a narrative.

The four stones discussed above depict some aspects of the overall scene described by Úlfr, and now the focus turns to artifacts that assist in forming a synthesis of details for particular features, especially regarding Þórr's physical appearance but also his hammer and other elements of the scene. These artifacts, many of them miniatures, are described as they are introduced, but the organization of the presentation is based on the features rather than the type of artifact or what it is thought to depict. It is not the intent here to prove or disprove beyond a reasonable doubt who or what these images represent, but the samples have been selected based on scholarly discussion that makes each relevant and helpful to arrive at a hypothetical reconstruction of the woodcarvings at Hjarðarholt.

The most emphasized of Þórr's features in Úlfr's description and in other poems and texts discussed above are his eyes, as revealed by the phrases in quatrain 4 of *Húsdrápa*: *ennis innmáni ǫndótts banda vinar skein* "the in-(laid) moon of the forehead [eye] of the fierce friend of the gods [Þórr] shone" and *orðsæll áss skaut ægigeislum* "the famous Ás shot a terrible glance". Several miniature artifacts display varying shapes of oval to round, intense eyes on faces considered possible depictions of Þórr. The Eyrarland image, which Richard Perkins argues is an amulet of Þórr that was intended to influence the wind, was found in Akureyri, Northern Iceland and is dated to ca. 1000. It is made of bronze and is about 6.4 cm high. (fig. 89) The depiction is symmetrical and the figure is seated glaring straight ahead with prominent, glaring oval eyes. A similar likeness of Þórr was found in Lund made of Walrus Ivory about 4.7 cm. tall.

(fig. 90) The eyes are highlighted as they are incised, oversized, and almost round. An amber figure 4.6 cm. high from Feddet, Denmark has much less prominent eye sockets, but there are incised lines extending back from each eye that could be intended to emphasize intensity. (fig. 91) Another bronze figure of the same size found in Chernigov, Ukraine, possibly from a Scandinavian Viking "outpost", sits as the other miniatures introduced above, clutching its beard. (fig. 92) The eyes on this figure are hauntingly prominent round protrusions glaring slightly down with head tilted back. A 3.9 cm. whalebone piece found in Baldursheimur, Iceland, has circular sockets. (fig. 93) One eye appears to be missing, reminiscent of Óðinn, but if all these other objects are Þórr amulets, as Perkins claims and logically argues, this one shares a common overall impression (Perkins 2001: 139).

Prior to comparing other features of the miniatures thought to depict the image of Þórr, there are other objects worthy of consideration regarding iconography representing Þórr's eyes. One is an engraved face situated above a rendering of a hammer on the runic rock at Norra Åby, Södermanland, Sweden (Sö 86). (fig. 94) The rather crude outlined face features prominently round eyes. On the other hand, beautifully detailed faces are situated on the tops of handles of miniature Þórr's hammers. Many of these masks resemble birds of prey, and when Þórr threw Mjǫllnir, it could have been imagined to look like a raptor sweeping down on its victim. However, these masks also may be considered stylized renditions of Þórr due to his renowned terrifying glance. (fig. 95) Several look like owls due to the roundness of the eyes, such as a 4.6 cm. gold-plated silver Mjǫllnir pendant from Bredsättra parish, and one from Erikstorp, Ödeshög parish, Sweden. The former has small, beady eyes, and each appears to be surrounded by twisted wire spiraling outward, while the latter features larger circles. In spite of many other intricate details engraved on the hammers, their eyes draw the viewer in to them. An amulet shaped like a Þórr's hammer found in Mandemark, Møn, Denmark has a similarly rounded head, but the eyes are shaped more like pointed oval slits. A pattern of indented marks above those eyes suggests that this mask wears a helmet with openings for the eyes and protecting the rest of the head. Most striking of the Þórr's hammer pendants is one from the tenth century found in Kabbara Sweden. Rather than eyes that resemble an owl, this mask bears resemblance to the overall shape and sharp glance of an eagle. The eyes are round, but they are crowned by two sets of furled brows, one immediately above and the other crowning the top of the amulet. While the other renderings above contribute to a synthesis of the hypothetical appearance of Þórr's eyes as he glares at the serpent depicted in the woodcarving described by Úlfr, I consider this the most pertinent model. It is not unfitting that the sharp eyes of an eagle would be mapped onto Þórr, along with furled brows as he is angered. The hint from Úlfr's use of the terms *ennis máni* "moon of the brow" in his kenning for eye lends shape to the perception of the moon's stages from crescent to full. I suggest Þórr's round eyes were enhanced by stylized crescents above simulating brows shaped like an eagle, and these inspired Úlfr's kenning as he gazed upon the scene. With the exception of missing or hollowed out eyes on the Chernigov, Ukraine and the whale bone figures from Baldursheimur, (perhaps indicating these are actually images of Óðinn), the eyes on the miniatures are symmetrical. Although it is in exception of the archaeological evidence, since Úlfr uses the singular "moon" rather than "moons", one of Þórr's eyes may have been more prominently featured as he glared upon the serpent.

In some of these images Þórr has a prominent nose, but certainly not all of them. The Þórr's hammer pendants with the owl shaped eyes both have slender nose features. The "eagle

mask" featured on the Kabbara hammer has a broader, defined raptor-like beak. Overall, the Þórr miniatures have the faces of men rather than birds of prey. Other than emphasized eyes, some of the other common traits include a large nose or likely helmeted nose. The amber figure from Feddet has what appears to be a broad protective nose plate that extends down from a round helmet, as does the bronze from Chernigov, Ukraine. The Eyrarland image has a broad nose, even in relation to the prominent eyes, and the tip sticks out considerably. Although the figure has a conical helmet, the rim is clearly delineated and there is not a nose plate. This is not the case on a 6.9 cm. bronze image from Rällinge, Sweden, which is probably a representation of Freyr (fig. 96); the large nose on this piece appears to extend from the conical helmet - similar to the Sigtuna warrior. The whalebone figure from Baldursheimur and the walrus ivory figure from Lund both have large noses, but they are proportionate with the exceptionally sized eyes. This is how I picture Þórr's nose in the woodcarving in Óláfr's hall - prominent and sweeping down from the brows and sockets of the eyes. This appears to be a common method of carving faces in Viking Age art. The indentations naturally formed above the eyes forms the ridge for the brows which extend from both sides to sweep down and uninterruptedly fashion the nose. In the cases of the four picture stones thought to represent the fishing expedition, only Altuna displays a nose, and it is rectangular. Three of them feature rounded heads, and it is not clear whether the profiles of the figures on Ardre VIII are intended as helmet and/or hair, nose and beard. Snorri does not mention a helmet among Þórr's attributes, nor is one mentioned by Úlfr or other poets, so I am not including one.

There are numerous indications, however, that Þórr has ample facial hair. The Gosforth slab, which other than round indentations for eyes in a round head provides little other detail, does hint at a conical shape extending down from the chin of the figure understood to be Þórr. Ardre VIII and the Hørdum stone suggest the same but in profile. The common trait of all the miniature images presented here is the figures grasp their long beard. The bronze Eyrarland and the whalebone Baldursheimur both have forked beards. This may be part of the artists' designs in order to have the figures hold each part symmetrically (Perkins 2001: 117). The walrus ivory from Lund has a long, narrow, twisted beard indicated by diagonal incisions. The amber from Feddet has a similarly narrow beard that sweeps down from the chins, but it is marked by three etched horizontal bands. If any of these miniatures were intended as playing musical instruments and mistakenly interpreted as displaying a beard, it would be this one. However, that does not rule out a dual or more purposes, and it is indeed the thesis of Perkins that these images of Þórr are "sounding" in their beards in order to bring favorable winds (Perkins 2001: 27-52, 132-34). The bronze from Chernigov grasps its beard, and it appears to part below to each side. Other than the forked beard, the rounded face of the whalebone from Baldursheimur appears to be ringed by hair of equal length, and it does not sport a moustache. The only figure that has a prominent moustache is the bronze found in Eyrarland, and that one splits with the uppers curling up like a tendril on the cheekbones. As a feature of the Ringerike style, that detail has been cited as possibly dating the piece to the eleventh century (Perkins 2001: 91). Hypothetically then, the woodcarving of Þórr in Óláfr's hall would have a long beard and also a moustache, but not as stylized as the one from Eyrarland.

A couple of other details adds to a summary of a hypothetical wood-carved rendering of Þórr's face. Most of the miniatures, perhaps due to the facial hair (or the concept of whispering into their beards), have narrow slits or partially covered mouths. The ears, however, are exposed

and generally as pronounced as the eyes and nose. The miniatures are three-dimensional objects, but the hypothetical woodcarvings in Óláfr's hall are in relief. The extant anthropomorphic figures seen in such Viking Age art are generally either *en face* or in profile. In the larger picture, I propose Þórr was depicted sitting in the boat facing forward with stylized glaring eyes and furled brows sweeping from incised sockets to form a prominent nose, clenched mouth with a moustache and long beard. The overall shape of his head would have been roundish and hair rimmed with slight indications of ears. In addition, the beard would cover most of the visible body, other than a left arm extended holding a fishing line, and the right arm out with his hammer aloft.

Most of the detailed clues regarding the appearance of Mjǫllnir are the many miniatures found, but there are also some depictions engraved on stones, and it is theorized that the Eyrarland figure holds a hammer. As mentioned above, the bronze figure grasps its forked beard, but below it transitions to a double shaft that terminates in an upside down cross with bulbous ends. This could be interpreted as the Christian cross, or even a phallus. The problem with the phallus theory, however, is the object is not growing from the groin such as the bronze image from Rällinge taken to be Freyr, but extends from the beard and rests on the knees. The arguments put forth by Perkins that it is a stylized hammer seem more probable, as there are quite a variety of shapes among extant finds. Taking another look at the miniatures mentioned above with bird-like masks at the handle end of the shaft, on the opposing hammer face there is typically a protrusion formed by straight or curved lines that comes to a point. This may have developed due to stylization, as typically a cast iron mallet has a hole centrally bored in it to allow a wooden handle to pass through and be wedged in place. The result is a protrusion forming a cross-like shape. Clearly though, these miniatures represent a hammer composed entirely of metal, as one also would imagine forged by the mythic dwarf craftsmen who made the superior Mjǫllnir. Þórr's hammer is not known to pound anything but the heads of giants, and the shape may have been thought to be conducive if thrown. Contrary to what one might expect, the Norra Åby, Södermanland, Sweden (Sö 86) runic stone features a long shaft. Typically though, as shown by numerous examples among the pendants, there are many subtle variations in shape following the theme of short, tapering shaft with the hammer heads tapered, squared off or slightly rounded and the point terminating in the middle on the outside edge. (fig. 94) Archaeological dating indicates that Þórr's hammers were popularly worn in the decades just prior to conversion, perhaps in defiance by those demonstrating their adherence to pre-Christian traditions (Simek 1993: 219, Davidson 1964: 81, Turville-Petre 1964: 83). That would place them within the time frame of Úlfr's poetic composition. Many of the hammer pendants have beautiful detailed engravings that also could have been used as motifs in a wood-carved representation, and I have chosen to simplify a pattern seen on the one from Kabbara for the image of Mjǫllnir in the depiction of the woodcarving of Þórr's fishing expedition.

Prior to presenting a hypothetical composition of the scene at Hjarðarholt, some additional discussion regarding the appearance of Jǫrmungandr is in order. The so called zoomorphic serpent-like designs stemming from Scandinavia pre-date the Viking Age and continued to be popular in the years after conversion, as seen in stave churches. Many of the artifacts that are image carriers for these patterns and representations are described in depth in the sections of part one, including the Oseberg and Borre styles. As mentioned above, I envision the serpent to encircle the scene depicting Þórr's fishing expedition, much like the serpents that

contain runic inscriptions that surround and follow the edges of picture stones that remain in Gotland and mainland Sweden. Naturally one must take care here, however, not to mimic designs that post-date the period in question. For example, there are many stones featuring serpents in the Urnes style that were not seen prior to their appearance in the eleventh century. Rather, I prefer to take inspiration from the interwoven Borre style serpent type as featured, for example, on the Gosforth cross and slab, contemporary to the hypothetical carvings at Hjarðarholt. A sketch of the hypothetical wood-carved scene described by Úlfr in quatrains 3 - 6 of *Húsdrápa* is shown in figure 97. The following pages provide further context for the choices made in arriving at the depiction.

Interpretations regarding the myth of Þórr's fishing expedition

Central to scholarly conjecture is Þórr's success, or lack of it, in his quest to defeat Jǫrmungandr, and the fate of the serpent. The way Snorri in *Gylfaginning* has Hár present it, "they" say Þórr struck off its head by the sea-bed - *En ek hygg hitt vera þér satt at segja at Miðgarðsormr lifir enn ok liggr í umsjá*. "I think in fact the contrary is correct to report to you that the Midgard serpent lives still and lies in the encircling sea" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 45, *Edda* 1995: 47). Here, Snorri must be referring to the version as described by Úlfr in *Húsdrápa* as he states it most clearly that the head was knocked off the serpent. In other poems it is less clear. The overall corpus of the mythology is logically in conflict if Þórr kills Jǫrmungandr with his hammer at sea, and they are indeed to meet again later at ragnarǫk when they ultimately cause each others demise. Interpretations tend to draw on concepts of mythic time in order to arrive at albeit conflicting assessments of which version of the tale may be the "heathen" or subject to later revision due to Christian influence. Several scholars refer to the influential article by Eleazar Meletinskij, "Scandinavian Mythology as a System" when they address the temporal and spatial worldviews expressed in Old Norse mythology (Meletinskij 1974, Meulengracht Sørensen 2002, Clunies Ross 1989, Hastrup 1985). These ideas are applied to many of the interpretations of Þórr's fishing expedition involving the cosmogonic vs. eschatological aspects of the myth and how these factors relate to the involved chronological discrepancies. The following is an overview.

As presented by Meletinskij and applied by scholars, the Old Norse mythological world-view may be modeled to include horizontal and vertical spatial axes with corresponding temporal conceptual codes. The horizontal model was binary and based upon the opposition between Miðgarðr, the middle enclosure of the "cultured" earth and Útgarðr, outside the enclosure - a place devoid of domestication. In the horizontal model Ásgarðr, the mythic realm of the gods, is topologically included with Miðgarðr. Here, Miðgarðr is a mediating element combining two otherwise distinct groups of entities, gods and men in opposition to the inhabitants of Útgarðr (Hastrup 1985: 148). These opposition of forces were symbolic of "us" vs. "them", order vs. disorder, homestead vs. wilderness, and were represented primarily by the gods and giants; although, in the center men sometimes accompanied the gods, and in the periphery, dwarfs, elves and other mythic beings dwelled. In some of the more etiological oriented myths these entities held each other in check, which maps onto a cyclical concept of time. As told by Snorri and poets, the cosmos was created out of the void by the combination of ice and fire, the earth from Óðinn and his brothers slaying Ymir, followed by many tales of dualism where continual battles between the Æsir and *jǫtnar* "giants" are played out by alternate actors and often championed by

Þórr. These myths are not necessarily linked to a final demise but rather reinforce the notion of a balance of forces representing culture and nature.

The spatial orientation of the horizontal axis could vary. In some circumstances it could be west - east, as when Þórr would travel east to Jǫtunheimr in pursuit of slaying giants. Specifically related to the myth of Þórr's fishing expedition, the horizontal model appears to apply to the opposition of the peripheries of land vs. water, as the world was perceived to be round, centrally with land and surrounded by the sea. (This, on a smaller scale could be mapped by the Icelanders onto their existence on an island in the ocean.) The shoreline in some myths could be the Úthaf, or shores where Útgarðr was situated (Hastrup 1985: 148). Jǫrmungandr, as Snorri dubbed Miðgarðrsormr, the Midgard Serpent, was conceived as encircling the land in the outlying, surrounding ocean. Here there is some ambiguity regarding the role of the serpent, as its name, Miðgarðsormr, associates it with a positive element of the cosmological system, and indeed the visual concept of the serpent surrounding the inhabited earth biting its tail lends a sense of binding together the known universe and containing it (Meulengracht Sørensen 2002). On the other hand, the location of Jǫrmungandr's exile on the periphery, cast there by the gods on the orders of Óðinn due to the prophecy of the destructive powers of Loki's offspring, certainly places the serpent in opposition and may be seen as a chaotic force restrained by the gods.

According to Meletinskij, the center of the vertical model is the world tree Yggdrasill. The top represents the sky, the middle earth, and the lower world below - also symbolized by the zoomorphic eagle at the top to the tree, the deer grazing on its leaves and the serpent chewing on its roots. As a tree of life its milky dew drips down and feeds the springs at its roots. The *nornir* "norns" in turn nourish the tree, and they are associated with birth, as the *nornir* also dispense fate. The notion of death is captured in the vertical axis with the tree top as the dwellings of the gods through the myth of Valhalla "the hall of the slain" and below in Niflheimr, where Hel resides and hosts the lower realm of the dead. With these elements in mind, it is argued that the vertical axis connotes the irreversibility of time. Meletinskij's concept of the eschatological aspects of Old Norse myth is also illustrated by observations regarding Snorri's chronology of events involving broken oaths and deceit which led to ragnarǫk. The vertical model was understood as chronological and linear in the sense that there was a beginning and end to life, and in broader terms, society. Hence, it can also be associated with the Christian eschatological view that there will be an end to the world. The vertical model also fits Christian notions of heaven and earth, God and mortals. It is a common opinion that the myth of ragnarǫk and its doomsday scenario was influenced by the Christian mindset, and this vertical mode of thinking would have been reinforced late in the Viking Age during conversion among Scandinavians.

The temporal aspects of the horizontal and vertical axes as they apply to Þórr's encounter with Jǫrmungandr are at the core of many propositions regarding the origins of the myth. As pointed out by Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, the variations in Snorri and poetry are so great that over the span of three to four centuries new versions must have been created from older material. Citing the extant texts and the four picture stones arguably featuring Þórr fishing, he undertakes a comparative analysis of the variants and theorizes about the development of the myth from the Viking Age into the conversion period. Sørensen's summary is Þórr takes a horizontal journey - he must go from the heavens all the way to and through the transitional landmarks to the other end of the boundary of the world. In order to get there, he must enlist the

help of a giant. The giant prevents the completion of the struggle and thereby saves the world order. The point is it does not culminate in the destruction of the serpent, and therefore the universal dichotomy is both marked and confirmed (Meulengracht Sørensen 2002).

Meulengracht Sørensen argues that the presence of Hymir on the stones seemingly poised to cut Þórr's fishing line is evidence for the giant saving the cosmic world order (Meulengracht Sørensen 2002: 130). However, of the four stones he cites, three stones that have a second figure on the boat, presumably Hymir, do not show conclusively that a line is cut and a serpent is freed. Temporally, the stones seem to show the act of Þórr fishing, with possibly on three of them another figure - one of those three entirely uncertain - the other two very obscurely poised to disrupt the catch. There is no indication on the stones that the Midgard serpent survives the encounter.

Regarding the texts, Meulengracht Sørensen indicates that *Húsdrápa* is an anomaly because the serpent is slayed. He notes that in *Hymiskviða* Þórr strikes the serpent on the head, but it does not say that the serpent was killed by the blow. But this does not really address how the poet in *Hymisqviða* conveys the outcome of the encounter. Although it is badly preserved, the following has survived:

Dró diarfliga dáðraccr Þórr
orm eitrfán upp at borði;
hamri kníði háfiall scarar,
ofliótt, ofan úlfs hnitbróður.

Hreingálcn hlumðo, enn hǫlcn þuto,
fór in forna fold ǫll saman.

Søcþiz síðan sá fiscr í mar. (stanzas 23 and 24, *Edda* 1983: 92)

Then very bravely Thor, the courageous one,
pulled the gleaming serpent up on board.
With his hammer he struck the head
violently, from above, of the wolf's hideous brother.

The sea-wolf shrieked and the underwater rocks
re-echoed,
all the ancient earth was collapsing
. . . . . .[47]
then that fish sank into the sea. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 81)

Normally a blow from Mjǫllnir to the head would kill a foe. The cosmic response of the *forna fold*, ancient earth, implies a tipping of the balance, and a "sinking fish" that does not writhe away is usually dead. There is also a noticeable absence of Hymir cutting the line in the extant

[47] There are only three extant long lines in this stanza, but there is no paleographic evidence of a lacuna. There is speculation if there was a fourth line it would have referred to Hymir cutting the fishing line.

verses of *Hymisqviða*. In *Ragnarsdrápa*, Bragi's version does not address the survival or death of the serpent. The last verse simply states:

> Vildit rǫngum ofra
> vágs byrsendir œgi
> hinn er mjótygil máva
> Mœrar skar fyrir Þóri. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 96)

> Breezesender [giant, Hymir], who cut the thin string [fishing-line] of gulls' Møre [the sea] for Thor, did not want to lift the twisted bay-menacer [Midgard serpent]. (*Edda* 1995: 142)

Three extant stanzas by Eysteinn Valdason called by Finnur *Et digt om Tor* relate an encounter between the adversaries but include no conclusion (Finnur 1908: 131). In a fragment by Ǫlvir hnúfa, Þórr and the Midgard Serpent are mentioned, but in no conclusive way other than opposing each other. A *lausavisa* attributed to Gamli gnævaðarskáld, ninth century, states:

> Meðan gramr hinn er svik samðit
> snart Bilskirnis hjarta
> grundar fisk með grandi
> glúfrskeljungs nam rjúfa. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 16)

> While Bilskirnir's lord, who never nursed treachery in his heart, did quickly destroy the sea-bed-fish [Midgard serpent] with gorge-whale's [giant's] bane [Miollnir]. (*Edda* 1995: 73)

This slaying could be, of course, at ragnarǫk, but there is no telling. It looks ambiguous, at best, as to whether the sources other than *Húsdrápa* do not refer to the killing of the serpent.

Meulengracht Sørensen states Úlfr's version is no longer about preserving the balance of world order but is "a triumph over negative forces." This would, following Meletinskij, apply to the vertical axis as a link in the chain associated with an eschatological worldview. On the other hand, Meulengracht Sørensen claims in the earlier Viking Age sources there is nothing to indicate an association between the expedition and ragnarǫk. He concludes that Snorri's chronological placement situates the myth in a context where its original meaning, as confirmation of world order, becomes distorted. This meaning is only revealed when Snorri's version is compared with the stone pictures and the skaldic poems (Meulengracht Sørensen 2002). Again, the problem with this argument is it is inconclusive whether Hymir's presence in the texts or on the stones actually prevented Þórr from throwing his hammer and knocking Jǫrmungandr's head off. The claim that the encounter fits the horizontal axis of Old Norse mythology may be valid, but not based on the survival of the serpent. One good point Meulengracht Sørensen makes is Snorri recounts all the pertinent information, including the feet through the boat, otherwise only known from pictorial sources. (Extant, that is - additionally, there could be other poems that have not survived to this day, this also discounts oral tradition that was still circulating.) It is interesting to consider how much of what Snorri relates is based on what he has seen as opposed to what he has heard or read. This point about referencing visual

depictions is picked up by Kurt Schier, namely, Úlfr did not invent the version, he is describing iconography (more below).

Margaret Clunies Ross takes up after Meulengracht Sørensen and notes that the poet of *Hymisqviða* has worked together several myths that are probably a lot older than the text as we now have it. She thinks combining the fishing expedition with the cauldron fetching tale makes it take on a "significantly altered meaning" from that of an independent narrative and may be a "cautiously useful guide" to the "ideological challenge of Christianity to native modes of thought" (Clunies Ross 1989: 9). She argues along with Meulengracht Sørensen that in the early Scandinavian versions of this myth Þórr does not kill the serpent, which expresses a balance between the cosmic forces (Clunies Ross 1989: 10). Þórr's fishing belongs to the other myths that involve him going from Ásgarðr, the center, to the periphery in pursuit of giants. These, along with the myth of the acquisition of the mead of poetry, are of the quest type and fit the horizontal model as outlined by Meletinskij. In addition, by applying a Proppian analysis to *Hymisqviða*, Clunies Ross shows how through the wondertale structure used by the poet and embedding the fishing expedition in the quest for the cauldron, he downplays the eschatological dimension of the story. Snorri imposes a chronological aspect to the myth when he presents it as a sequel to the humiliation suffered by Þórr from the magic of Útgarða-Loki. After the tale is told, Snorri has Hár say he thinks the serpent lived on, presumably in order for it logically to be present at ragnarǫk. Rather, in *Hymisqviða*, the god's encounter with the chthonic force of the serpent reinforces a sense of checks and balances through the wondertale syntagm (Clunies Ross 1989: 23). She states that in the myth from the conversion period (ca. 1000) a vertical dimension becomes evident because Þórr actually kills the serpent (Clunies Ross 1989: 10). However, her arguments depend less on the fate of Jǫrmungandr and more on the tests and challenges that Þórr must undergo during his quest. Indeed, this seems to be the central theme of Þórr's horizontal wanderings that he repeatedly exercises these trials.

After citing the similarities and discrepancies in the primary sources mentioned above, Edith Marold suggests that there is one ancient version that combines two motifs: the victorious killing of the serpent in spite of the intervention of a companion figure. Although in the Old Norse sources the survival or killing of the serpent is ambiguous, a constant theme is the cutting of the line. Yet, she deems it unlikely that this myth would be so popular if it were to display the failure of Þórr in the many literary and visual representations. Also, seen together with the advance of Christianity one would expect Christ to overcome Satan (in spite of the giant). Indeed, as we have seen, grave stones carved by Anglo-Scandinavians featured Old Norse myths that parallel Christian motifs. *Gylfaginning* is the only source where it is explicitly said that it is believed the serpent survives. Marold reasons this is due to the issue of mythological time and the rationalization that the serpent must have survived to have participated in ragnarǫk (Marold 2000). Marold concludes that in the *Húsdrápa* episode and probably the iconography at Hjarðarholt the destruction of Miðgarðsormr is represented, as in the general history of religion the cosmogonic struggle against chaos, also seen in some of the following examples.

In Mesopotamian religion around the middle of the second millennium BCE, Tiamat was a primordial goddess of the sea, sometimes conceived of as a serpent (Fontenrose 1980). Marduk, possibly meaning "storm son" and as a "storm god", with lightning preceding his advance, slays her. A similar myth stems from Canaanite, ancient Ugarit, in which Ba'al is given clubs,

interpreted as thunderbolts, to do battle against Yamm, a personification of the sea (Jacobsen 1968). A possibly seven headed serpent called Lotan is mentioned as a servant of Yamm, also defeated by Ba'al. Although open to interpretation, the ancient motifs seem to feature a battle between a god of thunderstorms and the sea with the victory going to the god. These mythical creatures have been cited as the precursors for the Hebrew Leviathan, a sea monster referenced in the Tanakh. The King James version of the Old Testament lines l2 through 14 of Psalms 74 states: "For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness".

Among other comparative myths, in the *Rigveda*, Indra is a Hindu thunder god and slayer of Vritra, who took the form of a serpent (*Rigveda* 1896 1.32, tr. Ralph T. H. Griffith). His weapon is *vajra*, in Sanskrit meaning thunderbolt and/or diamond, and one of Indra's epithets is *Vajradaksina* "holding the vajra in his right hand". The Greek myth in which Apollo slays Python has the parallel of god slaying chthonic serpent, but without the allusion to a thunder god vs. a deity of the sea. The associations listed here indicate a universal theme. I do not consider the Old Norse myth influenced by the Biblical encounter with Leviathan as Satan other than as a convenient tool of appropriation for Christians to convert Scandinavians and/or apply their iconography to conversion grave stones. Nevertheless, it can be argued substantially that ancient mythic motifs circulated and contributed to versions of local lore - and certainly in the form of visual representations. We have seen evidence of this with roman coins and the appearance of Scandinavian bracteates, and later with suggestions of influence on the part of Carolingian art and perhaps poetry in the Viking Age ninth century. (See also ancient iconography in reference to Baldr's funeral procession in the next section.)

Citing some of the ancient myths listed above, Turville-Petre reasons we may suppose that in the original myths gods and heroes overcame monsters. What he calls dualistic conceptions from Christian and near-eastern eschatology became infused with Norse heathendom and led to the serpent's survival until ragnarǫk. Hence, he concludes the pagan version is Úlfr's - according to *Húsdrápa* the god killed his enemy, as Þórr was shown striking off the serpent's head on the pictorial panel in Óláfr pái's house in Iceland (Turville-Petre 1964: 75-76).

Kurt Schier does not differ, but adds an important dimension to the claim that *Húsdrápa* maintains the pre-Christian form of the myth. A sole textual analysis of Snorri's prose account and the poetry concerning Þórr's fishing expedition does not take into account the pictorial language expressed by the carvings. Schier argues that the growing influence of Christianity in Norway and Iceland in the late tenth century may have contributed to a foregrounding of eschatological myths, i.e. those that could mirror Christian thought. However, he reasons that woodcarvings of those myths represented in *Húsdrápa* would have retained their archaic forms, and that those motifs were less mutable than textual accounts, such as the overarching eschatological narrative presented by Snorri. It follows that the woodcarving of Þórr's fishing expedition in Óláfr pái's hall, as described by Úlfr, would conserve iconography that was based on pictorial tradition with less infusion of new ideas or appropriation by/through the instigation of Christian authors/creators/sources (Schier 1976).

While the horizontal and vertical axes are useful to distinguish between concepts of time and space, Meletinskij notes how in some cases cosmogony and cosmology converge. For this study of mythological content expressed visually, it can be useful to think how the myths combine two axes to form a three-dimensional worldview. (Or 2 1/2 D, as in a relief carving with its depth and contours casting shadows and emulating plasticity.) For one, the picture can show multiple stages - for example the encircling serpent can be seen as a cyclical entity - not just told with words with a beginning, middle and end, but with multiple stages in the story, animated in that it simultaneously shows the curiosity, the encounter and the striking off of the head of the serpent. As an encircling coil, there is, in a sense, no beginning or end to the narrative. This resembles the horizontal axis as described by Meletinskij and understood by scholars, but with the added element of not having a linear, textual finite point in time that determines the end of the myth. As another example, while Meletinskij maps the world tree onto the vertical axis as an irreversible temporal process, I argue Yggdrasill may also fit this three-dimensional model - in particular with the branches and roots not projected on a flat plane. The vertical movement of water as recycled dew drips from a spherical object and is refreshed by the norns. The organism spreads out to encompass the cosmos in its expansiveness. It is not a stagnate system, but involves cyclical regeneration. The tree symbolizes an ecological system sensitive to disruption. Birth, life and death occur, but that does not destroy the system. It is central to my thesis that the extant stanzas of *Húsdrápa* and the woodcarvings at Hjarðarholt confirm this mythic worldview.

In view of the discussion presented thus far, I arrive at the following interpretation of the myth. I concur with Schier, Turville-Petre and Marold, that the wood-carved scene represented in Óláfr's *eldhús* is a traditional variant that is not necessarily the result of Christian eschatological thinking. I have argued earlier that the woodcarvings likely were executed by craftsmen in the vicinity of Hlaðir, and it is well established that Hákon jarl was a staunch pagan. It is quite possible that archaic instances of a thunder god victorious over a serpent deity spread and took root in Scandinavia in both oral and pictorial forms, taking on the particular attributes of local objects of cult and Iron Age Viking art. I challenge the notion that the act of striking the head off the serpent would necessarily result in its absolute death. A common myth is when an earthworm is cut into two pieces, each part will grow into a new worm. This is scientifically disproven, however, the planarian variety of flatworms do exhibit an ability to regenerate lost body parts. Perhaps observations of such phenomena led to the Greek myth of Hydra, as Hesiod relates in *Theogony*. The serpentine water monster had many heads and each time one was dislodged it grew two more. Indeed, myth does not necessarily follow everyday logic. As stand alone tales, one may conflict another. In particular as graphic representations of Þórr's fishing expedition, the knocking off of the head of the serpent need not be taken as a terminal. Therefore, the scene described by Úlfr need not be understood as a vertical, eschatological moment in irreversible time. Rather, in spite of the victory, the woodcarving may be understood as fitting the cyclical concept presented by Meletinskij. The monster is subdued, but its "death" is not final.

Meulengracht Sørensen points out that in *Hymiskviða* Þórr is described as a *sveinn*. Bragi uses the term *snimma*, "early on" or "quickly, hastily", Finnur translates it as "fordums" (in old times) - according to Meulengracht Sørensen *snimma* is usually used as early in a person's life. He argues that Bragi saw the event as early in the life of Þórr or events in time. This indicates that in the 900's Þórr's attempt was viewed as a confirmation of the cosmic order and to reinforce the notion of Þórr as the protector of the world (Meulengracht Sørensen 2002: 133). I agree that

the notion of Þórr as a young man is an important clue as to the underlying message of the myth. Namely, extant versions support that the fishing expedition is a rite of passage through the symbolism of Þórr's age, his actions, and how he leaves the event. However, there is no outward indication that Þórr is attempting to disrupt the cosmic balance. The lodging with the giant and use of his boat does not seem a necessary component, rather a convenient one, for the transport of Þórr onto the sea - as pointed out by Meulengracht Sørensen a boundary area in opposition to Ásgarðr. Þórr could have killed Hymir and taken his boat. Þórr is not foreign to water. He crosses water boundaries by wading all the time, but indeed at times he needs assistance with it. In the poem *Hárbarðzlióð*, Óðinn in disguise refuses to ferry Þórr over a fjord crossing, and they engage in a flyting. Þórr is stuck and must walk around. In contrast, on his journey to challenge Geirrøðr, Þórr is given the staff Gríðarvǫlr "Gríðr's pole" by the giantess Gríðr, which enables him to cross the river Vimur - the same incident as referenced by Úlfr in his kenning for Þórr. Perhaps the balance of cosmic forces is found in the detail that Þórr needed the giant to show him where Jǫrmungandr was to be found - a chthonic guide, as it were - much like a wise person informs the initiate with primal knowledge. When Þórr hooks the serpent, he grows in Ás strength, strikes the serpent, and in the case of the woodcarving, boxes the giant. His time of complete separation and his vision of overcoming adversary realized marks the transformational point of the myth, at least arguably in those versions with *sveinn* and *snimma*. Typologically monster-slayings do occur early in the hero's life. Þórr emerges as an adult, one who has learned, exercised the skill and achieved his lesson. He is ready to rejoin the Æsir and, presumably, do it all over again. This is what Þórr represents to humans, one who repeatedly faces challenges and needs to overcome them, just like people do on an everyday basis.

Cult of Þórr and the carvings in Óláfr's hall

Unlike the gods featured in stanza 2, Heimdallr and Loki, there appears to have been an extensive cult of Þórr throughout Scandinavia. Prior to exploring some of the sources regarding veneration of Þórr, it will be prudent to define some of the terms I will be using in the following paragraphs. Heathen practices differ from Christianity in numerous ways, of course, among them as a "folk" oriented religion that may vary in specific practices rather than a "universal" religion that follows a particular dogma. Heathen traditions are polytheistic, while Christian teachings are monotheistic (Steinsland 2005: 33). Pre-Christian (as a preferred term over heathen) religious practices in Scandinavia specifically had different goals than Christian. The pre-Christian religion was conceived as involving behavior, *forn siðr*, practices of the "olden, heathen times" in this world, as opposed to having faith, *trúa*, in a savior. As alluded to in previous sections, there appears to have been a reverence for ancestors in combination with honoring gods with euhemeristic qualities. In the source material this is most often expressed through sacrifice, where offerings to the gods were made in exchange for positive outcomes and to reinforce the roles of members in the community. It follows that the term worship becomes complicated by two different approaches. Whereas the cult of a pre-Christian god, as I will use the term here, was more oriented on a benevolent relationship with mystical forces, Christian worship revolves around repentance and eternal salvation - an individualistic, transcendental bond with God. This is not to set aside ideological and social complexities, but rather to frame the following discussion regarding the popularity of Þórr and how that came to be expressed in the woodcarvings described in Óláfr's hall. Namely, there would have been a tradition in which the likenesses of gods were used to maintain a prosperous environment.

Generally, Þórr seems to have been a god of protection. This is evidenced by runes inscribed on stones asking for his safeguard (Turville-Petre 1964: 85) He may have been invoked to protect a monument from future vandalism, when sickness or danger threatened, or when emigrating (Sonne 2013). Additionally, as previously discussed regarding his hammer, he could have been invoked for consecration involving the well-being of the community in cases of marriage, burial and cremation ceremonies, feasting and the making of oaths between men (Davidson 1964: 84). The assistance of Þórr was sought in seafaring for both safety and favorable wind, which can be confirmed by the use of amulets (Perkins 2001). Place names along shorelines such as Þórshǫfn and Þórsnes add to the impression that he was a god of seafarers (Turville-Petre 1964: 87). In *Landnámabók* it states that Helgi enn magri was of mixed faith: he believed in Christ, but called on Þórr for sea voyages (*Landnámabók* 1986: 250). In an episode of *Rǫgnvalds þáttr ok Rauðs*, Rauðr calls on an image of Þórr to create a headwind against Óláfr Tryggvason (*Flateyjarbók* 1860: 296, Perkins 2001: 43). In *Brennu-Njáls saga* Steinunn Refsdóttir argues with the missionary Þangbrandr and recites a couple of stanzas claiming Þórr caused his shipwreck (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954: 265-56). These examples from literature not only suggest Þórr was called upon for protection on the seas, but that his cult was active particularly during the period of Christian conversion. The rivalry is further emphasized in *Eiríks saga rauða* when Þórhallr veiðimaðr claimed to have invoked Þórr by composing a poem for him to drive a whale to shore. When everyone got sick from eating it, the hungry crewmembers turned to God's mercy and were soon blessed with plenty of untainted supplies of nourishment (*Eiríks saga rauða* 1935: 224-25).

The cult of Þórr was widespread. As referred to in section 1.2, Adam of Bremen reported that in Sweden:

> Nobilissimum illa gens templum habet, quod Ubsola dicitur, non longe positum ab Sictona civitate [vel Birka]. In hoc templo, quod totum ex auro paratum est, statuas trium deorum veneratur populus, ita ut potentissimus eorum Thor in medio solium habeat triclinio; hinc et inde locum possident Wodan et Fricco. (Rerum Germanicarum Adam, Book IV, ch. 26; ed. Schmeidler 1917: 257-58)

> That folk has a very famous temple called Uppsala, situated not far from the city of Sigtuna and Björkö. In this temple, entirely decked out in gold, the people worship the statues of three gods in such wise that the mightiest of them, Thor, occupies a throne in the middle of the chamber; Wotan and Frikko have places on either side. (Adam of Bremen 2002: 207)

and,

> Omnibus itaque diis suis attributos habent sacerdotes, qui sacrificia populi offerant. Si pestis et fames imminet, Thor ydolo lybatur, ... (Rerum Germanicarum Adam, Book IV, ch. 27; ed. Schmeidler 1917: 259)

> For all their gods there are appointed priests to offer sacrifices for the people. If plague and famine threaten, a libation is poured to the idol Thor; ... (Adam of Bremen 2002: 207).

Place-names in Sweden that indicate Þórr worship include the compound words *lundr* "grove", *vé* "sacred place", and *hǫrgr* "mound, shrine". Throughout Scandinavia place names that are compounds of Þórr and natural objects or locations include: *sær* "lake", *berg* "rock", *áss* "ridge" (Turville-Petre 1964: 93-4). Additional spatial phenomena include districts, such as the settlement Þórstunir, in which Þórr was likely linked in some manner. Rituals such as carrying religious idols through the fields to assure fertility have been conducted in Sweden as late as the eighteenth century, and it has been argued that this stems from a pre-Christian practice. The place-name Torsåker "Þórr's arable land" may indicate such cult activities once took place there (Brink 2013: 42-3).

Many sources in the king's sagas regarding "idols" of Þórr in Norway have been mentioned in section 1.7, including the destruction of these images at the hands of Christian kings in Hlaðir, Mære and the valleys above Þrándheimr. In all of these described settings Þórr is given prominence, as in being situated in the middle of the likenesses of gods. In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd Munk Snorrason,* Þórr's image was supposedly carved on the prow of Eiríkr jarl's ship Járnbarðinn. Eiríkr jarl was able to obtain victory over the Christian king only after he smashed the image of Þórr and replaced it with a cross (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* 2006: 336). The sagas of the Icelanders provide indications that a cult of Þórr existed around the general area of Hlaðir. For example, there is a reference to practicing sacrifice in secret in *Hallfræðar saga*. Hallfreðr arrives at Hlaðir when Óláfr Tryggvason is there. Óláfr summons and converts him. Later, a certain Kálfr accuses Hallfreðr of having a Þórr amulet made of walrus tusk in his money-bag (*Hallfræðar saga* 1934: 162). In the saga, the claim proves false, but it is interesting in regard to the amulet found in Lund which demonstrates that such an artifact was indeed in circulation.

There are many indicators that Þórr was particularly popular in Iceland. In *Landnámabók* among Icelandic settlers approximately one quarter of four thousand have a name in some way based on Þórr (Turville-Petre 1964). It seems more than a coincidence that it was such a popular name. In addition to those instances in the sagas cited above describing Þórr's following in Iceland, in section 2.1 detail is given to the practice of casting overboard *qndvegissúlur* during the immigration and settlement of Iceland in order to guide settlers to their new homes. In the case of Þórólfr Mostrarskegg, it is told in *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Landnámabók* that one of them had Þórr carved on it. Þórólfr brought his "temple" with him and re-erected it where the *qndvegissúla* washed ashore (*Eyrbyggja saga* 1935: 7-8, *Landnámabók* 1986: 124-25). In *Kjalnesinga saga*, a perhaps less reliable description of a pre-Christian temple, the saga writer states that Þórr was the most honored there. Reminiscent of the description of the temple at Uppsala by Adam of Bremen, an image of Þórr was centered with other gods to each side (*Kjalnesinga saga* 1959: 7). Otherwise, the description is similar to that provided by Snorri of the *blót* gatherings held by Sigurðr Hákonarson, Hlaðajarl (*Heimskringla* I 1979: 167-68). Tales of Þórr's cult carried even further by Viking Age westward expansion are exemplified in *Fóstbræðra saga*; as detailed in section 2.1, Þórr's image and his hammer were reportedly carved

on a chair in Greenland owned by a certain Gríma. The saga writer describes how Gríma was able to utilize the chair with her powers of sorcery (*Fóstbræðra saga* 1943: 245-48).

There are, of course, questions as to how reliable the medieval literary sources are as past accounts. Those firmly in the source critical camp, such as Lasse Christian Arboe Sonne, reject Old Norse medieval literature in the historical study of the Viking Age. He points out there are distortions in the presentation in the sagas of events in the Viking Age and expresses skepticism regarding oral tradition surviving several hundred years. He also dismisses place names in his study of a cult of Þórr (Sonne 2013). Among the numerous examples from literature cited above, if they stood alone indeed many are very questionable. However, collectively the tales are strong indicators of a widespread cult of Þórr. The indications are particularly prominent during the hundred years or so leading and in response to the conversion of Scandinavians to Christianity (Turville-Petre 1964: 94, Lindow 2001: 290). The latter claim is legitimized by archaeology with the many artifacts described above.

Perkins focus on Þórr amulets casts interesting light on the agency of images, which in turn may be taken into consideration for the woodcarvings at Hjarðarholt. As he presents it, the general purpose of amulets is to have some influence over the world. More specifically, they may be prophylactic, i.e. objects intended for the prevention of disease, shipwreck; or, productive, as in creating luck, success in ventures or regulation of meteorological events. They may be representations of gods, body parts, weapons or magic symbols. Amulets may be miniaturizations of larger objects such as effigies of deities, and the vehicles or chairs they are seated on. Perkins cites the Melanesian word *mana* as "a magical force which might be possessed in varying degrees of strength by a person or god or animal or object" - indeed amulets (Perkins 2001: 56). He likens the term to the Old Norse verb *at magna*, to empower, strengthen; and to charm, make strong by spell. Some of the ways amulets may be thought to be empowered in this manner include elaborate manufacture, of a distant derivation or marked with special symbols. They are thought to be effective through the concept of like produces like, or repulsion, through imitation (Perkins 2001: 53-60). I have discussed similar observations made by Gell (1998) and Helms (1993) in section 1.1 and made references throughout this study regarding these possible social relations involved with the Oseberg ship carvings, and in general woodcarvings, during the Viking Age.

A certain agency residing in the image of Þórr is understood from the numerous references of idols housed throughout Scandinavia, carvings on high seat pillars and seats themselves. The image of the god was understood as an index pointing to, and indeed in some cases the actual embodiment exercising Þórr's will. This notion is reinforced by the amulets which were thought to influence the fortunes of people through wind at seas, protection and good luck. This agency must have been shared with the installation of carved renderings of the god and the myths on the walls and ceilings of buildings. The woodcarvings may have been intended to induce protection and good luck for the inhabitants, but these traits were supposedly gained by the amulets themselves. This begs the question if the wall carvings provided some added value to the population in Laxárdalr.

Due to their overall shape, Viking Age houses are often compared to an upside down ship. In section 1.1, I argued that the Oseberg ship, with its carved orifices and serpent eye could have

been understood to allow a certain access to the interiority of the priestess, as a deity, that occupied the vessel. Conversely, the presence of the priestess could have been perceived to emanate outward from the same "portal" and be held in awe by those who saw the ship approaching them. As an inverted ship, the Viking dwelling that featured wood carved images could have produced a similar effect. Especially during situations like the performance of Úlfr's poem, gazing upon the carved scenes could have transported the minds of the inhabitants from the microcosm of the hall into a sense of the macrocosm of the mythic corpus. As a Þórr amulet worn under a shirt or carried in a bag was thought to deliver an individual good fortune, the carvings on the wall could have been understood to provide a collective beneficial influence offered by the gods. Þórr in particular was thought to protect and bring good fortune to the cult, so his likeness on the wall would have been perceived as the embodiment of his benevolence mapped onto the dwelling and surrounding landscape. Specifically, the carved mythic scene of his encounter with Jǫrmungandr would have lent a symbolic sense of support for overcoming the hardships endured on a day to day basis on the farmstead. Óláfr was once a warrior, but in Iceland he became a wealthy landowner and farmer. It is told in *Laxdæla saga* that when he moved his farm dwellings from Goddastaðir to Hjarðarholt, those in the front of the procession of livestock and members of the household arrived at the new farm as Óláfr, at the end of the parade, left the old. That is a distance of about four kilometers. Although this is likely an exaggeration, clearly there was a lot at stake to keep all those people and animals alive. Haymaking and other agricultural activities needed to thrive. In this section it has been demonstrated that it was believed Þórr could influence the weather and was called upon for growing good crops. It would be appropriate that he might be featured prominently in the *eldhús* of such a chieftain and *bóndi*.

With factors presented in this section in mind, including Úlfr's description, other primary literary sources, extant iconographic artifacts from the period, interpretations of the myth of Þórr's fishing expedition and the possible agency imbued in the carving, I return to the graphed depiction of the scene. (fig. 98) Jǫrmungandr encircles the narrative with a vibrant intertwined ribbon-like scaled bodice. The serpent's body is inspired by the numerous examples seen in the North Atlantic of Borre style chains depicting monstrous beings. Jǫrmungandr is rendered in essentially three poses: curiously checking out the intruders, being hauled up including the stare down with Þórr, and with a struck off head. The serpent's head and eyes mimic those seen on the spiral of the Oseberg ship and the Hørdum stone. The multiple instances of Jǫrmungandr, composed with two positions of Þórr and Hymir on the boat, lend a sense of animation and uninterrupted cyclical time to the pictorial tale. Þórr, with Mjǫllnir aloft in his right hand poised to strike and his other fist on the gunwale holding the line, exchanges fierce glances with Jǫrmungandr while the monster spits poison. Þórr's face is designed based on a fusion of the numerous extant miniatures thought to represent him and the emphasis on his frightening eyes in Old Norse mythology. The sea churns as Hymir looks on with trepidation. His stocky body and old appearance is reminiscent of descriptions of giants in the corpus, but primarily he is depicted as a thick-set anthropomorphic figure in view of Úlfr's somewhat comic and demeaning tone. The second depiction of the two on the boat includes the rest of the action that Úlfr describes in *Húsdrápa*. As Mjǫllnir strikes Jǫrmungandr, Þórr's right hand follows through as he punches Hymir with the other. Here I have added an element not explicitly mentioned by Úlfr. I show Hymir with an axe in hand indicating that he cut the fishing line. This is an action common to the variants of the myth, and it provides motivation for Þórr's violent reaction pointed out by Úlfr.

Waves, currents, clouds and weather fill in the areas that surround the representation of the tale. Symbols, such as the stylized lightning bolts included here, are also present in the Oseberg tapestries in order to enhance the appearance of the composition. Similarly, woodcarvers typically do not like empty spaces in the relief patterns.

The overall layout of the carvings in Óláfr's *eldhús* and their collective significance is covered in the concluding section of this study. The carving of Þórr's fishing expedition does not stand in isolation, but an interim summary is presented here. The era of the composition of *Húsdrápa* is just prior to the Christian Óláfr Tryggvason's seizure of power in Norway and around Þrándheimr. His predecessor, Hákon jarl was invested in maintaining a relationship with the Æsir, but the tensions involving the incursion of Christianity must have been felt. In response, images of Þórr would have been fore fronted in competition with the influx of Biblical representations. Óláfr pái arrived in Hlaðir at this critical juncture in time. The cult of Þórr was also at its height just prior to conversion in Iceland. The aura of Þórr would have appealed to Óláfr as a chieftain, as there were some parallels. As a young man, he undertook a journey in which he proved himself by becoming a warrior who championed alongside his grandfather in Ireland. This would have been mirrored by the successes of Þórr against the giants. Óláfr succeeded in his rite of passage, as I have argued Þórr is a mythic model in his quests. Óláfr was illegitimate and needed to prove himself - as Þórr was begot on Jǫrð outside of marriage. Óláfr would have wanted to demonstrate his capabilities and emulate the qualities of the god. There were these attributes of common identity, but perhaps more importantly, the life on the farmstead in Iceland required overcoming challenges. The very popularity of the god would make Þórr a figure of prominence in the iconography of the hall, but he also was called on by farmers to bring them prosperity. As I discuss in detail in the final section, I imagine the *ǫndvegi* "seat of honor" in Óláfr's *eldhús* to have been in the middle of the long bench of the building. It would have been suitable to have the carvings of Þórr above Óláfr's place in the hall, as Óláfr would have wished to emulate such an elevated status. Þórr's powerful glance, his eyes, would have been a portal to the deity. The orifice of the eye could allow access to an imagined inner essence of his qualities. This is a stepping-stone to evoking a concept of the common cult. Spatially, the broader myth, through the orifice created by the encompassing serpent, is also a portal to the landscape and sense of being on an island surrounded by the ocean (Animation 8). Hence, the mythic worldview became embodied in the physical world through sensual perception, the woodcarvings, in the hall. The cyclical nature of the woodcarving also lent a temporal sense of the life on an Icelandic farmstead - a sort of measurement and acknowledgement of recurrent time - also revisited in the next sections.

2.6: *Húsdrápa*, strophes 7 - 12 Baldr's funeral procession

If the discussion in this section was limited to the description by Úlfr Uggason of Baldr's funeral procession in Óláfr pái's *eldhús*, it would provide ample input for a hypothetical reconstruction of the woodcarving. However, not only would that not do justice to the importance of Baldr in Old Norse mythology, it would also make superficial some of the conclusions I draw regarding the ontology of the woodcarving in the hall, its placement and overall significance for the inhabitants of Laxárdal in the late tenth century. Unlike stanza 2, in which reference to an obscure myth about a struggle between Heimdallr and Loki leaves much open to speculation, the complexity of extant primary sources about Baldr, including Snorri,

poetry and Saxo Grammaticus offers a differing set of problems for scholarship. There is no lack of information regarding Baldr's death, and in the broader scheme of *Gylfaginning*, *Vǫlospá* and additional eddic poetry, the event is significant for ragnarǫk, the "doom of the gods". While this is also an important factor of consideration for Þórr's fishing expedition, the issue for that tale is more concentrated on how the serpent survived to meet Þórr again, or if some archaic form of the myth made that pending encounter less relevant in older instances. In regard to Baldr's death, a conflicting Scandinavian account other than what I shall refer to here as the West Norse sources, the one presented by Saxo, results in a set of more complex issues. As noted by the earliest Old Norse scholarship, common to the versions are metaphoric allusions to solar, seasonal and fertility deities. More recently, the topic of how vengeance in the mythic slaying mirrored societal issues from settlement through thirteenth century Iceland has addressed the specific cultural implications of the myth. Additionally, because of the way Baldr's slaying is presented as such an impetus for the downfall of the gods, the question of eschatology, how the Christian mindset shaped Snorri's prose versions and the *Poetic Edda* is placed in the foreground of scholarship. While it is beyond the scope of this section to fully discuss these book-length topics, enough background is provided to present a meaningful interpretation of the scene. In previous sections about Loki, Heimdallr, Þórr, Hymir and Jǫrmungandr in the myths, a focus was placed on how the sources may have helped provide clues regarding their iconographic appearance. This is not the case in the following exposition about Baldr per se, as I do not think he is visible in the scene described by Úlfr of the procession towards his pyre. Therefore, this section uses a somewhat different approach than the previous two assessments of the woodcarvings. It begins with Snorri's account of the myth of Baldr's death with an emphasis on the funeral. That is followed by the extant quatrains of *Húsdrápa* describing the procession found in the Codex Regius transcript of *Skáldskaparmál* and as organized by Finnur. Before returning to the questions of additional primary sources and scholarship regarding the myth, referring to examples from archaeological remains, I present a hypothetical sketch of the wood-carved scene. The remainder of the section focuses on analysis and interpretation of the Baldr myth with concluding thoughts regarding its place in Óláfr's hall.

Rather than paraphrasing Snorri's prose account of the funeral procession, he describes it so vividly that it is worth quoting at length.

> '(...) En Æsirnir tóku lík Baldrs ok fluttu til sævar. Hringhorni hét skip Baldrs. Hann var allra skipa mestr. Hann vildu goðin fram setja ok gera þar á bálfǫr Baldrs. En skipit gekk hvergi fram. Þá var sent í Jǫtunheima eptir gýgi þeiri er Hyrrokkin hét. En er hon kom ok reið vargi ok hafði hǫggorm at taumum þá hljóp hon af hestinum, en Óðinn kallaði til berserki fjóra at gæta hestsins, ok fengu þeir eigi haldit nema þeir feldi hann. Þá gekk Hyrrokkin á framstafn nǫkkvans ok hratt fram í fyrsta viðbragði svá at eldr hraut ór hlunnunum ok lǫnd ǫll skulfu. Þá varð Þórr reiðr ok greip hamarinn ok myndi þá brjóta hǫfuð hennar áðr en goðin ǫll báðu henni friðar. Þá var borit út á skipit lík Baldrs, ok er þat sá kona hans Nanna Nepsdóttir þá sprakk hon af harmi ok dó. Var hon borin á bálit ok slegit í eldi. Þá stóð Þórr at ok vígði bálit með Mjǫllni. En fyrir fótum hans rann dvergr nokkurr. Sá er Litr nefndr. En Þórr spyrndi fœti sínum á hann ok hratt honum í eldinn ok brann hann.

'En at þessi brennu sótti margs konar þjóð: fyrst at segja frá Óðni, at með honum fór Frigg ok valkyrjur ok hrafnar hans, en Freyr ók í kerru með gelti þeim er Gullinbursti heitir eða Slíðrugtanni. En Heimdallr reið hesti þeim er Gulltoppr heitir, en Freyja kǫttum sínum. Þar kømr ok mikit fólk hrímþursa ok bergisar. Óðinn lagði á bálit gullhring þann er Draupnir heitir. Honum fylgði síðan sú náttúra at hina níundu hverja nótt drupu af honum átta gullhringar jafnhǫfgir. Hestr Baldrs var leiddr á bálit með ǫllu reiði (...)' (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 46-47)

'(...) So the Æsir took Baldr's body and carried it to the sea. Hringhorni was the name of Baldr's ship. It was the biggest of all ships. This the Æsir planned to launch and perform on it Baldr's funeral. But the ship refused to move. So they sent to Giantland for a giantess called Hyrrokkin. And when she arrived, riding a wolf and using vipers as reins, she dismounted from her steed, and Odin summoned four berserks to look after the mount, and they were unable to hold it without knocking it down. Then Hyrrokkin went to the prow of the boat and pushed it out with the first touch so that flame flew from the rollers and all lands quaked. Then Thor became angry and grasped his hammer and was about to smash her head until all the gods begged for grace for her. Then Baldr's body was carried out on to the ship, and when his wife Nanna Nep's daughter saw this she collapsed with grief and died. She was carried on to the pyre and it was set fire to. Then Thor stood by and consecrated the pyre with Miollnir. But a certain dwarf ran in front of his feet. His name was Lit. Thor kicked at him with his foot and thrust him into the fire and he was burned.

'This burning was attended by beings of many different kinds: firstly to tell of Odin, that with him went Frigg and valkyries and his ravens, while Freyr drove in a chariot with a boar called Gullinbursti or Slidrugtanni. But Heimdall rode a horse called Gulltopp, and Freyia her cats. There came also a great company of frost-giants and mountain-giants. Odin laid on the pyre a gold arm-ring called Draupnir. It afterwards had the property that every ninth night there dripped from it eight gold rings of the same weight. Baldr's horse was led on to the pyre with all its harness(...)' (*Edda* 1995: 49-50)

Later in *Skáldskaparmál*, after providing a list of kennings for Baldr, Snorri tells that *Úlfr Uggason hefir kveðit eptir sǫgu Baldrs langt skeið í Húsdrápu, ok ritat er áðr dœmi til þess er Baldr er svá kendr*. "Ulf Uggason composed a long passage in Husdrapa based on the story of Baldr, and an account of the events which were the origin of Baldr's being referred to in this way was written above: [in *Gylfaginning*]" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 17-18, *Edda* 1995: 74-75). I shall refer to some of those kennings later, but here I wish to make the point that, as is likely the case for the rest of *Húsdrápa*, Snorri must have been familiar with more quatrains than the ones we have cited by him in *Skáldskaparmál*. Scholars concur that Snorri was informed by *Húsdrápa* for at least the part about Baldr's funeral in *Gylfaginning*. For example, in the extant quatrains Úlfr refers to some of the same participants and their mode of transport, albeit with some slight differences. As Snorri only cites him, Úlfr may have been his main informant. The following are the *helmingar* in the arrangement by Finnur as normalized by Faulkes with his translations and modified word order:

7
Riðr á bǫrg til borgar
bǫðfróðr sonar Óðins
Freyr ok fólkum stýrir
fyrst ok gulli byrstum.(*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19)

Battle-skilled Freyr rides in front to Odin's son's [Baldr's] pyre on golden-bristled boar and governs hosts. (*Edda* 1995: 75)

8
Ríðr at vilgi víðu
víðfrægr (en mér líða)
Hroptatýr (of hvapta
hróðrmál) sonar báli. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 8)

Far-famed Hropta-Tyr [Odin] rides to the mighty broad pyre of his son, and from my jaws flow words of praise. (*Edda* 1995: 67)

9
Þar hykk sigrunni svinnum
sylgs valkyrjur fylgja
heilags tafns ok hrafna.
Hlaut innan svá minnum. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 9)

There I perceive valkyries and ravens accompanying the wise victory-tree [Odin] to the drink of the holy offering [Baldr's funeral feast]. Within have appeared these motifs. (*Edda* 1995: 68)

10
Kostigr ríðr at kesti
kynfróðs þeim er goð hlóðu
hrafnfreistaðar hesti
Heimdallr at mǫg fallinn. *(Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 10*)*

Splendid Heimdall rides to the pyre raised by gods for the fallen son [Baldr] of the strangely wise raven-tester [Odin], on his horse. (*Edda* 1995: 68)

11
Fullǫflug lét fjalla
fram haf-Sleipni þramma
Hildr, en Hropts of gildar
hjálmelda mar feldu. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 70)

> The most powerful mountain-Hild [giantess] made the sea-Sleipnir [ship] lumber forward, while Hropt's [Odin's] helmet-fire-power-investors [berserks] felled her steed. (*Edda* 1995: 121)

Again, with minor discrepancies, Snorri's prose closely follows what remains of Úlfr's description. It is possible that Snorri had seen iconography such as those woodcarvings that were in Hjarðarholt, and in addition to other narrative sources he embellished his tale in *Gylfaginning* by what he had observed. One difference is Snorri reports that Freyr is pulled by his boar in a *kerra*, "chariot" or simply a vehicle pulled by a beast of burden, whereas Úlfr reports, as translated by Faulkes, that Freyr is riding the animal. Finnur glosses *riðr á bǫrg* as *køre med galt*, but he may be following Snorri, as the preposition *á* seems to indicate Freyr was on the beast and not pulled by it.

In my hypothetical rendering of the carved scene I shall follow the order of the participants as edited and presented by Finnur. (fig. 99) The overall layout of the scene and many of the components are motivated by the Oseberg tapestries, primarily fragments 1 and 2, which show a procession with wagons pulled by horses, riders on horseback and walking men and women. (figures 21, 23) I have provided a detailed discussion and argued in section 1.2 that those tapestries may depict a funeral procession. Importantly, the movement in those tapestries is from right to left, and this is a clue that iconography in general may have been "read" that way by Scandinavians during the Viking Age. A wall hanging from Överhogdal in northern Sweden is another example of this phenomenon (Graham Campbell 2013: 158-59). It is reasonable to conclude representational woodcarvings of processions would follow suit. The following description of the hypothetical scene moves in the same direction.

In strophe 7 Úlfr refers to *bǫðfróðr Freyr* "the battle-keen Freyr". This may not be totally out of character for the Vanir fertility god, and it is noteworthy that Úlfr uses a military epithet to describe him leading hosts. Among the list of poetic expressions for leaders found in *Ynglingatal*, many warlike qualities are emphasized as well as references to divine descent from Freyr: *Freys áttungr* "Frey's descendant", *Freys afspringr* "Freyr's offspring", *týs áttungr* "the descendant of the god", with among many other martial traits, *vígfrǫmuðr* "promoter of battle" and *fylkir* "one who marshals, arrays, positions an army for battle, prince, ruler" (Sundqvist 2002). While the latter terms are not used to identify Freyr in *Ynglingatal*, they do indicate that these aspects of rulership ideology are associated with him. Indeed, Úlfr uses the term *fylkir* when he describes Freyr depicted leading hosts in the carvings under discussion. In his abstract for the conference titled "Interpreting Eddic Poetry: Mythology in Eddic Poetry" Sundqvist presents:

> When I went through the research and sources on Freyr, I discovered an interesting anomaly, or perhaps rather a certain imbalance between the handbooks' descriptions of the god and the information I could find about him in the sources. In the handbooks, fertility traits of Freyr were stressed almost exclusively, while the sources actually expressed a more complex image of the god. In addition to the connections he had to fertility, he also had links to rulership and military aspects. Freyr appeared in the source material as a 'Warrior-Lord' who defended peace. (Sundqvist 2014)

Normally the gods in the West Norse and North Atlantic tradition are depicted without helmets, for example those on the Manx and Gosforth stones. However, the Gotlandic picture stones hint at helmets among the anthropomorphic figures, and for example the Swedish Ledberg stone, which may show Óðinn being swallowed by Fenrir, features him with a conical shaped helmet. (fig. 100) The bronze miniature from Sweden that features a phallus and reasonably may be taken to represent Freyr also wears a conical shaped helmet. (fig. 96) Since Úlfr points to the attribute of battle, I have chosen to depict Freyr in the sketch of the hypothetical carving with some facial features of this miniature including, but with less prominent, headgear. Úlfr says Freyr *ríðr fyrst til sonar Óðins borgar*, which Faulkes translates "rides in front to Odins's son's pyre". However, *fyrst* may also translate "first, to begin with." As I envision Úlfr looking upon the iconography right to left, I suggest Freyr is in front of his host, but this group is furthest away from the pyre. He is *á bǫrg ok gulli byrstum* "on a golden-bristled boar", as mentioned above, riding it. Snorri refers to this boar as Gullinbursti or Slíðrugtanni in his *Gylfaginning* account, and he confirms this alternate name in *Skáldskaparmál* after quoting Úlfr's strophe (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19). Even though the boar is not mentioned by name, it was likely intended as the one crafted by the dwarf Brokkr as described in *Skáldskaparmál*:

> En Frey gaf hann gǫltinn ok sagði at hann mátti renna lopt ok lǫg nótt ok dag meira en hverr hestr, ok aldri varð svá myrkt af nótt eða í myrkheimum at eigi væri ærit ljóst þar er hann fór, svá lýsti af burstinni. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 42)
>
> To Freyr he gave the boar and said that it could run across sky and sea by night and day faster than any horse, and it never got so dark from night or in worlds of darkness that it was not bright enough wherever it went, there was so much light shed from its bristles. (*Edda* 1995: 97)

It is striking in this passage, as in so many of the citations of primary sources that follow, how there is an emphasis on a contrast between night and worlds of darkness in opposition to brightness and light. The personifications of these binaries are not limited to any single deity, and indeed here the glowing one is a boar that passes through the sky. In regard to the boar's appearance in iconography, there are a couple of stone carvings of boars on the Isle of Man from the Viking Age on which I am basing Freyr's mount, one currently in Maughold and the other from Andreas, which is described as Sandulf's Cross from the mid tenth century. The runic inscription on the cross indicates it was made for a woman named Arnbjǫrg. (figures 101, 102) As presented in section 2.4, some Scandinavian settlers on Man who were Christians nevertheless had mythic figures carved on their gravestones. Úlfr adds an entourage accompanying Freyr: *ok fólkum stýrir*, which Faulkes translates "and governs hosts". Turville-Petre writes it out as "he who leads armies" which Lindow modifies to "and leads armies" (Turville-Petre 1976: 68, Lindow 1997: 72). Here I suggest that Úlfr is exaggerating the actual amount of warriors depicted on the panel due to the impression that is made in the composition. A similar sense is created in the Oseberg tapestry fragment 13B, which on the lower right shows a tight group of shields along with a single warrior's lower body. There is a fold in the fabric, so it is uncertain how many there originally were. Nevertheless, without an entire "host", one gets the idea that an army could be present off-frame of the side of the scene. (fig. 27) I propose something similar was depicted in the carved scene at Hjarðarholt, with Freyr in the lead on his boar and a few warriors behind him with the impression they extended beyond the right edge of

the frame. Just as shields represent warriors, I envision the round discs as seen from the front, and in addition to the Oseberg tapestry I use the Ledberg picture stone as a model for helmeted warriors in profile. Three-quarter views are atypical of Viking Age iconography, but profile and frontal may be seen in combination such as these rendered figures. As the warriors advance they are shown holding fewer weapons because as I understand it, they are entering a place of sanctuary.

The next quatrain points to Óðinn: *víðfrægr Hroptatýr* - the "far-famed Hropta-Týr". That Óðinn would be far-famed is understandable, and Úlfr may have used the kenning *Hroptatýr* because it alliterates, but it is also a quite recognizable circumlocution for the god. The noun *hroptr* generally is translated as "crier, invoker, speaker". In the section of the eddic poem *Hávamál* referred to as the *Rúnatal*, Óðinn, in what seems to be a trance-like shamanic state retrieves runes: *nam ec upp rúnar / œpandi nam* "I took up the runes, screaming I took them". Three stanzas later Óðinn is referred to as *hroptr rǫgna* "invoker of the powers" (*Edda* 1983: 40-41, La Farge Tucker 1992: 121). Given the context, it seems a translation "crier of the powers", and in the case of Baldr's funeral procession "Crier-Tyr" as a simple kenning for Óðinn would be appropriate. Óðinn is known for his eloquence, so perhaps Úlfr saw him depicted mouth agape - if not muttering some ecstatic wisdom in verse, expressing his grief for the loss of his son. In a moment of self-reflection and in keeping with the *dróttkvætt* meter, Úlfr inserts *en of hvapta mér líða hróðrmál* "and from my jaws flow words of praise." This mirrors him gazing upon his mentor, Óðinn, who graced him with the mead of poetry (Lindow 1997: 73). In profile, Úlfr may be striking a similar pose as he strolls along observing the iconography and reciting his verse. Óðinn *ríðr at vilgi víðu sonar báli* "rides to the mighty broad pyre of his son", as I have suggested above, in front of Freyr. The Oseberg tapestries stagger the participants in the procession in a pattern-like manner such that perspective is less of a concern than an even distribution of the figures. In addition, there may be an idealized consideration regarding the size and placement of the representations, e.g. certain objects may be in the forefront. In the hypothetical reconstruction of the scene, I place Óðinn above the other gods. While normally he could have been depicted riding his eight-legged horse Sleipnir, I choose to follow Snorri in this case. Namely, in *Gylfaginning* it is told that one of Óðinn's sons or his servant has ridden Sleipnir to the underworld to negotiate the release of Baldr from the domain of Hel. I return to this below. In regard to Óðinn mounted on another horse I take clues from the Oseberg tapestries along with wood-carved details from the figures shown on the Oseberg wagon. (figures 6, 9) For his appearance in profile, the Manx depiction on Thorwald's Cross at Andreas is added to the mix. The figure is considered Óðinn due to holding a spear, ravens and his foot being swallowed by a wolf as identifiers (Kopár 2012: 72). (fig. 103) The numerous masks and sculpted Viking Age heads discussed in part one also inform the depiction of Óðinn and the other gods in the procession. The head of the bearded figure is tilted slightly back as seen in the iconography as processional decorum. This god, as the others, is shown wearing a split tunic with a belt.

The way Finnur arranges the strophes, which is also followed by Turville-Petre, Úlfr continues with *Þar hykk valkyrjur ok hrafna fylgja sigrunni svinnum* "There I perceive valkyries and ravens accompanying the wise (or bold) victory-tree". This arrangement makes sense if indeed Úlfr is following the scene right to left and describing the iconography as it grabs his attention, as these entities are closely associated with Óðinn, identified here by the simple "tree" kenning. Ravens are identifiers for Óðinn, and his informants Huginn "thought" and Muninn

"Memory" would be close by, as I have depicted them in flight next to him. The silhouette shapes mimic those seen on the tapestries and Thorwald's Cross. In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri cites a stanza from *Grímnismál* when he lists the Valkyries that serve ale in Valhǫll (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 30, *Edda* 1983: 64). Following the verse Snorri provides three additional names of females who assist in gathering the slain and govern battles, and there are more mentioned in the mythic and legendary corpus. However, there are thirteen names in the strophe who appear to be his immediate following, and this seems a suitable number to depict hovering above and next to Óðinn. The Oseberg tapestry fragment 13B serves as a model for the grouping and outline of the Valkyrie shapes, and a ninth century silver Valkyrie pendant from Denmark provides additional details, including their faces. (figures 27, 104) The method of engraving the facial features on this three-dimensional pendant also exemplifies how Viking Age relief was excised, and I have used this method for all of the hypothetical woodcarvings of the *en face* anthropomorphic entities in the scenes. The expression used by Úlfr *sylgs heilags tafns* translated by Faulkes "to the drink of the holy offering" warrants some additional discussion. While there would likely be some sort of feast for Baldr, what we have in the scene is movement toward the funeral pyre. Derived from the verb *svelga*, to swallow, the noun *sylgr* translates literally to a drink of something, but its association with liquid places it in the poetic paradigm of blood. *Tafn* translates to sacrifice, bloody offering or prey. Hence, Turville-Petre translates the phrase "to the blood of the holy sacrifice" (Turville-Petre 1976: 69). Lindow chooses "to the blood of the holy corpse". Skalds use the term *tafn* to refer to fallen warriors or "carrion" of the battlefield. Given the mention of the presence of ravens in the quatrain, this is an interesting point because such birds are frequently alluded to in skaldic poetry for feeding on corpses, and perhaps that could have been a factor that prompted Úlfr's choice of words (Lindow 1997: 72-74). In any case, for the wood-carved scene, the item of importance is the destination of the participants. I shall return to the issue of Baldr's corpse, but let it suffice for now that the procession is headed toward a pyre, a ritual cremation to dispatch Baldr rather than a feast. The single line refrain in this quatrain: *Hlaut innan svá minnum* "Within have appeared these motifs", although translated in various ways, may be taken to demonstrate that what has been passed down to us was an eyewitness account.

Continuing with strophe 10, Úlfr identifies another god by name: *Kostigr Heimdallr* "Splendid Heimdall". The addition of being excellent or having good qualities does not add much to his possible appearance but has more to do with his character and participation in the Norse pantheon (see section 2.4). I have depicted Heimdallr based on the extant anthropomorphic profiles listed above and have added him holding his horn as an identifier. More notably, *ríðr hesti at kesti þeim er goð hlóðu* "rides on his horse to the pyre raised by the gods", provides a vivid description of him on horseback. This is presumably Gulltoppr, as Snorri multiple times identifies Heimdallr as owner of a horse by that name, and states that he rides his steed in the procession (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 47, 25, *Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19). The name indicates Gulltoppr "Gold-tuft" should have a prominent forelock in the carving. Úlfr points to the deceased with a circumlocution: *mǫgr fallinn kynfróðs hrafnfreistaðar* "the fallen son of the strangely wise raven-tester". This is the second time the poet alludes to the wisdom of Óðinn, here in the compound *kynfróðr* where Faulkes translates it as "strangely, amazingly (very) wise", and Turville-Petre uses it simply as emphasis "very wise" (Turville-Petre 1976: 70). Standing alone *kyn* might translate to "wonder", but there may be wordplay here as it also translates to "family, origin". Snorri and the poets create the impression that Óðinn has and seeks

primordial wisdom from his giant kin as the Alfǫðr "all-father". The compound *hrafnfreistuðr* "raven tester" may refer to Óðinn's penchant for manipulating battles and gathering the slain through the association of the corpse as carrion. However, the term also can be translated as "raven user", and I prefer the interpretation that Úlfr is seeing the close proximity of Óðinn's ravens to Heimdallr, and that inspired the kenning. I place Heimdallr below and in front of Óðinn with one of the two ravens above and behind Heimdallr astride his horse. Gulltoppr is also listed among the horses of the Æsir, where it additionally states an unnamed: *Baldrs hestr var brendr með honum* "Baldr's horse was burned with him" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 17). Úlfr places a lot of emphasis on the pyre as if he sees it depicted built upon the boat and ready to light. He does not mention Baldr by name, rather *sonr Óðins*, *sonr Hroptatýs*, *mǫgr fallinn,* and he says nothing about the corpse. I do not want to include much in the scene that is not described by Úlfr, but I have argued above in section 1.2 that Baldr may have been brought to the ship by wagon, *En Æsirnir tóku lík Baldrs ok fluttu til sævar* (as in transported, full translation above). Also in *Gylfaginning*, Snorri states that after the launch Baldr's body was carried on to the ship, and later his horse was led to the pyre with all its harness: *Hestr Baldrs var leiddr á bálit með ǫllu reiði*, as if it had been pulling a wagon rather than saddled or bareback. Faulkes translates *reiði* as tackle, gear, and Cleasby Vigfusson specifically as a harness. A funeral without a body seems odd, so I am including a draped wagon (similar to the Oseberg tapestries) with harnessed horse in proximity to the ship.

In strophe 11, Úlfr switches from the present tense to what I understand as the immediate past represented in the carvings. In one (reordered) phrase in the strophe, *Fullǫflug fjalla Hildr lét haf-Sleipni þramma fram* "The most powerful mountain-Hild [giantess] made the sea-Sleipnir [ship] lumber forward", I imagine the ship in its first stage of launch, as Snorri describes above, *Þá gekk Hyrrokkin á framstafn nǫkkvans ok hratt fram í fyrsta viðbragði svá at eldr hraut ór hlunnunum ok lǫnd ǫll skulfu*. "Then Hyrrokkin went to the prow of the boat and pushed it out with the first touch so that flames flew from the rollers and all lands quaked". Úlfr uses the terms *Fullǫflug fjalla Hildr* as a kenning for Hyrrokkin, quite suitable given the task she undertakes. The attribute *fullǫflugr* "most mighty" adds to the imagery of her actions. Hildr is a Valkyrie name that doubles as "battle" combined with *fjall* "mountain", and as we have seen in the previous section, *jǫtnar* are associated with the landscape. Hence, a female warrior with massive elemental power has been summoned. This unequaled death among the Æsir left them dumbfounded. In my view, it took the chthonic, force of life-giving/life-taking nature associated with the feminine to literally push the cycle along. I suggest the giantess could have been depicted in a profile position having just set the boat down the rollers with a supernaturally effortless shove. For this image I have primarily used the source of a stone carving currently housed in the church at Jurby on the Isle of Man that is reasonably the likeness of a giantess. (fig. 105) There is another stone thought to represent Hyrrokkin on her "mount", which also applies to the other phrase in this strophe. Hyrrokkin was busy shoving the ship, *en hjalmelda gildar Hropts of feldu mar* "while Hropt's [Odin's] helmet-fire-power-investors [berserks] felled her steed." Snorri indicates, that Hyrrokkin's *marr*, or "horse", is a wolf. As cited above, she arrives astride the wolf using vipers as reins. This image is clearly shown on the Hunnestad stone (DR 284), which may depict Hyrrokkin (Price 2006: 181). (fig. 106) The Mammen/Ringerike style overlap dates it probably at the early end of 990 - 1050. Other poetic sources support the notion that giantesses ride wolves. For example Gísli Þórgautsson uses the kenning *fólu marr*, where *fála* is "giantess" and *marr* is "horse" understood as "wolf". In *Magnúsdrápa*, Arnórr Þórðarson

uses the extended kenning *marr áleggjar Yggjar vífs* where *marr* is "the steed" of the genitives *áleggjar* "river-bone, i.e. stone" plus Yggjar (Óðinn's), hence "of the giant" *vífs*, "woman's", e.g. "the steed of the river-bone-Óðinn-woman's" = "the giant-woman's steed" = "wolf" (Finnur 1908: 313-14). It states in a prose insert between stanzas 30 and 31 in *Helgaqviða Hiǫrvarðzsonar*: *Heðinn fór einn saman heim ór scógi iólaaptan oc fann trollkono; sú reið vargi oc hafði orma at taumom,...* "Hedin was going home alone from the woods one Yule eve and he met a troll woman; she was riding a wolf and had serpents as reins..." (*Edda* 1983: 147, modified from *Poetic Edda* 1996: 129) Troll women are strongly associated with *jǫtnar*. As it is prose commentary, this reference probably cannot be dated prior to the thirteenth century, but it reinforces that the concept of a giantess having a wolf with snakes as reins was not Snorri's invention. In verse 5 of *Hyndlolióð,* Freyja says to her interlocutor, a *vǫlva*:

> Nú tactu úlf þinn einn af stalli,
> lát hann renna með runa mínom!' (...) (*Edda* 1983: 289)
>
> 'Now take one of your wolves out of the stable,
> let him race beside my boar!' (...) (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 254)

Perhaps Úlfr was one of the earliest poets to use *marr* as a circumlocution for wolf. As we have seen, it seems that Snorri's prose account of the procession follows Úlfr's rather closely, and Snorri may have seen woodcarvings such as the one described in *Húsdrápa* or stone carvings like the Hunnestad stone. Therefore, I am including four "berserks" in the process of tackling her wolf-mount, as Snorri describes the scene above. Among other warriors seen in profile, on for example the Oseberg wagon and various stone carvings, I take a hint from the Oseberg tapestry fragment 13B, which seems to explicitly represent berserks. One, with clearly a bear head, confronts another with, not to be mistaken for horns, flame-like appendages protruding from his helmet. It strikes me that Úlfr's kenning for sword: *hjálmeldr* "helmet fire", could have been provoked by literally seeing such a depiction. Therefore, to distinguish these warriors dispatched by Óðinn to look after Hyrrokkin's mount, I model them after the one seen in the tapestry.

In section 1.1, I presented a detailed analysis of the Oseberg cart and suggested a possibility that the serpent-like creatures that were "grabbing" the anthropomorphic figures represented the *fylgjur*, or "fetches" of those who were in the process of being killed in those scenes. (figures 7, 8, 9) In a few instances in the sagas, fetches, attendant spirits in animal form, are seen by those just before they are going to die. If these serpents were not intended as fetches, they certainly appear to be related to death or the underworld on the carved panels of the wagon, and they made up a significant part of the composition. Although Úlfr makes no mention of such creatures, I am incorporating some of these interwoven biomorphic figures into the composition of the design in proximity of the pyre: hovering above the wagon with Baldr's hidden corpse, as though they are looking for it; facing Baldr's horse and above the ship with the pyre built on it, but not yet lit, as if they are waiting to dispatch the body; and, below Hyrrokkin as her accomplice in making the whole process happen. These figures are a hybrid of Oseberg, Borre, and Jellinge styles that I propose were circulating influences in Hlaðir during the tenth century.

In summary, the scene proceeds from right to left as animated time, with the procession "presently" riding along. At the end of the parade sequence, there is a temporal shift where the

carved depictions feature Hyrrokkin with the ship when a crucial dramatic moment - the earth moving launch - has just transpired. The friction has caused flames to erupt from the rollers. Abstract symbols such as those seen in the Oseberg tapestries serve to fill in the voids in the relief carvings, but they are also indicators of motion and quaking - perhaps as an iconographic cross-over of the senses intended to also represent the sounds of such actions. The rest of Snorri's description of the scene is rather all-inclusive, with essentially all of the gods and creatures of Miðgarðr and Útgarðr attending the funeral. There are also additional actions, such as Baldr's body carried onto the ship pyre after the launch, his wife Nanna dying of grief, Þórr threatening Hyrrokkin with Mjǫllnir and kicking the dwarf Litr onto the pyre. Additionally, Óðinn placed the ring Draupnir on the pyre. I have already mentioned that Gulltoppr, Baldr's horse, was led to the pyre with all its harness. None of these acts are specifically mentioned by Úlfr, and although they may have been included in a longer instance of the poem, I have chosen to err on the side of caution and leave them out of the composition of a hypothetical scene carved in Óláfr's *eldhús*.

The Baldr myth - primary sources and commentary

It is beyond the scope of this section to engage in a full discussion about the larger Baldr myth, but some exposition is required to further expand on the cultural context of the wood-carved scene that was once housed in the dwelling at Hjarðarholt. With emphasis on the woodcarving in mind, I shall briefly recount the events as told in *Gylfaginning* prior to and after the funeral procession interspersed with citations from *Skáldskaparmál*, poetry and the quite different version of the myth found in Book Three of *The History of the Danes* as told by Saxo Grammaticus. This summary follows a chronology as presented by Snorri, and is accompanied by commentary that will help to form a concluding interpretation of the carvings in situ. I begin with Snorri's list of kennings for Baldr.

> Hvernig skal kenna Baldr? Svá at kalla hann son Óðins ok Friggjar, ver Nǫnnu, faðir Forseta, eigandi Hringhorna ok Draupnis, dólgr Haðar, Heljar sinni, gráta guð. Úlfr Uggason hefir kveðit eptir sǫgu Baldrs langt skeið í Húsdrápu, ok ritat er áðr dœmi til þess er Baldr er svá kendr. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 17-18)
>
> How shall Baldr be referred to? By calling him son of Odin and Frigg, husband of Nanna, father of Forseti, owner of Hringhorni and Draupnir, enemy of Hod. Hel's companion, god of lamentations. Ulf Uggason composed a long passage in Husdrapa based on the story of Baldr, and an account of the events which were the origin of Baldr's being referred to in this way was written above [in Gylfaginning]. (*Edda* 1995: 74-5)

We have seen above how in *Gylfaginning*, Frigg is present at the funeral procession, whereas Úlfr does not mention her. Frigg is the wife of Óðinn, and Baldr is their only known legitimate son, which obviously makes him elevated in status among Óðinn's numerous offspring. Snorri also mentions that Baldr's wife Nanna died of grief at the funeral and was placed with him in the pyre on Hringhorni, but their son Forseti is not specifically listed among the participants. I shall return to Baldr's ownership of the ring Draupnir below. Otherwise new to this discussion and relevant to the killing of Baldr is *dólgr Haðar* "enemy of Hoðr". In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri tells how *Baldr inn góða dreymði drauma stóra ok hættliga um líf sitt*. "Baldr the Good dreamed great

dreams boding peril to his life" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 45, *Edda* 1995: 48). The eddic poem *Baldrs draumar* provides a version of the tale that in response, Óðinn rides Sleipnir down to Niflhel and at Hel's gate awakens a *vǫlva* with spells. He learns from her that they await Baldr, and that he will be slain by Hǫðr (*Edda* 1983: 277-79). Evidently, Óðinn was not able to use the information to change the course of events, nor does Snorri cite that in this poem the Æsir were forewarned. In *Skáldskaparmál*, Snorri answers the question: *Hvernig skal kenna Hǫð? Svá at kalla hann blinda Ás, Baldrs bana, skjótanda mistilteins, son Óðins, Heljar sinna, Vála dólg*. "How shall Hod be referred to? By calling him the blind As, Baldr's slayer, shooter of mistletoe, son of Odin, Hel's companion, Vali's enemy". (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19, *Edda* 1995: 76). All of this is pertinent information, as Snorri continues in *Gylfaginning* that the Æsir sought amnesty for Baldr from danger, and his mother Frigg received vows from a comprehensive list of animate and inanimate things that they would not harm him - except for the mistletoe. Loki went to Frigg dressed like a woman, and he tricked her into revealing this vulnerability. In the meantime, the Æsir thought it was great glory to have Baldr stand encircled and hurl all sorts of objects at him without harming him. Loki "plucked" some mistletoe and went to the assembly. There he encountered Hǫðr, the blind son of Óðinn, and encouraged him to "honor" Baldr by tossing the "stick" at him. The missile went right through him, and Baldr fell dead to the ground. The Æsir were stunned. With more brevity, the poem *Vǫlospá* in Codex Regius concurs with some of the details:

str. 31:
Ec sá Baldri, blóðgom tívor,
Óðins barni, ørlǫg fólgin;
stóð um vaxinn, vǫllom hæri,
miór oc mioc fagr mistilteinn.

I saw for Baldr, for the bloody god,
Odin's child, his fate concealed;
there stood grown, higher than the plain,
slender and very fair - the mistletoe.

str. 32:
Varð af þeim meiði, er mær sýndiz,
harmflaug hættlig, Hǫðr nam scióta;
Baldrs bróðir var of borinn snemma,
sá nam Óðins sonr einnættr vega.

From that plant which seemed so lovely
came a dangerous, harmful dart, Hod began to shoot;
Baldr's brother was born very quickly;
Odin's son began fighting at one night old.

str. 33:
Þó hann æva hendr né hǫfuð kembði,
áðr á bál um bar Baldrs andscota;

enn Frigg um grét í Fensǫlom
vá Valhallar - vitoð ér en, eða hvat?

Nor did he ever wash his hands nor comb his hair,
until he brought Baldr's adversary to the funeral pyre;
and in Fen-halls Frigg wept
for the woe of Valhall - do you understand yet, or what more?

str. 34:
Þá kná Vála vígbǫnd snúa,
heldr vóro harðgor hǫpt, ór þǫrmom.

Then oppressive bonds were twisted,
rather severe fetters, made of Vali's entrails. (*Edda* 1983: 7-8, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 8)

These stanzas seem to agree with *Gylfaginning* that Baldr was slain by Hǫðr using mistletoe. The mythic weapon is problematic because the parasitic plant does not grow at all in Iceland and only in the most southern regions of Scandinavia. Scholars have pointed to a lack of knowledge among most Scandinavians leading to its description as "grown high in the field" and indeed its capability to be used as a lethal projectile. I shall return to this point later, but more important is the issue of the slayer. Three sources listed above agree it was Hǫðr. The stanzas in *Vǫlospá* are more vague as to whether Loki was involved. Strophe 34 alludes to Loki being bound as retribution, and according to *Gylfaginning* he is eventually caught and punished for his misdeeds, including his involvement with the murder. The *Hauksbók* version of *Vǫlospá* is missing some of these stanzas but contains one similar to 34. However, in any case, the way it is described the actual murderer is Hǫðr because he cast the weapon. Snorri and the account in *Baldrs draumar* agree that he was Óðinn's son. This creates the dilemma of how to avenge the murder because it is within the family. Lindow has written a monograph about Baldr that investigates this issue. Brother slaying brother clearly plays a part in the downfall of the gods. *Vǫlospá* spans the mythic time of the gods ending in ragnarǫk. As Baldr's slaying is explicitly listed prior to the final events in the poem and by Snorri, it is evident that it was a portent for doom. The issue of vengeance in the myths mirrors the system of feud in Iceland that dates back to settlement in the late ninth century and reached a level of crisis in the thirteenth century when the myths were written down. Hence, the accounts reflect the pressing social concerns of the times (Lindow 1997).

While feud played a prominent role in Icelandic society in the late tenth century, and indeed this is reflected in *Laxdæla saga*, I shall continue to develop the idea that the woodcarvings in Óláfr's hall contain a more archaic representation of the myths - not just in form, but also in content. While these ideas are not new and were pointed out by scholars as early as the nineteenth century, I shall develop some thoughts that specifically relate to the carvings at Hjarðarholt and are culturally relevant for when Óláfr pái occupied the farmstead. Namely, much stands out in the overarching Baldr myth that points to the strong contrast of light and darkness, day and night, summer and winter and generally the passing of the seasons - temporal and spatial reckoning on the farm.

Snorri places emphasis on the light surrounding Baldr inn góði when he has Hár state:

> 'Annarr son Óðins er Baldr, ok er frá honum gott at segja. Han er beztr ok hann lofa allir. Hann er svá fagr álitum ok bjartr svá at lýsir af honum, ok eitt gras er svá hvítt at jafnat er til Baldrs brár. Þat er allra grasa hvítast, ok þar eptir mátþu marka hans fegrð bæði á hár ok á líki. Hann er vitrastr Ásanna ok fegrst talaðr ok líknsamastr, en sú náttura fylgir honum at engi má haldask dómr hans. Hann býr þar sem heitir Breiðablik. Þat er á himni. Í þeim stað má ekki vera óhreint, svá sem hér segir:
>
> Breiðablik heita
> þar er Baldr hefir
> sér of gerva sali,
> í því landi
> er ek liggja veit
> fæsta feiknstafi.' (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 23)
>
> 'Odin's second son is Baldr, and there is good to be told of him. He is best and all praise him. He is so fair in appearance and so bright that light shines from him, and there is a plant so white that it is called after Baldr's eyelash. It is whitest of all plants, and from this you can tell his beauty both of hair and body. He is the wisest of the Æsir and most beautifully spoken and most merciful, but it is one of his characteristics that none of his decisions can be fulfilled. He lives in a place called Breidablik. This is in heaven. No unclean thing is permitted to be there, as it says here:
>
> It is called Breidablik where Baldr has made himself a dwelling, in that land where I know to be fewest evil intents.' (*Edda* 1995: 23)

Snorri stops short of stating outright that Baldr is a benevolent personification of the sun, but arguably his description comes close. On the other hand, Hǫðr, as quoted above, is *Heljar sinni* "Hel's companion", and when Snorri further describes him:

> 'Hǫðr heitir einn Ássinn. Hann er blindr. Œrit er hann styrkr. En vilja mundu goðin at þenna Ás þyrfti eigi at nefna, þvíat hans handaverk munu lengi vera hǫfð at minnum með goðum ok mǫnnum. (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 26)
>
> Hod is the name of one As. He is blind. Only too strong is he. And the gods would prefer that this As did not need to be named, for the work of his hands will long be kept in mind among gods and men. (*Edda* 1995: 26)

Hǫðr is the polar opposite of Baldr. His blindness is darkness. Hǫðr utilizes his strength to murder Baldr. His work is to take away the light.

Hǫðr's act is mentioned in the first two lines of strophe 32 in the Codex Regius version of *Vǫlospá* quoted above. The second half of the elusive verse refers to another son sired by Óðinn to avenge the slaying. When Óðinn demands from the *vǫlva* in stanza 11 of the poem *Baldrs draumar* to tell him who shall avenge Baldr's slaying, she fills in what is less explicit in *Vǫlospá*:

'Rindr berr Vála[48] í vestrsǫlum,
sá man Óðins sonr einnættr vega;
hǫnd um þvær né hǫfuð kembir,
áðr á bál um berr Baldrs andscota;
nauðug sagðac, nú mun ec þegia.' (*Edda* 1983: 278-79)

'Rind will give birth to Vali in western halls,
Odin's son will fight when one night old;
he won't wash his hands nor comb his hair,
until he's brought to the pyre Baldr's enemy.
Reluctantly I told you, now I'll be silent. (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 244)

Snorri never follows up with how the vengeance is played out, but he confirms the deed and relationships: *Hvernig skal kenna Vála? Svá at kalla hann son Óðins ok Rindar, stjúp Friggjar, bróður Ásanna, hefni-Ás Baldr<s>, dólg Haðar ok bana hans, byggvanda fǫðurtopta*. "How shall Vali be referred to? By calling him son of Odin and Rind, stepson of Frigg, brother of the Æsir, Baldr's avenging As, enemy of Hod and his slayer, father's homestead-inhabiter" (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 19, *Edda* 1995: 76). Perhaps the reason Snorri avoids the tale of the avenging murder is it defies logic and does not fit in with the rest of his narrative. If Óðinn's newly sired son fights when one night old, in a metaphoric sense it suggests a myth that by slaying "darkness" Váli brings back "the light" of day. This is problematic, however, because it seems there would be some gestation period for Váli after the sexual union of Óðinn and Rindr. (I return to their relationship in the discussion of Saxo below.) The logic of a daily cycle interpretation also falls apart if one considers Baldr a "sun god" because vengeance does not bring back the victim. According to Snorri, the retrieval of Baldr is attempted by the gods in another way.

Interwoven in the *Gylfaginning* account, prior to the funeral Frigg asked who among the Æsir wished to earn all of her love and favor and ride to the underworld and offer Hel a ransom for the return of Baldr. Óðinn's *sveinn*, boy or perhaps servant, named Hermóðr undertook the journey on Óðinn's horse Sleipnir. I mentioned this above in my decision to not depict Óðinn on Sleipnir in the hypothetical carving representing Baldr's procession. In the narrative, after Hermóðr gallops off, Snorri has Hár relate the description of the funeral cited above. After telling how Baldr's horse was led upon the pyre, Hár resumes the tale of Hermóðr: *hann reið níu nætr døkkva dala ok djúpa svá at hann sá ekki fyrr en hann kom til árinnar Gjallar ok reið á Gjallar brúna. Hon er þǫkð lýsigulli*. "He rode for nine nights through valleys dark and deep so he saw nothing until he came to the river Gioll and rode on to Gioll bridge. It is covered with glowing gold" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 46-47, *Edda* 1995: 49-50). Nine is a common number in Old Norse mythology. It is associated with death, as Adam of Bremen described at

[48] The name is missing from the manuscript but filled in by editors as it fits for alliteration.

Uppsala, where every nine years nine males were sacrificed (see section 1.2). The poem *Hávamál* has Óðinn tell how he sacrificed himself by hanging nine nights in a windy tree and entered a death-like trance in order to go "down" to bring up runes (see sections 1.2, 1.5). I am following a long tradition of "nature mythology" when I point to the seasonal "death" of the sun. Here, I suggest there is a reference to the yearly solar cycle divided into lunar months, where in nine out of twelve the sun is in recession and/or not in its full capacity. There is a tradition that continues to the present day of burning bonfires in Scandinavia on midsummer nights. While these contemporary celebrations usually are named after Christian saints, in the past the event may have been associated by name with Baldr (Frazer 1913: 103). One may consider how in the myth of Baldr and Hermóðr's journey, that the burning of the pyre of Baldr was associated with midsummer, after which the daylight each day began to diminish. Perhaps symbolically, each "night" of the journey equated a month until the spring equinox brought on the gold glow of bounty brought by the sun. Of course, the nine months of the cycle were not complete darkness, but an understanding that the solstice marked a time that the sun retreated lower into the horizon and only fully returned to its beneficial height at the spring equinox is possibly the idea metaphorically represented here. In pre-Christian and medieval Iceland various methods of measuring time were in use that made the passing of a solar year complicated to reconcile. A year might be measured in weeks resulting in 364 days. A lunisolar calendar was based on a combination of the movements of the sun and moon. However, a lunar month is approximately 29.5 days, so 12 lunar cycles were about 354 days. Leap years were created that added in different cases days, weeks or an added lunar month (Nordberg 2006). Perhaps due to these complications, there was less emphasis on the *mánaðr*, month, and actual time reckoning was based more on the alteration of seasons. Namely, the notion of *misseristal* divided the conceptual calendar into two *misseri*, or half years, summer and winter. Hence, the term spring equinox is actually ahistorical, as this point of time in the year would have been considered the beginning of summer, *sumarmál* "summer-meal, or -measure". Notably, this along with midsummer, was a time of festivities (Hastrup 1985: 26). A model of the year represented as a circular diagram reveals four quarters, and again, I am suggesting the three quarters each conceptually may be divided by three lunar cycles resulting in a total of nine months of solar decline and return from midsummer to the beginning of summer. (fig. 107) Death, of course, has its direct correlation to life, and nine months also corresponds to the duration of human pregnancy. If metaphorically the nine day journey to Hel by Hermóðr took nine lunar cycles, this would allow Baldr's avenger, Váli, to gestate and conduct his deadly task at one night old: kill the darkness. Namely, according to *Vǫlospá* cited above, Váli brings his brother's killer to a pyre. This could correspond with Hermóðr's arrival to Hel.

Hár continues to tell how Hermóðr was directed by Móðguðr, the guardian of the bridge, down the road to the north. When Hermóðr arrived at Hel's gates, he spurred on Sleipnir, and the horse leapt clearing the obstacle. Hermóðr rode to Hel's hall, went inside and found Baldr there on the *ǫndugi*, "seat of honor". No dialogue is mentioned until the next morning when Hermóðr informed Hel how sorely Baldr was missed and begged her to allow him to ride back. Hel replied that it must be tested that Baldr was so beloved. Only if all things alive and dead would weep for Baldr would she allow him to return. Baldr walked Hermóðr out of the hall and gave him the ring Draupnir to return to Óðinn *til minja* "as a keepsake". His wife Nanna sent with him a linen robe and some other undisclosed gifts for Frigg, and a gold ring for Fulla, the goddess servant of Frigg. These rings are of particular interest in support of a solar myth interpretation. Draupnir is

yet another pointer to the number nine, as Hár reports: *Honum fylgði síðan sú náttúra at hina níundu hverja nótt drupu af honum átta gullhringar jafnhǫfgir*. "It afterward had the property that every ninth night there dripped from it eight gold rings of the same weight" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 47, *Edda* 1995: 50). Andreas Nordberg presents how the method of counting differed in the Viking Age. When speaking about a cycle, the modern model starts over at zero, while during the Viking Age the initial unit is inclusive. Hence, what Snorri means in modern terms is Draupnir drips one ring per night in an eight-night cycle, "because the last night in the interval was also counted as the first night in the following cycle" (Nordberg 2006: 154). If this is the case, the result of the cycle is still nine rings on the ninth day including Draupnir. It is also interesting that Nanna contributes an additional gold ring, which would also make up for any lesser value construed by the idea of an "eight-day week". While the attribute of Draupnir directly appeals to the thought of inexhaustible wealth, the shape and color of the object maps on to the sun, and the additional property of regeneration certainly symbolizes its return - in this case it literally does return to the world of the living, in lieu of Baldr. An additional gold ring for the goddess Fulla reinforces the notion that Hermóðr's journey does not yield the return of a fallen god, but his trip back with the symbolic objects harkens to a successful journey through the dark to retrieve the light. Even if the analytic proposal regarding the number nine is set aside, the journey to the underworld and retrieval of Draupnir metaphorically may be understood to represent the success of the trip in regard to the symbolic retreat and return of the sun.

Hermóðr shares Hel's message with the gods, and they dispatch requests around the world in order that Baldr be wept out of Hel. *En allir gerðu þat, menninir ok kykvendin ok jǫrðin ok steinarnir ok tré ok allr málmr, svá sem þú munt sét hafa at þessir hlutir gráta þá er þeir koma ór frosti ok í hita*. "And all did this, the people and animals and the earth and the stones and trees and every metal, just as you will have seen that these things weep when they come out of frost and into heat" (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 47, *Edda* 1995: 51). However, a certain giantess refused, and Hár recites a verse with her stating she will weep dry tears... let Hel keep what she has. Hár concludes that it is presumed this was Loki, and he begins the next tale about the retreat, capture and binding of Loki. For Snorri, Loki's involvement informs the overarching narrative of events leading to ragnarǫk. In my view, his refusal to weep derails the return of the instance of the personification of the sun, but it seemingly does not prevent the continuation of the solar cycle. The etiology of the myth as a cause for the frost melting indicates that the return of Hermóðr from his journey to the underworld, and his retrieval of the gold ring(s), has delivered *sumarmál*.

That is perhaps a tidy solution if the Baldr myth were encapsulated as such, and I argue in some instances it was. However, *Vǫlospá* and Snorri present the episodes as part of a larger eschatological narrative in which after the world of the gods is destroyed Baldr and Hǫðr return. Strophes 62 and 63 of the Codex Regius state:

> Muno ósánir acrar vaxa,
> bǫls mun allz batna, Baldr mun koma;
> búa þeir Hǫðr oc Baldr Hroptz sigtóptir,
> vel, valtívar - vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?
>
> Þá kná Hœnir hlaútvið kiósa,

oc byrir byggia brœðra tveggia
vindheim víðan - vitoð ér enn, eða hvat? (*Edda* 1983: 14)

Without sowing the fields will grow,
all ills will be healed, Baldr will come back;
Hod and Baldr, the gods of slaughter, will live happily together
in the sage's palaces - do you understand, or what more?

Then Hænir will choose wooden slips for prophecy,
and the sons of two brothers will inhabit, widely,
the windy world - do you understand yet, or what more? (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 12)

Snorri elaborates and tells more specifically who joins Baldr and Hǫðr:

> Hár segir: 'Upp skýtr jǫrðunni þá ór sænum ok er þá grœn ok fǫgr. Vaxa þá akrar ósánir. Viðarr ok Váli lifa svá at eigi hefir særinn ok Surtalogi grandat þeim, ok byggja þeir á Iðavelli, þar sem fyrr var Ásgarðr. Ok þar koma þá synir Þórs, Móði ok Magni, ok hafa þar Mjǫllni. Því næst koma þar Baldr ok Hǫðr frá Heljar. Setjask þá allir samt ok talask við ok minnask á rúnar sínar ok rœða of tíðindi þau er fyrrum hǫfðu verit, of Miðgarðsorm ok um Fenrisúlf. Þá finna þeir í grasinu gulltǫflur þær er Æsirnir hǫfðu átt...' (Prologue and *Gylfaginning* 2005: 53)
>
> High said: 'The earth will shoot up out of the sea and will then be green and fair. Crops will grow unsown. Vidar and Vali will be alive, the sea and Surt's fire not having harmed them, and they will dwell on Idavoll, where Asgard had been previously. And then Thor's sons Modi and Magni will arrive, bringing Miollnir. After that Baldr and Hod will arrive from Hel. Then they will all sit down together and talk and discuss their mysteries and speak of the things that had happened in former times, of the Midgard serpent and Fenriswolf. Then they will find in the grass the golden playing pieces that had belonged to the Æsir...' (*Edda* 1995: 56)

While few in current scholarship would contest that these accounts were influenced by Christianity, attempts to liken Baldr to Christ in terms of resurrection are problematic (S. Bugge 1889, Simek 1993: 28). The renewal of the mythic Old Norse world involves the absence of Óðinn and all but one of his first generation peers, and makes way for the sons of Óðinn and Þórr. An exception is named in *Vǫlospá*, the enigmatic Hœnir, who was known in tales to sit with the Æsir at banquets and as a travel companion to Óðinn. However, Snorri also tells how Hœnir was at one point given as a hostage in the truce of the war between the Æsir and Vanir. This symbolically points to the overall tone of the aftermath of ragnarǫk as reconciliation rather than the resurrection of a single God in the form of Baldr. The additional sons of gods who repopulate the former realm of Óðinn inhabit a renewed world - one that need not be considered modeled after Christianity. Among those who, such as Frazer, argue that Baldr is a vegetative god, the death and return after ragnarǫk signifies the concept of cyclical life. However, this does not explain why initial attempts to retrieve Baldr failed, and it took a cataclysmic event before he was able to leave Hel. Indeed, the myth of ragnarǫk seems to represent a grander cycle than a

solar year or changing of the seasons. The eschatological narrative complicates the nature mythology theories.

Baldr in Saxo

Snorri's version of the Baldr myth and the other so-called West-Norse sources are more pertinent to an interpretation of the woodcarvings at Hjarðarholt than Saxo's legendary account for a source-specific reason: Snorri cites the poem *Húsdrápa* when he recounts the tales. Saxo's version includes the same characters in name, but the account is so different they bear little resemblance. Saxo's story is more legendary than mythic as it takes place in a human environment. The roles of Baldr and Hǫðr, (the characters as told by Saxo distinguished here by the spelling Balder and Høther), are mostly reversed - the former is a demi-god, son of Óðinn but apparently not born of Frigg. While Snorri has nothing but good to say about a passive Baldr, according to Saxo Balder is an aggressive, character-flawed warrior. Also in contrast, Høther is a hero rather than a duped villain. There are some similar concepts expressed in Saxo's legend, however, and it is also interesting to note certain anecdotes that point to other tales known in West Norse sources. Even though it may not have a lot to contribute to the appearance of the woodcarving at Hjarðarholt, Snorri is silent about the relationship between Óðinn and Rindr and the actual avenging of Baldr, but Saxo fills in some information from his perspective, and it is relevant for an overall interpretation of the mythic iconography. In order to round out the exposition of the Baldr myth in the primary sources, the following is a brief synopsis with commentary.

Høther is fostered by King Gevar. He is not blind, rather Høther excels at variety of skills, including sports and music. He has a powerful physique and a persuasive way with words. He is not Balder's brother, but because he eventually kills Balder, he will become the target of vengeance. Nanna is the daughter of Gevar, and she falls for Høther - not Balder. Balder sees Nanna bathing and lusts for her. He decides to kill his rival, Høther. As mentioned above, it seems like Saxo conflates some aspects of many of the known West Norse tales in his account about Balder and Høther. As a voyeur, Baldr is reminiscent of Freyr who in the poem *For Scírnis* spies Gerðr and must have her. There are additional parallels to Snorri's account of Baldr. Skírnir, like Hermóðr, journeys on horseback through the dark, in that myth to "Giantland" in order to woo Gerðr on behalf of Freyr. "Her arms shine and from there / all the sea and air catch light." As such, Gerðr seems to be another instance of the personification of the sun. Only after coercion and a magic spell does she agree to meet Freyr and grant her love after nine nights. Upon learning he must wait, Freyr mutters a verse:

'Lǫng er nótt, langar ro tvær,
hvé um þreyiac þriár?
opt mér mánaðr minni þótti
enn siá hálf hýnótt.' (*Edda* 1983: 77)

'Long is one night, long are two,
how shall I bear three?
Often a month to me has seemed less
than half one of these pre-marital nights.' (*Poetic Edda* 1996: 68)

Here there is clearly a blurring of time when a half-night seems like a month. Perhaps it is merely a coincidence, but this lustful period also mirrors the nine units of duration one must wait from midsummer and its decline until its return at *sumarmál*.

Høther is out hunting and encounters some forest maidens in the mist, i.e. Valkyries, who tell him about Balder's desire but warn him not to challenge Balder because of his demi-god status. Saxo's telling is reminiscent of the ending of the encounter between Þórr and Útgarða-Loki the way the Valkyries suddenly disappear and seemingly "trick" Høther. Actually, the impression is more like they gave him helpful information. Generally, Saxo demonizes any supernatural force, particularly the gods, in favor of human heroes. This can help explain the role reversal of his Balder and Høther. Upon his return, Høther tells King Gevar about the incident, and he asks for Nanna's hand. The king refuses the offer due to Balder's previous advances, as he fears retribution; however, he advises Høther to seek out Miming, a wood satyr who owns two precious items: a sword that could "deal him his fate" and a bracelet that has the power to increase wealth. Along with the common theme of a magic sword, here there is an obvious conflation of the bracelet with Draupnir. The magic sword has been compared to the mistletoe, just as some swords in romantic sagas are also named Mistilteinn (Turville-Petre 1964: 116). Curious instructions follow: Høther must pitch his tent in the shadow of the cave where Miming lived. In addition, the shadow of Høther's tent must not fall on the cave. The path is beset with obstacles and severely cold. The characters also become conflated from a West Norse point of view: here Høther takes the role of Hermóðr. The tale is a descent to the underworld - much like Hermóðr takes in his attempt to retrieve Baldr in the West Norse version told by Snorri. Høther's nights are devoted to his anxieties. It is hard to miss a psychological twist, i.e. could the satyr be Høther's "shadow" self? One might question how shadows can be cast in the underworld at all. One night the satyr stumbles over the tent, Høther grabs his spear, and threatening the life of the satyr, he receives the ransom of the sword and bracelet. As Hermóðr, he returns from the underworld with a potentially golden treasure.

Upon Høther's return, a certain Gelder gains knowledge of the booty, and he attacks Høther. Gevar warns Høther ahead of time and advises him on a familiar battle tactic: hold back in a defensive fashion until Gelder uses up his weaponry. Sure enough, after Gelder exhausts his offensive means, Høther wins him over as an ally. Helgi, the king of Halogaland, seeks Høther's assistance in his suit for the hand of Thora. Høther is successful on his behalf. This anecdote must refer to Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr, the patron goddess of Hákon jarl. For a full discussion regarding her, see section 1.6. In Høther's absence, Balder tried to get Gevar to give him Nanna's hand, but deferring to her, she refused saying it would be an uneven match. He is a god and she a mortal. Learning of this attempt to gain Nanna, Høther and Helgi attack Balder and the gods. They win an unexpected victory because Høther is able to render Þórr's oak club useless by lopping off the handle. This insertion could be etiological in regard to the short shaft of Mjǫllnir. The gods retreat and Balder escapes. Gelder had been killed during the battle. He is placed on a pyre built from his vessels and his ashes are ritually placed in a mound. The cremation funeral described by Saxo seems to be the closest parallel to Úlfr's account of the funeral procession to Baldr's pyre, but once again, the characters and their actions involved in the incidents described are quite different. For example, Gelder is not a god and there is no indication that he might be a personification of light or the sun.

After defeating Balder in this first battle, Høther wins the hand of Nanna. They go to Sweden. Høther is, however, defeated in a second battle initiated by Balder, and Høther is forced to abandon his own acquired lands and retreat to Gevar. In what must be an etiological insertion to the tale, Balder thrusts his sword in the ground and up flowed springs to quench the thirst of his soldiers. The site is thus named after him. Balder's victory has not yielded Nanna to him as a prize. Balder is tormented by dreams of phantom shapes of Nanna, and he is so debilitated that he is unable to walk properly. Therefore he travels in a chariot. At this point, with no direct bearing on the narrative, Saxo inserts how a viceroy of the gods at Uppsala, Frø (Freyr), initiated a change in the ancient rites by instituting human sacrifice. This must be a reference to Adam of Bremen's account of the temple in Uppsala that features images of Freyr, Þórr and Óðinn. Saxo may have been thinking about fertility gods, also mentioned by Adam, whose likenesses were supposedly drawn about the fields and countryside in Scandinavia (see section 1.2) (Davidson, Fisher II 1980: 55).

Høther becomes ruler of Denmark through ancestral right after someone else slew his father's killer, which also relieves him of the task of vengeance taking. After Høther experiences a brief period of good fortune, Balder once again defeats Høther in battle, and Høther retreats to Jutland, giving a place name to where he stayed. However, after these two defeats, Høther wanders from civilization. He loathes life and sunlight. This is the third time in Saxo's account that Høther retreats to mystical realms, suggesting he has a cyclical nature or fate. The mysterious maidens appear to him again, and they let Høther know about the magic food that Baldr consumes to increase his vigor. They advise Høther to acquire possession of the food, and then he can accomplish anything. This food could be a conflation with Iðunn's apples, which provides longevity to the gods. However, as it turns out, it more likely resembles the mistletoe of West Norse tradition, the one thing that makes Balder vulnerable (Davidson, Fisher II 1980: 55). Now full of confidence, Høther launches another attack on Balder. After a day of battle with many losses on each side, that night Høther sneaks to the enemy camp. He notices three maidens who carry Balder's personal nourishment. He follows the tracks they make in the dew, and eventually he comes upon their abode. Posing as a minstrel, he is able to take their company. They have three snakes, and they mix the venom of the creatures in with Balder's food - the snakes hover over it dripping the venom from their open jaws. One of the maidens will share the food, another objects seemingly intuiting Høther is Balder's enemy. There is a lacuna in the text, but the maidens give Høther a glittering belt that will guarantee him victory. Once again, the factors in the tale allude to darkness, night, dew, serpents in the netherworld - could the glittering belt be Orion? This is the fourth "dark" period that Høther experiences before emerging again victorious. Indeed, as he retreats from the camp, Høther comes upon Balder and stabs him in the side.

Balder realizes that he has received a mortal wound. Nevertheless, the next day he has his troops carry him into battle. That night, he dreams that the goddess of death appears before him (Hel?), affirming he will die after three days. Balder receives a royal funeral, but no funeral pyre; he is buried in a mound. Later, raiders of Balder's mound are overcome by water. That is the second time in Saxo's account that water has been associated with Balder - the first when he provided the spring named after him. This suggests that in Saxo's tradition Balder indeed is associated with vegetation and fertility. His lustful, Dionysian nature, invigorated by the

serpents' venom may be likened to the potential of the decomposing earthy soil. At least until this point in the narrative, his rival, the well-built, talented and eloquent Høther repeatedly retreats to an "other" world, either in a quest or a state of despair, only to return with a renewing treasure that allows him hope or victory. Intended or not, Høther seems to be Saxo's solar representative.

At this point Saxo turns to the attempts by Óðinn to seduce Rinda, her rape and the conception/birth of the equivalent of Váli, Bous, Balder's avenger. Consistent with Snorri, Saxo tells that Óðinn, regarded the chief of gods, would constantly seek seers, and here he does so with the vengeance for his son in mind. Rostiof the Finn foretells that Rinda, daughter of the Rutenian king must bear him a son who will carry out vengeance for his (half) brother.[49] In his first attempt to win Rinda, Óðinn approaches the king as a soldier, wins glory in battle and is made a general. After whispering the object of his desire to the king and winning encouragement from him, Óðinn is met with a slap on the face when he tries to kiss "the girl." Next, calling himself Roftar, Óðinn approaches the king as a talented smith, and he wins attention for making fine gold jewelry for the women in the household of the king. He presents a most beautiful bracelet to Rinda, but still when he tries to kiss her he receives a box to the ear. Apparently, since he is described here as a "sly, old fellow", Óðinn has not shape-shifted to a more desirable physique. Rinda is suspicious of his motives, and she is aware of some trickery afoot. In his third attempt to get to Rinda, the tale states that Óðinn alters his looks a third time, but in this instance Saxo mentions that gifted sorcerers at one time were able to reproduce the qualities as well as the appearance of any age group. Hence, it is suggested that Óðinn changed his appearance to a younger man and once again proved himself a champion in battle. Why he would try this approach a second time with any hope of success must be due to his changed looks. In spite of this youthful attribute, when he tries to kiss Rinda she gives him a shove that sends him flying to the floor landing on his chin. Óðinn's response is to curse her by touching her with a piece of bark inscribed with spells. This may be related to the *hjástælt* line by Kormákr: *seið Yggr til Rindar*. "Óðinn got Rindr with *seiðr*", "spells, charms, incantations" (see section 1.5). After this humiliation, Óðinn dresses himself like a woman, calls himself Vecha and claims to be a female physician. He becomes Rinda's attendant. He washes the dirt from her feet, and as he rinses them is able to touch her calves and thighs. By "chance" the girl falls ill. Oðinn in the guise of Vecha prescribes a treatment so bitter tasting that Rinda must be tied down to bear its potency. Using such a ruse, Oðinn rapes Rinda and she becomes pregnant. Versions vary as to how the king may have been fooled or allowed the union.

After this "perversion" and dishonor, the gods exile Oðinn for ten years. Some say eventually the gods pity Oðinn, others that he somehow bribes them, but he is reinstated to power. Oðinn hears of the battle savvy Bous, and he urges his son to take vengeance for the slaying of Bous' half-brother Balder. Høther is informed of his oncoming death by seers. Indeed, Bous slays Høther, but he is also inflicted with mortal wounds. Bous is given a fine funeral by his troops, but there is no mention, surprisingly, about any such rites for Høther. Prior to this battle, however, Gewar had been burned in by his own earl, Gunne. One of Høther's last acts is

[49] Davidson notes the similarity here between Óðinn's inquiry with the *vǫlva* in *Baldrs draumar*. She asserts that the name Rostiof translates to Hrossþjófr "Horse-thief", a name of a giant in *Hyndluljóð* str. 34. Further, the name would suit Loki, as he distracted the horse in the episode about the Masterbuilder in *Gylfaginning*. (see section 2.5) She also lays claim to the idea that the *vǫlva* in *Baldrs draumar* actually may be Loki. (Davidson, Fisher II 1980: 56).

to overcome Gunne and cast him on a blazing pyre. While Saxo's account of Rinda and Bous has perhaps little to inform the appearance of the woodcarving in Óláfr pái's *eldhús*, it does inform these missing portions of Snorri's overall Baldr myth and lends some ideas for links to a West Norse version of the initial attempts at the seduction of Rindr. Namely, in the poem *Hávamál*, Oðinn unsuccessfully stalks an otherwise unnamed *Billings mey* or *mær* "Billing's girl or maiden": *háðungar hverrar / leitaði mér it horsca man, / oc hafða ec þess vætkí vífs* "every sort of humiliation the clever woman devised for me, / and I didn't even possess the woman". Immediately following this account, Oðinn is successful in seducing Gunnlǫð: *fát gat ec þegiandi þar; / mǫrgum orðom / mælta ec í minn frama / í Suttungs sǫlom*. "I didn't get much there from being silent; with many words I spoke to my advantage in Suttung's hall" (*Edda* 1983: 32-33, *Poetic Edda* 1996: 28). While perhaps neither of these women are Rindr, the episodes speak to the initial failure of Óðinn followed by his use of spells to win his desire, i.e. *seið Yggr til Rindar*. There is agreement with the West Norse sources that Váli, Saxo's Bous, was born from the illicit affair and avenges Baldr, but no extant information is provided regarding how it happened. Saxo writes about the struggles between Høther and Balder, inverted "light" and "dark" characters, and then Høther and Bous, as battles. This may not be how it was played out in missing myths stemming from Iceland of the vengeful slaying, but it is interesting that Saxo has Høther's last act lighting a funeral pyre. It seems in the sources there is a dance among these personifications of light and those who are agents in its cycle, and not a singular "sun-god". Indeed, Saxo's storytelling serves to show how many ways threads of myths could be woven together to form an overarching narrative. Of course, this argument may also be applied to Snorri, the poet of *Vǫlospá* and other poems that clearly are composites of mythic fragments.

Additional scholarship and the Baldr myth

As indicated above, nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars largely focused on Baldr as a fertility or vegetative god. The inclusion of the mistletoe was central to Sir James George Frazer's theory about Baldr and the god's associations with ancient religions that practiced fertility rites based on a solar deity and the sacrifice of a sacral "harvest" king. Frazer cited Pliny who wrote about how the Druids regarded the oak as sacred and considered anything that grew on it was sent from the heavens. Additionally, mistletoe was believed a cure for many diseases, and it assisted women to conceive. Frazer adds the Gauls, populations across Europe and the Ainos of Japan to a universal list of those who valued the plant for its healing, mystical qualities. Among Scandinavians, Frazer includes Swedish peasants who hung bunches of mistletoe generally for protection and more specifically against fire. Frazer suggests the Baldr myth inspired the burning of bonfires for midsummer and may stem from an actual pre-Christian rite of burning an effigy of the god or a human sacrificial victim chosen by lot. The act would have been a sacred drama that ensured the sun would shine and crops would grow. He claims that Baldr must have been a tree spirit or deity of vegetation represented by the oak. Hence, Frazer regards the oak and mistletoe as the model for the rite, reasoning that it was believed the mistletoe, with its evergreen qualities, was the seat of life for the oak. As long as the mistletoe remained on it, the oak was immortal and invulnerable, just as Baldr had oaths that nothing else would harm him. By stripping and gathering the mistletoe, the oak or in proxy the tree-spirit in the form of a human sacrificial victim could be burned, and the guarantee of future fertility would be attained (Frazer 1913: 90-112). While I concur with the general idea of a solar metaphor in the myth of Baldr, Frazer's details regarding a broader vegetative theme are

problematic. There is no specific mention in Saxo's account of mistletoe associated with Baldr, as he was killed by a magic sword acquired by Høther from the satyr Miming. So, one cannot point to any tradition there. Some scholars argue the descriptions given by Snorri and the West Norse/Icelandic poets demonstrate that they really were not familiar with the plant (Turville-Petre 1964: 11, Liberman 2004: 26-27). As mentioned above, in *Vǫlospá* it is described as growing tall in the field, and Snorri has Loki pulling it up as if by the roots. I would prefer to give more credit to the Icelanders for knowledge of plants that grew off their island, but notwithstanding, Frazer's theory seems significantly remote from the cultural landscape of the Norse late Viking Age. Attaching far-flung beliefs about the mistletoe to the Scandinavian god is not really congruent with the cultural/social sphere in which the versions of the myth were circulating. Furthermore, the way the sources present the tale, Baldr was not stripped of protection from the growth, he was slain when a dart fashioned from a seemingly harmless plant went through him.

It is for similar reasons that Anatoly Liberman states that the nature mythologists have taken too far what he claims is the underlying origin of the myth, the struggle between the forces of light and darkness (Liberman 2004: 22). As early as the seventeenth century Baldr's death was interpreted as a solar myth. In *Atlantica* Olof Rudbek regarded Baldr as the sun (Clunies Ross 1994, Rudbek 1679). Lindow provides a comprehensive overview of scholarship regarding the Baldr myth, from which only a few who are representative of schools of thought I shall mention here. In the nineteenth century the Danish pastor/philosopher N. F. S. Grundtvig echoed the association of Baldr's predicament as a metaphoric struggle between light and darkness. It followed that a long list of nature mythologists such as Karl Simrock recognized the seasonal aspects of the bright, shining Baldr in opposition to his adversary the blind Hǫðr. (Simrock 1864: 94).

Sophus Bugge and Kaarle Krohn advocated the Christ analogy. In particular, Bugge likened nature weeping for Baldr with medieval descriptions of the lament of Christ. (Bugge 1889: 55). Krohn follows Bugge arguing among other points that the mistletoe must be of a foreign origin, and he compares it to the cabbage stalk used for the wood of the cross. Additionally, he points to similarities with the piercing of Christ by the blind Longinus. He argues that etymologically, the Old English Bealdor, hence Baldr, is an appellative with the meaning "Lord". Since he is the son of the "Allfather" it also follows Baldr is a Christ figure. In a footnote citing Úlfr's use of the terms *heilags tafn* as "of the holy sacrifice", Krohn went so far as to claim it was useless to look for any pre-Christian ritual origins in the myth (Krohn 1905: 118-22). Again, while the eschatological aspects of Snorri's *Gylfaginning* and the poem *Vǫlospá* are comparable to the Christian, there are enough differences to make such a sweeping statement problematic. I take the poem *Húsdrápa* and the woodcarvings to indicate the opposite - that Baldr's funeral procession side by side with Þórr's fishing expedition and the struggle between Heimdallr and Loki were archaic myths conserved by material culture.

Departing from the solar/seasonal hypothesis, Jan de Vries noted that Baldr was not one of the Vanir, typically the group of fertility gods of the Norse mythic system. He traced the etymology of Hǫðr to "warrior" - semantically in contradiction to the actions of a misled blind god. de Vries emphasized Baldr's death as the first in the mythical world, and saw this in conjunction with the custom of cremation representing the initiation into an Odinic cult. Hǫðr,

with his blindness was the hypostasis of the one-eyed Óðinn, and the hurling of projectiles at Baldr was indicative of the initiation rite of a warrior (de Vries 1955, Lindow 1997: 31-34, Clunies Ross 1994: 269-70). There is substance to this interpretation in the context of Hákon jarl. Óðinn was the god associated with leaders, and Hákon jarl enjoyed reputed legendary kinship with the deity. Additionally, there is a parallel in the legendary sacrifice of one of Hákon jarl's sons at the battle of Hjǫrungavágr. Nevertheless, that symbolically Óðinn would murder his son Baldr is diametrically opposed to the extant versions of the myth that survive today. Even if Óláfr pái wished to emulate Óðinn for his leadership qualities, it seems very unlikely that he or the inhabitants of Dalir would have understood the carving as representing the initiation into a cult of Óðinn.

As described above, Frazer linked the myth to rites ensuring annual renewal, and other scholars traced this to Proto-Indo-European origins involving divine twins, such as Victor Rydberg who cited Vedic myths involving the murder of a brother who descended to the underworld and awaited the renewal of the world (Rydberg 2004). Georges Dumézil also traced the Baldr myth to Indo-European sources, and as translated by Alan Toth made the sweeping statement: "more than the Iranian version of these cosmic events, it is the para- and pre-Vedic mythical ensemble, transparently preserved in the plot of the Indian epic, which reveals itself as parallel to the entirety of Scandinavian mythology". Dumézil pointed specifically to the Ossetic tale of the killing of Sozryko as corresponding to the slaying of Baldr. In the tale, Sozryko is invulnerable except for his knees. At the instigation of Syrdon, a Loki figure, a seemingly harmless game is organized where Sozryko is able to rebound a cutting wheel aimed at him, that is, until it strikes the fatal spot. Dumézil cites the *Mahabharata* regarding the eschatological aspects of the Baldr myth. Two brothers, one blind, tricks the other in a game which forces him into exile. A dark period is introduced. After a great battle, the two survive in a world that is reborn and purified. Dumézil admitted there are many discrepancies along with the similarities he saw in these two sources, but he nevertheless claimed that in the course of time the Scandinavians sublimated these original myths into their eddic form (Dumézil 1959: 62-65).

Amongst all of the scholarship that traces the Baldr myth to ancient origins, the work of Gustav Neckel is perhaps the most fruitful as a springboard for this study because he discusses sources of iconography. He argued there must have been some previous models for the carvings described in *Húsdrápa*. He mentioned the possibility that the inspiration for the iconography came from the British Isles. Óláfr's visit to Ireland made it likely that either insular or Irish influences for the resulting patterns were possible, however, he did not deem that the actual content derived from there. It seems he thought Icelanders carved the scenes but were only using techniques, certain aspects of stylization and perhaps forms rather than using existing motifs and iconography modeled after Western Atlantic carvers. The carver(s) would have been subjected to their own cultural worldview in regard to determining the appearance of the carvings (Neckel 1920: 46-47). This to a certain extent may be true of the Irish Celtic iconography; however, Neckel did not mention the Manx or Gosforth stone carvings depicting Scandinavian mythic figures and scenes. Due to western Atlantic expansion during the Viking Age, I claim these may be similar to representations that were carved in the proximity of Hlaðir, and they can indeed be taken for models of certain motifs, such as anthropomorphic depictions of gods. Indeed, woodcarvings featuring similar motifs and depictions seen on the Isle of Man and Northern

England could have been available for purchase when Óláfr sought out building material from Hákon jarl.

Neckel continued that those among the "Irish" hypothesis imagined that the carvers knew about Snorri's tale in *Gylfaginning* and carved the scene(s) based on that knowledge. Of course, that would require that the tale was circulating in a similar form some two hundred fifty years earlier. The poem *Húsdrápa* may be considered evidence that the funeral procession myth indeed was known, through Úlfr's act of referential intermedia coupled with the woodcarvings. Based on the exotic content of the poem, such as Freyr riding a boar, Neckel concluded an Icelander did not invent the motifs. Indeed, I have argued that Óláfr brought the woodcarvings from Norway. In section 2.5, I cite Schier and his hypothesis that the woodcarvings represented an archaic form of the myths that maintained their presence in Hlaðir. I concur, and in section 2.1, I provide examples of the transfer of cultural heritage during the diaspora from the Scandinavian mainland - traditions that must have included much of the mythic corpus later documented by the Icelanders. What is unique here, is Úlfr provided an eyewitness account to the myths being transferred and embedded via material culture.

Neckel was probably correct that a procession format derived from Scandinavia rather than insular sources. He pointed to the silver vessel found in Gundestrup, Denmark as a depiction of a procession of riders and on foot, which he suggested may be a stylistic counterpart to the frieze at Hjarðarholt. However, this is supposedly of Celtic design and much older, ca. 200-300 CE. (fig. 108) Of particular interest is a rider with protrusions on his helmet that resembles the one I have represented on the berserks in the hypothetical carving sketch. The riders in profile on their horses, as the troops with their shields facing forward are also somewhat reminiscent of the Oseberg figures. Otherwise, the details defy comparison: the rest of the helmets on the riders sport animals, and their horses are small with large ears that point backwards. The shields of the troops appear quite different - rather than the circular Viking they are oblong. None of the figures wear tunics. Neckel mentioned the "flowering" of woodcarvings at Oseberg, but he discounted them as part of the discussion because they are non-representational. Indeed, most of the patterns recovered are biomorphic designs, but it is common to neglect consideration of the carvings on the wagon depicting gods or warriors, possibly because they are representations of unknown narratives. Indeed, he need not look further than these and the Oseberg tapestries for more contemporary evidence of Scandinavian depictions of processions.

The second part of Neckel's argument was the sources that ultimately inspired the woodcarvings in Óláfr's hall derived from a much more remote time and space. Although he admitted it was adventurous to claim a connection, he pointed to the frieze at the Parthenon as a precursor that helps inform how such a display could later appear in the north. Neckel saw a thread extending to the ancient Middle East and cited rock carvings depicting processions of gods. One, featuring Hittite religious art at Boghaz-Keui in present day Turkey, shows figures standing astride beasts. One of them appears to be a goddess figure on a lion or panther. (fig. 109) Neckel linked this to Snorri's description in *Gylfaginning* of Freyja in the procession riding her cat(s) and suggested a similar pose may have been mentioned by Úlfr in a now missing stanza of *Húsdrápa*. He also cited Cybele, the Phrygian mother goddess, and her association with lions and suggested that pictorial representations of her provided a Freyja prototype. Neckel

made another comparison between a depiction of the Babylonian sun god Schamash ca. 860 BCE and a horned figure on the smaller Gallehus horn bearing a staff and ring. (figures 110, 111) Another depiction of a procession of gods on a carving from Malatia in Anti-Taurus also features a staff-bearing figure with arguably a ring. In view of these precedents, Neckel insisted that the Baldr frieze was an indirect imitation of the Asia Minor and eastern Mediterranean depictions (Neckel 1920: 50-51). Indeed, it is understood that Roman coins served as prototypes for the bracteates that circulated in Scandinavia during the Iron Age, and Vikings travelling to Byzantium and the Mediterranean were likely exposed to friezes adorning religious and governmental sites. However, Neckel did not stop there. He suggested that both the iconography and the religious ideas would have been carried by wandering (and warring) tribes from the Middle East into Europe. For example, elements of the pagan religion of the fourth century Goths could have reached the north through heroic songs and crafts (Neckel 1920: 52-53). While none of these peoples lived in total isolation, it is understandable how universal themes were shared and certain elements of myths were appropriated by neighboring populations. Where most of the scholarship involving Asiatic and Middle Eastern origins goes astray is in the details - and this is visible in the iconographic examples as well. It seems the distance of time and space shows up in the stylistic dissimilarities seen between the rock carvings from Asia Minor and Grecian/Roman marble reliefs in comparison with the north. The Scandinavian Late Iron Age "biomorphic" designs take on a quite different character setting them apart from corresponding artistic developments to the south. The interwoven "gripping beast" designs decoratively covered the functional image carriers. Likewise, representational iconography that depicted narratives, many undecipherable for observers in the present era, were carved compositions formfitting onto picture stones. The cart and sledges of the Oseberg find demonstrate how representational and biomorphic figures were designed as compositions for those surfaces. What we lack today are extant woodcarvings that were part of the structural components of dwellings. Paneling in particular was a suitable medium for the processional frieze described by Úlfr because it allowed a large, visible rectangular surface to display the scene. Therein a similarity exists, however, it is a long way in time, space, style and adapted worldview from the Parthenon.

Looking for distant origins of the Baldr myth, while certainly achievable, does little to inform the cultural context of its Scandinavian circulation. This brings the discussion back to Snorri and the Norse poetic sources. Margaret Clunies Ross notes that the overarching circumstances in the myths and legends point to the need for Baldr to be avenged. For medieval Icelanders the most pertinent part of the Baldr myth was the crisis brought about by a murder within the family. She steers her thoughts to the unexpected slaying brought death to the reigning heir, and as a result initiated a crisis of succession (Clunies Ross 1994: 268-77). Before her, Turville-Petre, Davidson and others wrote about the circumstances of an accidental killing told in Beowulf which brought on a crisis within the family of Hreðel. (Turville-Petre 1964: 120, Davidson 1964: 189). As mentioned above, Lindow takes up the issue of vengeance in his 1997 work, and he maps the predicament on the system of feud in medieval Iceland. He shows with detailed analysis how the Baldr myth mirrored the code of conduct which weighed heavily on the societal worldview contemporary to the time of writing. For this study, I am assuming that oral tradition is correct in relaying that Úlfr Uggason recited *Húsdrápa* ca. 983, and that he described a woodcarving of Baldr's funeral procession in Óláfr's *eldhús*. It follows that I am seeking to investigate a quite specific cultural context found about three kilometers up the Laxá from Hvammsfjǫrðr in the late tenth century. Feud plays a large part in *Laxdæla saga*, as indeed all of

the Icelandic family sagas; arguably however, the woodcarvings and the poem *Húsdrápa* are not directly tied to this societal issue. The poem is not quoted in extant manuscripts containing the saga, and although readers contemporary to its writing may have been familiar with the mythic themes, they are not emphasized by the saga writer. In addition, from reading the saga one does not get the impression there were a lot of sacrificial rites being conducted in the valley during the time in question. It seems during this time just prior to the conversion of Christianity was a transition period. In contrast to Þórr, and with the possible exception of the woodcarvings in Hjarðarholt, there is not much known in the way of a Baldr cult. There are a few place names scattered about Scandinavia, including two called Baldursheimur in Northern Iceland, but no evidence of any cult practice. The fictitious *Friðþjófs saga* tells of a Baldrshagi "Baldr's Meadow" in Sogn, Norway, where there was a temple with his idol, but it cannot be taken as a historic reference (Turville-Petre 1964: 116). Rather than thinking of an abrupt transition, one might consider a worldview among the people of Dalir in the late tenth century that allowed for various ways of thinking about the *forn siðr* "old customs". I argue that Þórr and company were considered deities, but at the same time the inhabitants of Dalir out of respect for their ancestors also understood the myths as a common cultural heritage. This type of reflection could allow the metaphors in the tales to emerge in the minds of the inhabitants. I am suggesting that, among other possibilities, those who gazed upon the woodcarving of Baldr's funeral procession did not perceive the scene as the death of a "sun god" that they might worship or make sacrificial offerings for his return. Rather, I argue from an emic perspective that the inhabitants were sophisticated enough to understand the depicted myth as a metaphor and cosmic marker of the cyclical passing of time. In the case of this livestock-farming community, the solar and seasonal representation had a significant cultural meaning. Namely, time was measured not by a clock but by the events of the year on which the people depended on for their survival. This is reflected by names of the months which presumably pre-date the medieval, such as *sáðtið* "seed time", *stekktið* "(lamb-) fold time", and *heyannir* "hay-time". One term for a month is embedded in the landscape, *selmánuðr* "shieling month", when livestock were put up in the higher terrain. On a daily basis, certain landmarks in relation to the sun, *dagsmörk*, would mark the times of day. With such a basis in the ecological system and the life-cycle, time reckoning was social and conceptual (Hastrup 1985: 18-32). Inside the hall, the woodcarvings as reminders of the points of the year, a kind of iconographic calendar, could serve to acknowledge this sense of the passage of time. The funeral pyre simultaneously represented the height of brilliant light just as it must burn out. Baldr's funeral procession in this context would have provided through its imagery a concept of the annual phases of the sun and how it shone upon those who worked the land in their various roles and seasonal occupations. I imagine this concept was reflected in the placement of the woodcarving in the hall. I develop the argument further in the next section that the carvings were situated on the lower part of the ceiling along the north wall, and Baldr's funeral procession was to the left of the carving of Þórr's fishing expedition. This placement would mean that direction of movement was from the east toward the funeral pyre and the setting sun in the west.

As an active agent in social relations, the woodcarver in Hlaðir knew the Baldr myth and the conservative, yet conventional iconographic motifs. His work became an instance of prototypes that reached far back in time. The artist's interpretation, I argue, would be congruent with the understanding of the tale held by yeomen and their households - that the myth of Baldr contained meaning for the seasonal life on the farm. Hákon jarl, with his ancestral claims linked

to the Æsir, was famed for bringing prosperity to the land, and his aristocratic goals would not be in conflict with the artist's intent. The product of the woodcarver's work, the index in the form of a woodcarving depicting the funeral procession, acquired by the patron Óláfr gained a certain mystique having been brought to Iceland from afar, and in combination with its skill of execution the carving captivated its audience in Hjarðarholt with a certain "biography". Perhaps to a certain extent the wood-carved scene could have been thought to influence events, and it was believed that social interaction involving the imagery might sway fortune. More likely, I propose it served like an ornate clock on the mantel that did not display numbers and operate using mechanics but instead through the iconography served as a representation of the cosmic, astronomical cycle. Ironically, the myth of the death of Baldr represented by the carving may have been viewed as a festive occasion on the farm - a time to celebrate prosperity and at the same time lend some hope for survival in the future.

2.7: *Þar kømr á til sævar* - Óláfr's *eldhús*

The last strophe of *Húsdrápa* is a suitable way to begin the final section of this study:

> Þar kømr á, en æri
> endr bar ek mærð af hendi
> - ofra ek svá - til sævar,
> sverðregns - lofi þegna. (*Skáldskaparmál* I 1998: 84)
>
> There the river reaches the sea, and I have again handed over an encomium for the sword-rain-deliverer [warrior]. Thus I raise the eulogy of thanes. (*Edda* 1995: 133)

The river reaching the sea is a metaphor for the poem reaching its end, as it may also be applied as an allegory for this final section of the study at hand. As Finnur and others have edited *Húsdrápa*, having completed the descriptions of the mythological carvings, Úlfr self-reflexively pointed to his praise-poem and redirected attention to his patron, the "warrior" Óláfr. Recall from section 2.3 that the praise poem, whether it be for gift of a shield, in admiration of woodcarvings or a panegyric for the recipient, is the most common application of *dróttkvætt* verse. In *Skáldskaparmál*, Snorri lists this quatrain by Úlfr among others that contain non-periphrastic terms for poetry and the use of the term *mærð* "encomium". The kenning for warrior, *árr sverðregns* "messenger, or deliverer of sword-rain [battle]", in addition to being conventional for the genre, must refer to Óláfr in recognition of his brief martial past when he was for a year or so in service with his maternal grandfather, King Myrkjartan of Ireland. The praise is reiterated in the plural with *ofra ek svá lofi þegna* "thus I raise the eulogy of men" as *þegn* is a generic form of "honorable man". Faulkes uses the cognate "thane" in his translation, which in Anglo-Saxon England was a rank of somewhere between land owner and nobleman. It would be flattering to be included in such a category for a chieftain in Iceland where there were no royalty or aristocracy. The word also had an ethical dimension as "brave" or "good man" (Lindow 1975). The focus of this section, however, is less in assessing the acclaim of Óláfr than continuing the investigation of the praiseworthy woodcarvings in his building. In particular, the hall and scenes are considered as a gestalt. An emphasis is placed on the archaeological findings of Viking Age

dwellings as power centers and how this may have been manifested within the central halls of the structures. I argue that the woodcarvings described in *Húsdrápa* would have been located in proximity of the seat of honor in the room, the *ǫndvegi* "high seat". Possible prototypes for the *ǫndvegi* are considered, and I present a hypothetical layout of the carvings in the hall including the chair. In addition, I provide examples of carved houses in other cultures in order to open a discussion of the degree in which woodcarvings in Nordic structures may have been intended to represent ancestry. All of these factors serve to form a hypothetical reconstruction of the overall space and an evaluation of the input to the senses during the recital of the poem in Óláfr's *eldhús*. This section serves as a conclusion, as it creates a synthesis of observations made throughout the dissertation.

The Viking Age hall as prototype for the layout of Óláfr's *eldhús*

For a hypothetical reconstruction of the building, one of the more important statements by the saga writer is reiterated here: *Þat sumar lét Óláfr gera eldhús i Hjarðarholti, meira ok betra en menn hefði fyrr sét*. "That summer Oláfr had a fire-hall built at Hjarðarholt which was larger and grander than men had ever seen before" (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 79, *Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 39). This leads to questions of the actual dimensions of such a structure. Archaeological sites and reconstructions of Viking Age dwellings in Scandinavia and Iceland provide potential prototypes. For example, the excavation and reconstruction at Borg in Lofoten, Norway, reveals an enormous longhouse with several stages of development over centuries. (fig. 37) This house was unusually large even by Scandinavian mainland standards. The earlier building on the site in question was erected c. fifth/sixth century, and it was 67 meters long and 7-8 meters wide. In the seventh century that one was torn down, and it was replaced with a larger building on the same site. That dwelling remained in use until the second half of tenth century and was ca. 80 meters in length and 7.5-9 meters wide. The latter was divided into five rooms that archaeologists have labeled: A) Living-room, B) Entrance room, C) Hall, D) Room and E) Byre (Herschend, Mikkelsen 2003: 13, 62). It is the connected byre that substantially contributed to its extraordinary length. Also considered to be one of the largest Viking Age structures, the Lejre hall in Denmark, for example, is ca. 48 meters long and 11.5 meters in width, and it appears to have been divided into five or six rooms without a byre (Christensen 2010). A "normal" Norwegian Viking Age building was about 30 meters long (Herschend, Mikkelsen 2003: 68). As might be expected, excavations in Iceland are also of a more modest size. The Hrísbrú excavation site in the Mosfell valley dates to the settlement period and was continually occupied until the eleventh century. (fig. 112) The external measurements of the building were 28 meters long and 10 meters wide. The foundation reveals a three aisle construction and shape of a classic Viking Age house, with two central rows of posts running the length of the house forming a roof supporting framework. (fig. 113) While these central posts ran parallel, the external walls were of a slightly concave, bowed shape, as was apparently the ridge of the ceiling highest in the center lengthwise, gradually tapering lower at the gable ends. Less fitted dwellings would have rafters that rested directly on thick turf walls. (fig. 54) Wealthier conditions, such as the case at Hrísbrú, allowed an outer row of posts lined with interior wood paneling and wainscoting, with an insulating gap between the wood and the exterior turf. At Hrísbrú, this gap was filled with stones. The supporting skeleton was made of wood beams and poles, but the scarcity of lumber in Iceland and harsh weather conditions made it practical to use turf as the outer protective layer. Indeed, the thickness of the walls reduced the interior

measurements of the Hrísbrú dwelling to 25 meters by 5 meters (Zori, Byock 2014: 8). The reconstructed farmhouse at Þjóðveldisbærinn called Stöng[50] is a similar overall size. The actual foundation excavation site is further up the valley. (fig. 114) As noted above, the interiors of these houses were typically divided into different "rooms" of varying sizes and purposes. For example, entryways were located at one or both ends of the long sides, and often led into a "gable-room" partitioned off from the inner chamber. Stöng appears to be somewhat unique, in that part of the attached dwelling was a smaller room, *stofa*, with roof supporting beams that spanned an albeit narrower addition eliminating the need for three aisles. (fig. 115) Judging from extant finds, usually the three aisles stretched the length of the building with spaces for various functions partitioned off from one another. What concerns this study is the central "great" room, sometimes referred to by saga writers as the *skáli*.

It appears that *eldhús* could also be a term used for this inner partitioned area of a house, or it could be an entirely separate building (*Complete Sagas of Icelanders* Vol. V 1997: 400). Additionally, both *skáli* and *eldhús* may be anachronistic terms not in use during the Viking Age, so there is some ambiguity about exactly what is being described. However, if the events surrounding the construction in *Laxdæla saga* were passed down correctly, it seems most likely that Óláfr's *eldhús* was assembled as an independent building. It could have been connected to the old living quarters or eventually added onto, but at least initially, I imagine it primarily as a large, open hall with among other purposes the accommodation of large gatherings. If indeed it was, and I quote the Kunz translation, "larger and grander than men had ever seen before", that begs the question if the comparison was made to the overall size of the structure or to other known interior partitioned sections of houses. For example, based on the distribution of posts indicating interior partition walls, the largest central room at Lejre could have been up to twenty meters in length and likely would have served as the assembly place (Christensen 2010: 246). In comparison, based on finds of luxury items found in room "C" at Borg, it is understood to have been the "hall" of the dwelling and in the later building was about 14 meters long (Munch 2003b: 253). In Iceland, the Hrísbrú site floor plan shows five distinct spaces: four rooms and an entrance hallway. A long fire pit identifies the main, central hall which was about 9 meters long. The main wood paneled *skáli* of the Stöng dwelling was 12.25 meters by 5.85 meters. In Northern Iceland the site at Hofstaðir is the largest house excavation on the island thus far. It was in use ca. 940-1070, contemporary to the dating of *Húsdrápa*. In the early twentieth century it was thought to be the site of a heathen cult building, but after re-examination it currently is understood to have been a chieftain's residence with a large feasting room, perhaps associated with pre-Christian rituals. The house is approximately 38 meters in length. In his review of the publication covering the most recent excavation, Søren M. Sindbæk notes that based on a grid formed by the distribution of the post holes for the building, it is possible to divide the length of the dwelling into quarters, where the middle half (two quarters) would appear to be one, long central hall and the remaining quarters formed two gable rooms, one at each end (Sindbæk 2009). (fig. 116) The main editor of the reviewed publication, Gavin Lucas, interprets the space as 16.3 meters between the partitions (Lucas 2009). If one were to accept that the *eldhús* in Hjarðarholt was "larger and grander" but simultaneously consider that saga writers may have been prone to exaggeration, it is possible that Óláfr's new house was of a comparable overall size as the one at Hofstaðir, but the innermost chamber included even more of the square meter coverage. A

[50] Stöng, meaning "pole", apparently got its name from the long pole over the pit in the lavatory on which people sat while relieving themselves.

common spread between posts appears to have been a fathom, about 1.85 meters. Based on all of these variables, the inner fire-hall, *eldaskáli*, of Óláfr's *eldhús* could have been about 20 meters long and a standard 3 fathoms or 5 and a half meters wide.

This leads to questions regarding the purpose of the *eldhús* that Óláfr had built. Archaeological evidence indicates that during the Viking Age, Scandinavian ritual functions transitioned from being conducted amidst *hǫrgar*, sacred areas outdoors, or specifically named locations in nature such as a grove, *lundr*, to aristocratic residences that were located in "central places". There is increasing evidence at these sites of small, sometimes separate structures used as cult buildings. However, rites involving a large assembly of people must have been held in the halls large enough to accommodate the guests (Jørgensen 2014, Sundqvist 2014). Terry Gunnell has made some convincing arguments that in Iceland, the chieftain's farmstead was transformed at times for the purpose of ritual functions. While the environmentally related spirits were left behind in Norway, settlers symbolically brought their traditions with them embedded in the *ǫndvegissúlur*, or high seat pillars, which were also fundamental members of the interior spaces of the new dwellings (see section 2.1). Names of other building parts, such as *dvergar*, the short posts that support the *áss*, or ridge beam of the hall, bring to mind how the dwarves in mythology held up the corners of the heavens. The *goði*, Icelandic chieftain, apparently had the function of both a political and a religious leader, and his farm would have been considered a central place that had both a secular and sacral function. Indeed, the farmstead and his house could be considered a pre-Christian Norse microcosm (Gunnell 2001, Sundqvist 2014). The archaeological evidence at Hofstaðir supports the argument that dwellings at central places in Iceland served as locations for ritual gatherings. The sheer size of the hall along with a high meat profile among the finds suggests the practice of sacrifice and seasonal gatherings for feasting. The reasons for such assemblies could have been for building and maintaining social relations and alliances, and also as displays of status (Lucas 2009: 404). Óláfr's *eldhús* would have been suitable for many purposes, but modeled after an aristocratic hall it could have been understood as transformed into a ritual space for feasts, such as the gathering at the wedding when Úlfr recited *Húsdrápa*.

Again, in *Laxdæla saga* Óláfr is not described as a *blótmaðr*, one who partakes in sacrifice, nor a particularly religious person, but he is portrayed as being concerned about his status - to the extent that he would desire to mimic someone like Hákon jarl, who in legend is portrayed as a descendent of the Æsir. Óláfr sought recognition for his ancestry, and this found expression in his displays of finery - such as having the carved mythological scenes in his new building. Those tales depicted on the paneling represented a mythic Norse macrocosm in themselves.

The *ǫndvegi*, "high seat" as the locus of the carvings

The placement of the woodcarvings described by Úlfr is a focus of this section in order to arrive at an overall hypothetical programme, or layout in the hall. How the carvings were situated is also an important consideration for the overall reception of the poem. Here again, is another important piece of information from *Laxdæla saga*: *Váru þar markaðar ágætligar sǫgur á þilviðinum ok svá á ræfrinu;* "On the wood of the gables, and the rafters, decorative tales were carved" (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 79, *Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 39-40). I would like to

note, however, that the sagawriter uses the terms *þiliviðr*, which may refer to wood paneling placed anywhere in the house, and *ræfr*, or "roof", which points generally to the ceiling, and that also could be paneled. The saga writer does not actually use the term *gafl* "gable" in regard to the placement of the carvings described by Úlfr. With this information in mind, I suggest the woodcarvings would have been most visible where the ceiling met the walls. (fig. 117) When the saga writer adds, *var þat svá vel smíðat, at þá þótti miklu skrautligra, er eigi váru tjǫldin uppi*. "it was so well crafted that it was thought more ornamental without the tapestries than with them", presumably it means that the wall hangings would detract from the woodcarvings, and perhaps at least part of the carvings would have been obscured by the tapestries. It is not certain exactly where the festive *reflar* were hung (see *Gísla saga Súrssonar,* ch. 15). They were likely long and narrow, and, so they could be seen, hung lengthwise where the walls met the ceiling. As I envision it, if the *reflar* were up, some of the wood-carved mythic scenes above them may have remained visible, but the lower carved plate and any woodcarvings that may have been incorporated below would have been covered, ultimately detracting from the programme.

The location of the *ǫndvegi* "high seat" in Óláfr's hall seems like it would be a determining factor for a more precise setting of the programme, as it is only natural that the chieftain would want to be seated surrounded by the carvings. Recall that *ǫndvegissúlur* "high seat pillars" were reportedly brought by some settlers to Iceland, and at least one was described as featuring the carved likeness of the god Þórr (*Eyrbyggja saga* 1935: 7, see section 2.1). When oral tradition passed on by the sagas is taken in consideration, these posts would have been the central locus of power for the interiors of buildings. The one mentioned in *Eyrbyggja saga* was described as an integral part of a "temple", but others seem to have been structural posts in dwellings that stretched up to the ceiling (Sundqvist 2014: 122-23). If this were the case, it seems most likely that the *ǫndvegi* would be situated between the pair. There has been some speculation whether the pillars formed parts of the seat. The definition of *ǫndvegi* provided by Cleasby Vigfusson states that the sides of the seat were the *ǫndvegissúlur*, but I argue if those posts were structural, they likely would have been separate. It would be difficult to integrate vertical front or back "legs" of the seat if the pillars were any of those from the two rows that formed the center aisle of the hall. Those posts could not conceivably form the back legs because that would situate the seat out in the lower center aisle floor. If the pillars formed the front legs, it would place the seat so far forward that there would be a large gap between the seat and the wall behind it - possible but not practical; it would also be a long step down to the center aisle. It is conceivable that the *ǫndvegissúlur* were structural posts among those that formed the outer perimeter walls, supported the ends of the roof rafters and were integrated into the wainscoting. If those pillars were part of the seat, the back would have been a section of the *þiliviðr*, paneling boards, that made up the wall. That would position the *ǫndvegi* all the way back from the center aisle, however, and it may not have been the most desirable arrangement. Even with an insulating gap between the exterior turf and the wall panels, there would certainly be a draft of cold air through the chair back. That might be less of an issue if these special pillars were positioned at the end of the central hall by the partitioned wall. However, as argued further below, a gable position seems an unlikely spot for Óláfr's place of honor. Given the practical design considerations, I suggest the *ǫndvegissúlur* were two of the structural posts, one at each side of a free-standing *ǫndvegi* situated away from the back wall but with enough room in front to have a table placed for feasting. These architectural features would have designated a space approximately one square fathom for the head of household, *goði*, or chieftain.

The actual designs of the *ǫndvegi* could have been quite varied. It could have seated one, or possibly as many as three people. If it were indeed a separate piece of furniture, a trestle-style bench as a spot designated for the head(s) of household might suffice for less wealthy farmstead dwellings. In the case of the more well-to-do, the beech chair from the Oseberg find is a suitable prototype for a starting point in regard to its design. (fig. 118) The chair is basically a box construction with a higher raised back. The front, back and side pieces of the seat give the appearance of being framed, but they are actually wide boards with a recessed center. The grain runs horizontally, and the panels are attached with staggered tenons through the mortised legs. The rear legs extend higher and another wide board is fitted to them with a rabbet to form the back of the chair. The top of the legs and back are slightly rounded to form a gentle arch on the top. The back shows signs that it was upholstered, and the seat appears to have been woven with a type of cane or leather. Surprisingly, the chair is not carved, but there were some signs of painted animal ornamentation before undergoing restoration (Grieg 1928: 105-10).

The same type of construction as the Oseberg chair lends itself to carved versions, however, as seen in several dating from the Early Middle Ages. As discussed in section 1.7, many of the stave church portals and interiors feature wood-carved ornament that can be seen as harking back to motifs from the Viking Age. Several extant chairs that may have initially been situated in stave churches, also with combined Christian and traditional pre-Christian Scandinavian ornament, are of interest in creating a hypothetical design for a Viking Age *ǫndvegi*. One must be discerning, of course, but in particular, some of the serpent-like designs and the parts that carry these images can be synthesized with Viking Age motifs featuring stylistic trends for the time in question. I do not provide as detailed an analysis as the woodcarvings described in the poem *Húsdrápa*, but I present three additional chairs as examples for a design that will help illustrate the possible appearance of an *ǫndvegi* and the overall area where the woodcarvings described by Úlfr were situated. (fig. 119)

The first example is a chair from Blakkar in Lom, Gudbrandsdalen. It is of the same basic construction as the Oseberg, with the following complexities. The front legs extend higher than the seat, and on top there are small sculptural carvings of animals. The front is raised off the floor, and each side is comprised of two pieces featuring woodcarvings of chain and scroll patterns below, and representational scenes with decorative borders above. The front also once featured a foot-rest. The back legs are shaped such that they sweep back and out as they rise and terminate with serpent-like heads. There are carved "wings" that sweep down from the back legs to the front, which form a decorative element to the piece as well as arm rests. The top of the back rises as an arch in the center as it curves down from the top of each back leg. A view of the back of the Gålås chair, ca. 1200, shows two serpent-like terminating heads protruding out from the sides at the top of boards forming the back legs. They bear some similarity to the Blakkar back posts, but even more so with the *sengehestene* "bed posts" from the Oseberg burial ship find. (fig. 34) A variant of the box frame seat construction is seen in the Gåråstolen, from Bø, Telemark ca. thirteenth century. The sides, front and back consist of horizontal carved rails with vertical shaped stiles between them, giving it a bit lighter appearance. It features front legs that rise above the seat and terminate in stylized animal heads protruding forward. On this chair the back legs at the top support a cross member that is carved to form terminating animal heads. This is reminiscent of the bed frame seen from the Oseberg find. (fig. 29) Clearly, the construction,

forms and shapes featured on these chairs had been around since the Viking Age, and arriving at a synthesis with period correct ornamentation can lead to a visual argument for a hypothetical design.

Elements of these chairs may be compared to the Lejre miniature, which is thought to depict Óðinn seated on his throne Hliðskjálf. (fig. 120) Only two centimeters high, the silver figure shows exceptional detail of the chair featuring front leg posts with animal heads, similar to the outline of the chair from Gårå. However, these posts are oriented at a 45˚ angle to the seat of the throne, adding complexity to the construction and design. The back appears to be one piece cut out such that the necks of two beasts curve in before their heads sweep out at the top and rest on a protruding tendril. In the top center there is a fleur-de-lis shape. This forms interesting added details that combine some of the elements of the chair back designs discussed above. If this throne was modeled after a full scale wooden one, it would mean that the chair back was carved from a single thick slab of wood - possible, but a different technique than the box construction. In any case, the miniature from Lejre, dated to the tenth century, demonstrates it is probable that sculpted, carved wooden chairs were available as prototypes for the silversmith and likely owned by high-status individuals.

Using these chairs to form a tentative hypothetical design for Óláfr's *ǫndvegi*, I primarily make use of the box construction. I add the variance with front leg posts that are situated at a 45˚ angle to the seat and have carved serpent-like heads terminating on the top. In the back, I prefer the top cross member to terminate with similar heads. I have widened the chair to form an *ǫndvegi* that will seat two, approximately four feet. This allows the piece of furniture to fit between the two *ǫndvegissúlur*, a span of about a fathom, or six feet. While the decorative chair posts might have been considered *ǫndvegissúlur*, as stated above, it seems highly unlikely that these would be structural. Perhaps the term *ǫndvegissúla* may be interchangeable with any carved vertical upright considered sacred and within the space designating the "high seat of honor". I do not provide details for carvings on the surrounding posts here, but I reserve that for a future project. I do include a sketch of a chair with stylized ornament inspired by Oseberg carvings synthesized with designs from later Viking Age patterns. Some of these motifs somewhat predate the late tenth century but still could have been circulating as ornament for panels and terminals on chair posts. (fig. 121)

Typical of the Viking Age house, and as seen from remains of the Icelandic dwellings cited above, elevated wooden platforms were built along each side aisle. Members of the household could sit, sleep and work on these platforms, which may be called the *flet*[51], *pallr*[52] "platform(s)" or *bekkir* "benches" that ran along the long walls. Probably there were additional knock-down bench slabs used for gatherings and possibly tables of trestle design assembled as needed. The *ǫndvegi* may not have been moved much and remained a permanent feature in the hall, but potentially the use of portable furnishings that were not built-in existed as part of the daily life of the interior of the dwelling.

[51] These platforms and/or the benches may have been referred to as *flet*. (Zoëga 1952: 141). Cleasby Vigfusson defines *flet* as "a set of rooms or benches, and hence metaphoric of the house itself" (1969: 160). Fritzner translates the word as referring to the earthen floor. It seems that it is a loosely used term for architectural features of the hall.
[52] *Pallr* refers to a raised floor and/or bench along the long walls and *þverpallr* across the end wall. Other compounds refer to other sections of raised floors and the room, such as *krókpallr*, the platform area in the corner.

There are two schools of thought as to where the *ǫndvegi* would have been located in Viking Age central rooms. One argues for the placement in the corner, or more specifically the north-east corner of the room, but the other indicates a central place in the hall. For Óláfr's *eldhús*, I sift through some of the sources here and argue that the chieftain's space during the late Viking Age was located in the middle of the hall. In *Fagrskinna*, the saga writer states that Óláfr kyrri (in the eleventh century) moved the high seat to the gable end of the hall, but:

> Þat var forneskjusiðr í Nóregi ok í Danmǫrk ok í Svíaveldi, þar sem váru konungsbú ok veizlustofur, váru dyrr á hvárumtveggja enda stofunnar, en konungs hásæti var á miðjan langbekk, þann er vissi móti sólu. Sat þá dróttning á vinstri hǫnd konungi. Var þat þá kallat ǫndvegi ok enn ágætasti sess út í frá hvárn tveggja veg til kvenna ok karla, er næst var ǫndvegi, en hinn óvegligastr, er næstr var durum. Enn gǫfgasti maðr, sá er var gamall ok vitr, var kallaðr konungs ráðgjafi, sem í þat mund var konungum títt at hafa með sér gamla spekinga til þess at vita forna siðu ok dœmi sinna forellra. Þessi maðr skyldi sitja á annan langpall gagnvert konungi, ok hét þat et óœðra ǫndvegi... (*Fagrskinna* 2007: 300)
>
> It was the old custom in Norway, Denmark and Sweden at the king's residence and feasting halls, that there was a doorway at each end of the room, and the king's high seat was in the middle of the long-bench that faced toward the sun. The queen sat at the left side of the king. That was then called *ǫndvegi* "high-seat", and the most excellent were assigned a seat out from both sides, women and men, who were nearest the *ǫndvegi*, and the least noble, who were near the door. And the most noble man, he who was old and wise, was called the advisor of the king, such at that time it was customary for the king to have with him old wise men in order to acquire knowledge of the old customs and the judgments of his elders. This man would sit on the long bench across from the king, and that was called the *óœðra ǫndvegi* "lesser high-seat". (modified from *Fagrskinna* 2003: 239-40)

In regard to the reliability of this statement, Olof Sundqvist notes that it is little more than a hundred years between Óláfr kyrri's reign and the writing of *Fagrskinna*, so oral tradition has a relatively high mode of credibility regarding this matter (Sundqvist 2011, 2014: 114). For the definition of *ǫndvegi*, Cleasby Vigfusson derives it from *and-* "opposite" and *vegr,* an "opposite seat", "high seat":

> so called because two seats are placed opposite to one another; in ancient timbered halls the benches were placed longways, running along the walls of the halls (see bekkr), with the two seats of honour in the middle facing one another; the northern bench facing the sun, was called ǫndvegi it æðra, *the higher* or *first high-seat*, the opposite or southern bench being it úæðra, *the lower* or *second high-seat*; the two high-seats were the most honored places in the hall, and a chief guest used to be placed in the southern high-seat.

In his book *Høgsætet: Det gamle ondvege i religionshistorisk belysning*, Emil Birkeli systematically refutes the north wall theory (Birkeli 1932). However, his arguments do not stand

up well to scrutiny. He uses research of more recent Norwegian and Swedish farmhouses to determine that all of them have the high-seat situated in the north-east corner. It is his strong opinion/argument that these reflect "*oldtidens*" *skáli* and daily living rooms, and he dismisses any influence from Óláfr kyrri's so called reform (Birkeli 1932: 17). However, since the customs of the farmhouses post-date Óláfr kyrri, it seems reasonable to take the change of customs into account. Although some of his arguments are persuasive for the north-east corner having a history of prominence in the room, all of the examples he provides are of a somewhat quadrangular house floor-plan (almost square living rooms) (Birkeli 1932: 19-22). The long, narrow floor plans of Viking age houses with a central fire pit would present a quite different set of circumstances. This focus of Birkeli - that of how the ordinary farmer would furnish his house - is not really applicable for this study because arguably Óláfr pái would want to emulate royalty or the examples he had seen at Hlaðir. Birkeli's arguments are ambiguous regarding sources in Icelandic family saga literature. He cites passages from *Víga-Glúms, Eyrbyggja* and *Hávarðar* sagas all with the same claim that they indicate the *ǫndvegi* is furthest into the room on one of the side walls in the corner (Birkeli 1932: 30-33). A close reading suggests that might be possible, but none of them rule out more room beyond the seat - that area merely is not described. The same applies to other sagas he cites, but one segment from *Brennu-Njáls saga* actually reinforces the middle position along the wall. Also cited by Cleasby Vigfusson in support of the "opposite seat" definition, the saga writer quite specifically describes the seating arrangements at Gunnarr's wedding, which took place at his farm Hlíðarendi. Gunnarr sat in the middle of the bench with men of importance to each side of him. Across from Gunnarr in the middle sat the bride's father, certainly the next of rank given the occasion, and the bride sat in the middle of the cross bench (*Brennu-Njáls saga* 1954: 88-89, *Njal's saga* 1997: 39). Birkeli dismisses this as an exception because it was at the wedding of a high status man (Birkeli 1932: 34). Of course, we had a similar situation at the wedding when *Húsdrápa* was recited, and there the man of importance was not the groom but rather the head of household, the chieftain Óláfr.

In some excavations, concentrations of luxury artifacts and *gullgubber*, stamped gold foils, suggest that the high seat may have been situated in the corner or gable end of a hall. Frands Herschend presents a study of Foundation 1a on Helgö and arrives at four hypothetical locations for the high seat in the corner of a room. Unfortunately, the schematics regarding the foundation post holes he presents are not very detailed (only six central aisle posts are shown), but he claims the overall structure was partitioned into two rooms with the one being a *salr* in which ritual activity might have taken place. A concentration of gold foils and luxury glass fragments leads him to the conclusion that the chief, main place was in a corner of this hall. However, no evidence of a partition wall is provided in his analysis, and one might note that according to his diagram the location of the finds is in the center of the north wall of the overall dwelling. Herschend continues his breakdown by comparing the layout of the hall and finds with boat graves during the same period, ca. 800 CE. He provides an overhead schema showing how a burial boat was divided in half by shields, and the skeleton was situated in the upper half. Located below were his possessions and some everyday items that would be found in the hall. According to Herschend's analysis, it is through the helmet that the dead person was represented. To the side of the helmet there was a horn and spear. In front there was a "table setting" with ladle and bowls made of wood. In addition there was a playing board between the representation of the dead warrior and the "fire" represented by the cooking/eating utensils. This is not a complete summary, but based on the arrangement Herschend determines the buried

warrior/chieftain was seated in the upper end of the symbolic space, and this mirrored the actual hall (Herschend 1997: 50-55). While this is an interesting concept, it only presents one way of thinking about the layout. As an alternative, one might consider the warrior centrally located at the table setting. The width of the boat shown in which the warrior was interred would not allow his body to be stretched out perpendicular to it, and for practical purposes he simply was rested lengthwise with items at his feet that he may have needed or enjoyed in his afterlife.

Scholars such as Gunnell and Gerd Stamsø Munch cite Herschend's observations as they present their studies about the layout of Viking Age halls. Gunnell suggests archaeological evidence indicates that certain parts of the hall were considered more sacred than others, i.e. a corner of the room, and he reprints the four alternative layouts presented by Herschend. One of them shows the seat potentially located at the end of the room with the back towards the door (Gunnell 2001: 23). As Munch suggests, that would be rather strange, especially given the vulnerability for a person of power in such a seating arrangement. Munch, however, argues the evidence of *gullgubber* "gold foils" found in the post holes in room "C" at Borg in the north-east corner suggests the high seat was located there (Munch 2003: 261-62). At first glance this sounds convincing, but as it might be applied to the same period as Óláfr's *eldhús*, the hypothesis can be revisited. If the hearths are also to be understood as evidence of the location of the high seat in room "C", Carbon-14 dates show the north-east ones were abandoned in the late ninth century leaving only the central hearth burning closer to the time in question for *Húsdrápa* (Johansen, Munch 2003: 37). The three gold foils that were found in the north-eastern corner of the later (I.1a) dwelling likely were produced in an earlier period, as were fragments of a Merovingian bronze vessel, possibly eighth century. A silver spiral bead that was found alongside in room "C" was in principle the same type as many bronze spiral beads from the Early Merovingian Period (Munch 2003: 242-52). With the "remodeling" going on at Borg resulting in the shifting of the locations of the rooms, it is difficult to argue convincingly that the concentration of three gold foils for cult use and three luxury items of questionable age that were found in the north-east corner of the latest stage of development should lead to the conclusion that the high seat was located there. Interestingly, when the foundation plan showing the location of room "C" in the stage of later development is overlaid onto the plan showing the location of room "C" in the previous stage, the post holes associated with the gold foils would have been in the center of those combined areas. It is possible earlier deposits remained in the vicinity of their initial placement. I argue the central main hearth would have been the place of power and determined the location of the chieftain's seat rather than off in the corner of room "C" by the door to room "D", which was also a point of entry from outside. Additionally, the decor and any ornamentation depicting a mythic programme would have been a central feature of the room, surrounding the chieftain seated in his *ǫndvegi*.

Olof Sundqvist also cites Herschend's study, but his detailed analysis lists several Iron Age excavations, and these demonstrate there could have been considerable variances in the location of the *ǫndvegi* and the main power center in the hall. Among the dwellings are a Migration Period hall at Vallhagar, Gotland where features indicate both a high seat and opposite seat were located on the middle of the long walls. At the younger hall house of Lunda the central postholes were larger in diameter and objects were deposited close to the northern wall, suggesting the high seat was located in the vicinity (Sundqvist 2014: 119).

My conclusion is that Óláfr pái would have wanted to be located centrally in his feasting hall, surrounded in hierarchal fashion by his household and visitors. I argue that with the inclusion of woodcarvings, a somewhat symmetrical design of the hall would be favorable, with prominent depictions surrounding the area of the high seat along the north wall. The ranking guests across from him would have had a privileged view of the carvings essentially framing Óláfr. (fig. 122)

Other wood carved houses

Research indicating that Scandinavian dwellings in the Iron Age might be thought to have represented a mythological macrocosm gains support by the presence of woodcarvings in structures found in other cultures. I shall reference two peoples as examples, the Haida and the Maori. In the Pacific Northwest, totem poles lining the exteriors of houses along the coastal shores of villages caught the attention of early explorers and soon became internationally renowned. There are several types of totem poles, however, including carved pillars that support the central beams in the interiors of prominent family dwellings. The carvings consist primarily of stylized animals that are family crests and entities of mythology. Totem poles are essentially monuments set in place by families to show their histories and status as an indicator of the family's worth (Jonaitis 2010: 12). Wealth was considered in terms of rights for natural resources and access to supernatural forces. The former included stands of the best timber and stretches of shoreline where whales might beach themselves. The latter involved a founding ancestor and lineage as a basis for these rights. Cosmologically, as told by George MacDonald, the Haida myth involves a supernatural being with a pole on his breast, which supports the land and extends into the sky. It is visualized as a cedar tree, and as a living being power flows through this cosmic tree which serves to unite the three realms of the cosmos, the roots stretch through the underworld, its trunk extends through the earth and the branches reach the firmament. This is mapped onto the interior of the house with the vertical alignment of the central hearth and smoke hole above which allowed the smoke of offerings burned in the fire to rise and reach the celestial forces above (MacDonald 1983: 6-7). The Haida plank house functioned as both a secular home and a sacral ceremonial center. It was considered the dwelling of both the living and the ancestors, which was expressed in symbolic terms. For example, as one entered the door it might be through the mouth of the body of the ancestor, or one might exit through the vagina of the ancestress. This opening could also be represented by the belly of a carved animal (MacDonald 1983: 18). The interior house pillars supporting two massive central roof beams would number four to eight and may be the oldest type of carved pole. The carvings were usually family crests, but they could also illustrate heroic legends and stories from Haida mythology. Sometimes these stories were long and detailed enough that they were continued from pole to pole (Keithahn 1963: 51-55). There were also carved interior central poles under the peak of the roof displaying complex founding myths of the families (MacDonald 1996). Raised wooden platforms surrounded the walls for sitting and sleeping. Belongings were kept in boxes, and moveable furniture was not common, but the chief's seat of honor was brought out for ceremonial occasions (MacDonald 1983). While there is little in actual house terminology demonstrating the house structural parts as body of the ancestor among the Haida, for that we may turn to the Maori.

The Norse Viking Age dwelling as a more subtle cosmological representation with carvings that hint of ancestral links to deities finds an explicit counterpart in the Maori meeting

house. In contemporary times, the meeting house is an adaptation of the earlier chief's house with the associated layout and symbolism of the carvings. Two sets of symbols used in older carvings are incorporated into the structure; one indicates genealogical affiliation in unique combinations, and the other consists of a series of images that are derived from mythological themes. Essentially, the house represents the common ancestor of the given group, and the carved building parts signify the body parts of the ancestor. The ridge beam is the backbone with a mask forming the head of the being. The rafters at the end of the gable are the arms which terminate in fingers. The remaining rafters and wall slab supports are the ribs. The porch is the brains and the interior is the belly. Two of the interior half-round slabs that serve as supporting posts for the ridge beam are prominent. One is carved with figures depicting the immediate patrilineal and the other the extended lineage of the ancestor. Sacred objects were buried under these carved slab posts. There are additional carved "body parts", and gods and demi-gods are carved in the house illustrating spirits related to the ancestral figures. While the meeting house carvings emphasize genealogy, representations of the gods and otherworld specifically are found above the entryway on carved lintels, at the transition as one enters the body of the ancestor (Simmons 1985).

There are risks of oversimplification comparing the Haida and Maori houses with Viking Age dwellings, but from these examples analogies can be drawn that are helpful in extending analysis otherwise solely based on Old Norse texts and North Atlantic archaeology. Although the overall corpus of the mythologies and the stylistic carvings are quite different, the common notion of a cosmic tree that translates to structural pillars carved with genealogies and mythic tales harkens to the *ǫndvegissúlur* of the Viking Age dwelling. One account of Þórr carved on such a pole may be representative of a broader tradition of carvings of deities and perhaps mythological narratives on certain pillars. Another interesting parallel to Viking Age *ǫndvegissúlur* is the placement of offerings buried in the foundation holes of prominent carved slabs of the Maori meeting houses. As noted above, finds of items of value in certain post holes in Scandinavia are thought by archaeologists to be identifiers of power centers in rooms. Otherwise in terms of layout, sketches of Haida house interiors made by early explorers and photographs from the nineteenth century show interiors with platforms that are quite reminiscent of those described in the sagas and since displayed in numerous Viking Age halls reconstructed throughout Scandinavia. The Haida chief's seat has parallels to the Norse *ǫndvegi*, not only due to its status but also in that it was a rare separate furnishing rather than a built-in feature of the house, an indicator that it was an index of particular power.

Cosmology coupled with the notion of genealogy seen in the Haida meeting house is more geared toward lineage in the Maori house as the body of the ancestor. The building as body parts seen in the Maori meeting house is reminiscent of the cosmological myth of Ymir, the slain primordial ancestor of the giants. His body parts were used to form the material universe, such as the sea, the earth and the sky held up by the dwarfs named after the four directions. Other than the *dvergar* roof supports, this is not elaborated as such in the Viking Age dwelling, but the potential of mapping such a metaphor reinforces the idea that the Scandinavian Iron Age house was thought of as a microcosm of the mythic world. In particular, the Maori house begs further thought about how the ancestor may be represented in Nordic halls. The texts certainly point to such a reverence, as indicated by the poems *Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal*, which respectively trace the lineage of kings and jarls back to founding deities. Inside the hall, *bragar full* "libations" were ceremoniously drunk to the ancestors and the gods (Sundqvist 2014: 131). One

might wonder, then, if there were other building parts and concepts related to the hall as the body of ancestors that were not later relayed by Christian saga writers and scribes. Inserted in stanza 20 of the poem *Vǫlospá* the phrase *skáru á skíði*, "cut on a piece of wood" possibly alludes to the norns carving symbols representing fates. The poet could have been referring to runes or images, and there are numerous interpretations as to what sort of wooden member the *skíð* might be. It could have been intended as a stave or tablet (La Farge & Tucker 1992), or simply likened to the material of men - pieces of wood onto which lottery marks were inscribed (Dronke 1969: 40). Anne Holtsmark suggested the norns engraved some kind of calendar or marking of time (Holtsmark 1951). One theory is that such fate was cut directly on the wooden blocks that made up the original humans, Askr and Embla. Another enticing proposal is that iconography representing fate was carved on parts of the doorframe - perhaps the entryway to the primordial dwelling (Lindow 2015). The latter idea joins the prevalent Norse concept of fate with the original ancestors and the structural element of the building as a mythic portal. Certainly if we take the poem *Húsdrápa* as a historic reality, we have some evidence that halls were adorned by carvings representing the Æsir. Hákon jarl would have claimed to be a descendent of the Æsir as a legitimization of his role as a sacral and political leader, hence his rule. Yet, this does not explain the presence of the woodcarvings representing the gods in Óláfr pái's *eldhús* unless there was a broader understanding of the Æsir as, at least symbolically, representing common ancestry not only among the aristocrats, but also the yeomen and ranking families. Of course, at some point there would be a division between the elite who claimed to be descendants, owned property and ruled, and those who were subjects, not included and potentially oppressed by such relations. All the same, while there is little record of genealogical totem-like carvings among the extant Viking Age artifacts, it seems that such importance among the elite Norse concerning their ancestry was represented in their dwellings through mythic indices of wood carved images representing legendary heroes and the Æsir.

Sensual perception in Óláfr's *eldhús*

Here I return to the event of the recital of *Húsdrápa* in Óláfr's hall. The hypothetical central layout described above would also be practical for the purpose of oration, as in addressing a gathering, so that one end would not have been favored over the other. This is a matter concerning sensorial perception in the hall, which leads to a discussion of the senses of hearing and vision in regard to the particular attributes of this space. Research in the field of archaeoacoustics has demonstrated that certain ritual sites from antiquity may have been designed to enhance particular sound frequencies. These are primarily stone chambers, and what they have in common is a frequency resonance that would augment, for example, a chanting male voice (Lawson 1998: 116). In addition, certain frequencies dominant in the male voice, baritone in particular, have been demonstrated with EEG experiments[53] to evoke a response in areas of the brain related to a meditative state and enhancement of visualization (Debertolis, Tirelli, Fabrizio 2014: 60). It is possible that ancient ritual sites, such as Newgrange, Ireland, intentionally had been designed to exacerbate the resounding effect of certain frequencies and thereby enhance a ritual experience (Lawson 1998: 117).

[53] Electroencephalography (EEG) measures electrical activity of the brain along the scalp. It records wave-lengths, and the theta wavelength range is associated with reports of relaxed, meditative, and creative states.

However, in comparison, stone chambers are of course a quite different material and construction than the Viking Age wooden "hall". With the archaeoacoustic effects of the shape and construction of the hall there are other considerations involved in the design, ones that favor both enhancement and intelligibility. First, consider an outdoor event where a speaker addresses a crowd. If in an open area, the voice dissipates. It is interesting to think about the choice of the assembly place at Þingvellir, and how the speaking location of the "law rock" could have been situated in the landscape. (fig. 123) The rock faces surrounding that area would capture and distribute the sound waves, making the speaker's voice audible. Comparatively, in a closed room with angular walls constructed of flat surfaces there is an acute degree of reflection of the sound waves, and due to wavelength, particular frequencies are exaggerated. The result of such excessive and specific reverberation sounds disturbing. A balance between reflection and absorption is desirable for intelligibility. The wood paneling in the hall at Hjarðarholt would have provided highly reflective surfaces, but the woodcarvings would have served to diffuse the sound waves to make the acoustics more evenly distributed. In fact, wood surfaces with random patterns in relief and of uneven depth are used in modern sound studios in order to gain this effect. (fig. 124) Another technique used to soften harsh echoes is the strategic placement of fabric. This makes the saga writer's statement about the hall all the more interesting, *var þat svá vel smíðat, at þá þótti miklu skrautligra, er eigi váru tjǫldin uppi*. "It was so well crafted that it was thought more ornamental without the tapestries than with them" (*Laxdæla saga* 1934: 79, *Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997: 40). Perhaps in lieu of the tapestries and due to the carvings the hall "sounded" better than usual, as well. Add to this the common tapering and somewhat curved shape of the Viking Age hall: as noted in his 2006 publication, Graeme Lawson suggests the lack of parallel walls of this type of structure probably would have enhanced the intelligibility of speech and made it more audible toward the ends of the building. Namely, the truncated parabolic plan might well have provided two acoustical foci toward the narrower gable-ends of the hall improving sound dissemination (see also Lawson 1998: 126). So, unlike Neolithic and Bronze Age stone sites, where the amplification of indirect sound waves carrying the frequencies of the male voice may have been desirable for intensification of chanting, the design of the hall at Hjarðarholt would have enhanced similar sound waves for the purpose of oration and the recital of poetry. During a research trip in Iceland, I stood in the center of the reconstructed *salr* at Stöng and recited a quatrain. My travel partner stood at the end of the hall, and we agreed it was remarkable how clear and intelligible the sound of my voice carried and reached the corners of the room. The acoustic design of such halls may have been deliberate, and although it would be difficult to measure with all of the variables, the dimensions of the *eldhús* could have favored the particular resonance of Úlfr's male voice such that everyone at the gathering at Hjarðarholt would have had an enhanced reception of his composition.

Regarding the visual aspects of perception of the woodcarvings in the hall, sources of beams and pools of light are of the upmost consideration. Relief carvings may look rather flat in even, diffused light. However, in Viking Age dwellings that would not be the case. Rather, two types of directional light would have cast shadows and enhanced the sense of depth and plasticity. During daylight or moonlight hours, smoke holes at the ridge of the ceiling would cast directional beams into the hall from above. (fig. 125) These would move across according to the position of the heavenly bodies at any given time. Even if the light cast was indirect, it would still softly outline the edges of the relief and delineate the contours. Another source of direct

light could be from open doors. These beams would cast distinct shadows across the carvings and really bring out the details. It is also possible that some openings were along the edge of the walls where they met the ceiling (Byock 2001: 41). In *Brennu-Njáls saga* Gunnarr's house at Hlíðarendi is described as having windows along the roof beams - perhaps an anomaly, such openings would have allowed some additional daylight or reflected moonlight to pass into the room. These potential sources would have been directional, and in some cases straight across from the carvings. In that case the light would cast fewer shadows, and depending on the time of day create ambient light or more of a spot effect with the result of making the carvings visible. These exterior sources of light would provide a slow moving yet acute temporal variance of the appearance of the carvings. During hours when it was dark outside, fish-oil lamps were likely employed and distributed in strategic places along the hall. These would have created steady omni-directional pools of light, yet due to their distinct locations and depending on the angle in relation to the placement of the carvings they could have had a similar, but softer effect as the source coming from a door during daylight hours. In particular, the measurement of light intensity, i.e. the footcandles, would be considerably less from the lamp than that of daylight and cast soft shadows. Such a scenario most often would have been the case during the winter, when there were fewer daylight hours, such as at the wedding when Úlfr recited *Húsdrápa*. However, the light generated by the fire in the hearth would have really animated the carvings and made them come alive. This would, of course, depend on the amount of fuel and the size of the flames, but certainly the fire would have cast not only shadows on the carvings from below, but also the flicker would have danced upon the relief and lent a sense of motion. Add to this the mesmerizing effect of repeated patterns and orifices exacerbated by the depth of the shadows that drew the viewer in to the scene, and the result would have been an intense visual enhancement of the perceived mythic content.

So, in regard to the input of the senses there are many potential factors involved in evaluating the reception of the poem *Húsdrápa* in the hall at the wedding gathering. I also suggest that the sensory input interacted exponentially. For this, I first refer to the phenomenon of synesthesia: As described by Merleau-Ponty, our vision, hearing, and abilities to smell, taste and touch merge in various ways as we move our attention and focus on various elements in our surroundings. Within the experience of synesthesia there is a primary layer that precedes the division of the senses, where a crossover may occur (Merleau-Ponty 2006: 266). For example, in some instances people report to be able to "see" a sound or, as Halvard Lie wrote about this regarding skaldic poetry: it may be possible to "hear" a color during the recital of a poet (Lie 1982: 218).

It is interesting to consider synesthesia as an example of a cross over of the senses that could have occurred among the participants in the hall, but people who actually exhibit this mode of perception on a regular basis are rare. Ideasthesia is perhaps a more universal and useful model here. As described by Danko Nikolic, this model suggests that at the layer of reception, ideas and concepts associated with stimuli are also activated in order for the process of identification to occur. So, rather than the classic model of the brain deciphering sensory input and forming empirical recognition, pre-existing ideas are also involved in perception. How people experience an emotional response to art is an example of this phenomenon, in this case relevant to the visual perception of the woodcarvings and hearing the poem. It follows that sensory perception is associative and, at least in humans, integrated with the linguistic network in

the mind. This also helps illustrate how the crossover in metaphor is understood, when referents used are empirically quite different than the indices alluded to. Indeed, Úlfr's use of kennings is another factor in the perception of the stimuli in the hall. As I stress in previous sections, the metonymic imagery evoked by kennings could have produced an associative and hence paradigmatic reordering of symbols. In the process, implicit knowledge would have been brought forward and provided an impetus for broader understanding. Such an experience could have been evoked through the particular sensory stimuli present in the *eldhús*. Hence, one can imagine being there in the hall at that given point in time a core layer of experience prompted a process among the audience of the poem that allowed them to exponentially synthesize and grasp the mythic corpus (Gendlin 1962: 113-17).

Synthesis

I point to scholarship above that refers to certain Viking Age halls, *ǫndvegi*, and *ǫndvegissúlur* as loci imbued with power. As examples, Sundqvist notes how when a king or chieftain entered the high seat it may have been construed that he made specific contact with the divine world, and the *ǫndvegissúlur* acted as cosmic pillars - points of access to the mythic realm (Sundqvist 2014: 120). It is also stressed how the dwelling itself may have been understood as a microcosm of the mythic world through its structural elements and purposes. Taking this a step further, a focus of this study is how such power came to be expressed through these material indices as image carriers. If, as Sundqvist suggests, the god Óðinn sitting in Hliðskjálf was the prototype for the chieftain, his seat may be understood as the prototype for the *ǫndvegi,* and that is the material element in the equation. I suggest the woodcarvings were the key to unlocking the mysticism perceived in these objects by the participants in the cult, and that embodied agency can be measured both quantitatively and examined qualitatively. The former helps explain the closely packed coverage of iconography seen on many artifacts, as it seems it was thought the more densely decorated the more influence was gained over and through the image carrier. Hence, the more carvings the more powerful the object, and this would reflect on the status of the patron gained through his or her association with the carved material entity. Qualitatively, the mystique would have been enhanced by the active and passive capabilities of the image carriers - the artist's skill in bringing the mythic prototypes into made things with numinous attributes, and the recipients as spectators with their understanding of the indices roles in social relations. On a material level, the significance of the coverage of the carvings on the carriers may be likened to the analysis of the *dyrehodestolper* "animal head posts" in section 1.1. Namely, the inanimate objects may have been seen as "bound", but the swarming, interlocking biomorphic creatures that are engraved on its body were intended as liminal figures that, like a porous membrane, served as guardians to portals which allowed the image carrier to serve as a vehicle to cross the invisible, mystical boundary to what was conceived as an "other world". The stylized serpents, birds and biomorphic figures that loop in and around and clutch each other were likely seen to bind and unbind, and hence allow and/or disallow entry into mythic realms. The seat, the pillars, and here I would like to emphasize the house itself, were understood as agents in the communication between worlds. This helps explain how the *eldhús* described by Úlfr, the wood-carved panels depicting mythical scenes, with their representations of the gods surrounded by these mythic creatures turned the structure into a sacral space linked to the macrocosm of Norse mythology through material culture.

The topography at the Laxá valley makes it likely that the *eldhús* would have an east-west orientation. I verified this by visiting the present day site of the farm, which is still called Hjarðarholt. The current owners, Ágúst G. Pétursson and Björk Baldursdóttir were very hospitable. Björk was born on the farm. I explained to her my mission to walk around and find a possible site for Óláfr pái's *eldhús*, and I asked her if she had any ideas. Indeed, she described a spot where the horses had grazed down a few years earlier, and she thought it looked like an old foundation that could have been the location of the Viking Age dwelling. So, she joined us on a walk around there, and it does look like a likely spot. (fig. 126) The site is further down toward the river from the existing farmhouse on a gentle slope with an expansive level area that would accommodate the size of the hall. I found some large stones about 3 fathoms apart, but most of the area is overgrown with large mounds of clumps of grass covering whatever may be below. (fig. 127) This level area is roughly parallel with the river, perpendicular to the slope, as one might expect in a river valley. Hence, if it were once a spot for the foundation, the length of a building basically would have had an east/west orientation toward the fjord. Even if this is not the exact spot, all the potential sites in the surrounding area that would be level enough to build have the same orientation. (fig. 128) In fact, there are smaller level areas parallel to the site which would have served well for the original farmhouse and outbuildings.

If the carvings in the Viking Age *eldhús* were placed centrally on the long north wall, they would have been most visible on the paneling of the ceiling above the high seat and benches. Following Finnur's intuitive ordering of the quatrains, as the sun rises in the east, a depiction of stanza 2 would have been appropriate as it has been interpreted as an origin myth. (fig. 129) It follows that the depictions of Þórr would be centered. Arguably, he was a prominent object of cult veneration in Iceland at the time. Additionally, the myth of Þórr's fishing expedition portrayed him in one of many rites of passage - facing the challenges of life, which was so apt for life on the Icelandic farm during the era. (fig. 130) To the west toward the setting sun, and moving right to left as in other examples of Viking Age art, Baldr's funeral procession would have continued a representation of the cosmological cycle. As the eye was led to the pyre, it marked a transition in the iconographic display as it represented the temporal expression of the myth and a hint of promise for the process to continue - albeit in a flaming transformation. (figures 131, 132) Likely there were other myths carved where the ceiling met the walls, perhaps wrapping like a frieze extended around the hall. That would have led one back to the representation of stanza 2, where the cycle began afresh. As it is depicted in my hypothetical reconstruction, the layout is asymmetric, as the procession stretches out to the west. Additional, unknown tales carved on the east side of the *ǫndvegi* could have balanced out the visual display of the programme.

Still, these are the carvings that must have been visible to Úlfr as he ambled along the central portion of the *eldhús*. The acoustics of the room would have made his recital both intelligible and resound in both directions down the hall. As he made verse about the mythic imagery depicted on the paneling, the content, rhythm and cadence of his delivery, and also possibly the enhanced frequencies of his voice, can be described as a guided meditation. For those near enough and privileged to see, his kennings would have drawn the viewer to salient, mesmerizing features of the carvings, and the ideas generated by the tropes in combination with the aural and visual experience would have provided the participants a profound perception of, and portal to, a Norse macrocosm within the microcosm of Óláfr's hall.

References and Bibliography

Abram, David. 1996. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Pantheon books.

Adam of Bremen. 2002. *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*. tr. Francis J. Tschan. New York: Columbia University Press.

Adamus: Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum. Electronic edition of Latin text with preface of G.Waitz. http://hbar.phys.msu.ru/gorm/chrons/bremen.htm. Accessed November 28, 2014.

Ágrip. 2007. Íslenzk fornrit XXIX bindi. Bjarni Einarsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Ament, H. 2005. Tierornamentik, Germanische. In Beck, H. & Müller, R. eds., Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde. XXX. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. pp. 586-597.

Andersson, Theodore M. 1988. Lore and Literature in a Scandinavian Conversion Europe. *Idee, Gestalt, Geschichte: Festschrift Klaus von See: Studien Zur Europäischen Kulturtradition*. ed. Gerd Wolfgang Weber. Odense: Odense University Press. pp. 261-284.

Arrow Odd: A Medieval Novel. 1970. trs. Paul Edwards and Hermann Pálsson. New York: New York University Press.

Axboe, Morten. 2007. *Brakteatstudier (Studies in Gold Bracteates)*. Series: Nordiske Fortidsminder, Ser. B, Vol. 25. Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab.

Bagge, Sverre. 1991. *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bagge, Sverre and Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide. 2007. The Kingdom of Norway. *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1200*. ed. Nora Berend. Cambridge University Press.

Bailey, Richard N. 1980. *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England*. London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd.

Bately, Janet & Anton Englert, eds. 2007. *Ohthere's Voyages*. Roskilde, Denmark: Viking Ship Museum.

Bek-Pedersen, Karen. 2011. *The Norns in Old Norse Mythology*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.

Belting, Hans. 1994. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*. University of Chicago Press.

Berend, Nora. 2007. Introduction. *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*. Nora Berend, ed. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bertell, Maths. 2003. *Tor och den nordiska åskan: Förställningar kring världsaxeln*. Stockholms universitet.

Bertelsen, Lise Gjedssø. 2006. On Öpir's Picture. Stoklund, Marie; Nielsen, Michael Lerche et al. *Runes and Their Secrets: Studies in Runology*. University of Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Bill, Jan. 1997. Ships and Seamanship. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings*. ed. Peter Sawyer. New York: Oxford University Press.

Birkeli, Emil. 1932. *Det gamle ondvege i religionshistorisk belysning*. Stavanger: Dreyers Grafiske Anstalt.

Birley, A. R. 1999. tr. *Agricola and Germany*. Oxford University Press.

Blom, Grethe Authén. 1997. *Hellig Olavs by Middelalder til 1537*. Trondheims Historie 997-1997, Bind 1. Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

Bonde, Niels and Arne Emil Christensen. 1993. Dendrochronological dating of the Viking Age ship burials at Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune, Norway. Antiquity 67: 575-83.

Brennu-Njáls saga. 2010. Íslenzk fornrit XII bindi. Einar Ól Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Brink, Stefan. 2013. Myth and Ritual in Pre-Christian Scandinavian Landscape. *Sacred sites and holy places: exploring the sacralization of landscape*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

Brøgger, A.W. 1917. Vestfoldskolen. *Osebergfundet: bind i*. Brøgger, A.W., Hj. Falk, Haakon Schetelig, eds. Kristiania: A. W. Brøggers Boktrykkeri A/S.

Bugge, Sophus. 1889. *Studier over de nordiske Gude- og Heltesagns Oprindelse*, I. Christiania: A. Cammermeyer.

Byock, Jesse. 2001. *Viking Age Iceland*. London: Penguin Books.

Chandler, Daniel. 2002. *Semiotics: The Basics*. London: Routledge.

Christensen, Arne Emil, Margareta Nockert. 2006. *Osebergfunnet: bind iv, Tekstilene*. Oslo: PDC Tangen.

Christensen, Tom. 2010. Lejre beyond the legend – the archaeological evidence. *Settlement and Coastal Research in the Southern North Sea Region*, vol. 33, Rahden/Westf. pp. 237-254.

Christiansen, Arne, Anne Stine Ingstad, Bjørn Myhre. 1992. *Osebergdronningens grav: vår arkeologiske nasjonalskatt i nytt lys*. Oslo: Chr. Schibsteds Forlag A/S.

Cleasby, Richard and Gudbrand Vigfusson. 1969. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Clunies Ross, Margaret. 2014. Royal Ideology in Early Scandinavia: A Theory Versus the Texts. Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Vol. 113, Number 1. University of Illinois Press. pp. 18-33.

--- 2007. Stylistic and Generic Definers of the Old Norse Skaldic Ekphrasis. Viking and Medieval Scandinavia. Vol. 3. Brepols Publishers.

--- 2005. *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer.

--- 1998. Land-Taking and Text-Making in Medieval Iceland. *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles, eds. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 159-84.

--- 1989. Two of Þórr's Great Fights according to Hymiskviða. Leeds Studies in English. n.s. 20. pp. 7-27.

--- 1994. *Prolonged Echoes vol. 1: The Myths*. Odense University Press.

Cöllen, Sebastian. 2011. *Der rätselhafte Gott: Heimdallr im Licht altnordischer Vorstellungen von Ahnen und Ordnung*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet.

--- 2007. The Origin of the Fire in North Germanic Mythology. A N F 122, pp. 59- 78.

Collingwood, W. G. 1927. *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age*. London: Faber & Gwyer.

Complete Sagas of Icelanders, Vol. I-V. 1997. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Cubbon, A.M. 1996. *The Art of Manx Crosses*. Isle of Man: Manx National Heritage.

Davidson, H.R. Ellis. 1988. Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe. Syracuse University Press.

--- 1964. *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.

Davidson, H.R. Ellis & Peter Fischer. 1980. *Saxo Grammaticus: The History of the Danes, Books 1-X*. Volumes I&II. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer.

Debertolis, Paolo, Giancarlo Tirelli, Fabrizio Monti. 2014. Systems of Acoustic Resonance at Ancient Sites and Related Brain Activity: Preliminary Results of Research. *Archaeoacoustics: The Archaeology of Sound: Publication of Proceedings from the 2014 Conference in Malta*. ed. Linda C. Eneix. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Domeij Lundborg, M. 2006. Bound animal bodies. Ornamentation and skaldic poetry in the process of Christianization. *Old Norse religion in long-term perspectives*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Dronke, Ursula. 1969. *Poetic Edda II*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

DuBois, Thomas. 1999. *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Dumézil, Georges. 1959. The Drama of the World: Balder, Hoder, Loki. tr. Alan Toth. *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press. pp. 62-65.

Durkheim, Emile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Originally published in 1912. tr. Karen E. Fields. New York: The Free Press. 46 – 54.

Edda: die Lieder des Codex regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern. 1983. eds. Hans Kuhn & Gustav Neckel. Heidelberg: Carl Winter.

Edda. 1995. Snorri Sturluson. tr. Anthony Faulkes. London: Everyman J. M. Dent.

Egils saga. 2012. Íslenzk fornrit II bindi. Sigurðr Nordal gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Egil's saga. 1997. tr. Bernard Scudder. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. I. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Eiríks saga rauða. 1985. Íslenzk fornrit IV bindi. Einar Ól. Sveinsson og Matthías Þórðarson gáfu út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Eisenschmidt, S. 2006. Beck, H. & Müller, R. eds., Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde. XXXIII. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. pp. 73-78.

Eliade, Mircea. 1956. *The Forge and the Crucible*. tr. Stephen Corrin. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Eyrbyggja saga. 1985. Íslenzk fornrit IV bindi. Einar Ól. Sveinsson og Matthías Þórðarson gáfu út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Fagrskinna, a Catalogue of the Kings of Norway. 2003. tr. Alison Finlay. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Fagrskinna. 2007. Íslenzk fornrit XXIX bindi. Bjarni Einarsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Falk, Hjalmar. 1913. Begravelsesterminologien i den oldnorsk-islandske litteratur. *Festskrift Til Professor Alf Torp Paa Hans 60 Aars Fødseldag 27. September 1913*. Kristiania: H. Aschehoug & co. (W. Nygaard). pp. 1-18.

Finnur Jónsson. 1966. *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquæ Linguæ Septentrionalis. Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*. København: Atlas Bogtryk.

--- 1908. *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning 800-1200 B*. København: Gyldendalske Boghandel.

Flateyjarbok: En Samling af Norske Konge-Sagaer med Indskudte Mindre Fortællinger. 1860. Guðbrandr Vigfússon, Carl Rikard Unger, eds. I. Bind. Christiania: P.T. Mallings Forlagsboghandel. (scanned and reproduced by Bibliobazarr)

Fontenrose, Joseph. 1980. *Python: a study of Delphic myth and its origins*. University of California Press. pp. 153–154.

Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda I-III. 1943-44. Guðni Jónsson og Bjarni Vilhjálmsson sáu um útgáfuna. Reykjavík : Bókaútgáfan Forni.

Fóstbræðra saga. 1943. Íslensk fornrit VI. Bindi. *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag.

Frank, Roberta. 1978. *Old Norse Court Poetry: The* Drottkvætt *Stanza*. Islandica XLII. Ithica and London: Cornell University Press.

Frazer, James George. 1913. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Third Edition, Vol. 11 of 12. Part 7: Balder the Beautiful. The Fire-Festivals of Europe and the Doctrine of the External Soul. Vol. 2 of 2. New York and London: MacMillan and Co.

Freud, Sigmund. 1950. *Totem and Taboo*. tr. Peter Gay. New York: Routledge.

Friðriksson, Adolf and Orri Vésteinsson. 2003. Creating a Past: A Historiography of the Settlement of Iceland. *Contact, Continuity and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic*. James H. Barrett, ed. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols. pp. 139-61.

Friðriksson, Adolf. 1994. *Sagas and Popular Antiquarianism in Icelandic Archaeology*. Aldershot, GB: Avebury.

Fuglesang, Signe Horn. 2007. Ekphrasis and Surviving Imagery in Viking Scandinavia. Viking and Medieval Scandinavia Vol. 3. Brepols Publishers.

Færeyinga saga. 2006. Íslenzk fornrit XXV bindi. Óláfur Halldórsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Færeyinga saga. Icelandic saga database. http://sagadb.org/files/html/faereyinga_saga.html. accessed: December 1, 2015.

Gade, Kari Ellen. 2012. *Poetry from the King's Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*. General Introduction sections 3.2 and 4. Diana Whaley, ed. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols. pp. xliv-lxx.

--- 1995. *The Structure of Old Norse* Dróttkvætt *Poetry*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Geijer, Agnes. 1979. *A History of Textile Art*. London: Pasold Research Foundation, Sotheby Parke Bernet.

Gell, Alfred. 1999. The technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology. *The art of anthropology : essays and diagrams*. London; New Brunswick, NJ: Athlone Press.

--- 1998. *Art and Agency: an Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gendlin, Eugene T. 1962. *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Gísla saga Súrssonar. 1943. Íslensk fornrit VI. Bindi. *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag.

Gokstad Finds, The. 2012. UiO: Museum of Cultural History. http://www.khm.uio.no/english/visit-us/viking-ship-museum/exhibitions/gokstad/. Accessed 26 Feb. 2014.

Graham-Cambell. 2013. *Viking Art*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Graham-Campbell, James and David Kidd. 1980. *The Vikings*. London: British Museum Publications, Ltd.

Grieg, Sigurd. 1928. Kongsgaarden. *Osebergfundet: bind ii*. Brøgger, A.W., Hj. Falk, Haakon Schetelig, eds. Kristiania: A. W. Brøggers Boktrykkeri A/S.

Guðrún Harðardóttir. 2010. A View on the Preservation History of the Last Judgement Panels from Bjarnastaðahlíð, and some Speculations on the Medieval Cathedrals at Hólar. The Nordic Apocalypse. eds. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen. pdf. 2010.

Gunnell, Terry. 2001. *Hof,* Halls, *Goðar* and Dwarves: An Examination of the Ritual Space in the Pagan Icelandic Hall. Cosmos: The Journal of the Traditional Cosmology Society. Volume 17 Number 1. June 2001: 3-36.

Gunnes, E. 1976. Rikssamling og kristning 800-1177. *Norges historie*, bind 2. Oslo: J. W. Cappelens Forlag A.S.

Gurevich, Elena A. 1992. Þulur in Skáldskaparmál: An Attempt at Skaldic Lexicology. Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi/Archives for Scandinavian Philology, 107, pp. 35-52.

Hall, Alaric. 2007. *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England. Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity*. Anglo-Saxon Studies 8. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.

Hall, Richard. 2007. *The World of the Vikings*. New York: Thames & Hudson.

Hallfræðar saga 1939. Íslenzk fornrit VIII. bindi. Einar Ól Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Hastrup, Kirsten. 1985. *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland: An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change,* Volume 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Háttatal. 1991. Snorri Sturluson. *Edda*. ed. Anthony Faulkes. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hauck, Karl. 1986. *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit*: 2,2 Ikonographischer Katalog (IK 2, Tafeln). Munchen: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

--- 1978. Brakteatenikonologie. In Beck, H. & Müller, R. eds., Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde. III. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. pp. 361-401.

Hauglid, Roar. 1976. *Norske Stavkirker: bygningshistorisk bakgrunn og utvikling*. Oslo: Dreyers Forlag.

Hedeager, Lotte. 2011. *Iron Age Myth and Materiality: An Archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400-1000*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hedenstierna-Jonson, Charlotte. 2006. Borre style metalwork in the material culture of the Birka warriors: an apotropaic symbol. Fornvännen 2006(101):5, s. [312]-322 : ill.

Heimskringla. 1964. Snorri Sturluson. tr. Lee Hollander. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Heimskringla I. 1979. Íslenzk fornrit XXVI bindi. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Heimskringla I. 2011. Snorri Sturluson. trs. Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London.

Heimskringla II. 2002. Íslenzk fornrit XXVII bindi. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Heimskringla III. 2002. Íslenzk fornrit XXVIII bindi. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Helmbrecht, Michaela. 2011. *Wirkmächtige Kommunikationsmedien: Menschenbilder der Vendel- und Wikingerzeit und ihre Kontexte*. Acta Archaeologica Lundensia Series prima in 4°, No. 30. Lunds Universitet.

Helms, Mary W. 1993. *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade and Power*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Herschend, Frands and Dorthe Kaldal Mikkelsen. 2003. The main building at Borg (I:1). *Borg in Lofoten*. eds. Gerd Stamsø Munch, Olav Sverre Johansen, Else Roesdahl. Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press.

Herschend, Frands. 1997. *Livet i Hallen*. Institutionen för arkeologi och antik historia, Uppsala universitet.

Historia Norwegie. 2003. eds. Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen. tr. Peter Fisher. København: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Hohler, Erla B. 1992. Wood-Carving. *From Viking to Crusader: Scandinavia and Europe 800-1200*. eds. Else Roesdahl, David M Wilson. New York: Rizzoli.

Holmqvist, Wilhelm, et al. 1981. "Högsäte" *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder*, 22 vols. Copenhagen. 7:290-94

Holtsmark, Anne. 1951. Skáro á skíði: Til Tolkningen av Voluspá str. 20. Maal og minne 1951: 81-89.

Hougen, Bjørn. 2006. *Osebergfunnet: Bind iv. Tekstilene*. eds. Arne Emil Christensen and Margareta Nockert. Oslo: Kulturhistorisk Museum, Universitetet i Oslo.

Houlk, Per. 2006. The Oseberg Ship Burial, Norway: New Thoughts on the Skeletons from the Grave Mound. European Journal of Archaeology. Sage Publishing. Vol. 9(2-3): 185-210.

Hyde, Lewis. 1998. *Trickster Makes the World*. New York: North Point Press.

Hörður Ágústsson. 1989. *Dómsdagur og helgir menn á Hólum*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag.

Íslendingabók. 1986. (& *Landnámabók*). 1986. Íslenzk fornrit I. bindi. Jakob Benediktsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Jacobsen Thorkild. 1968. The Battle Between Marduk and Tiamat. Journal of the American Oriental Society. Vol. 88, No. 1. Jan. - Mar., 1968 pp. 104-108.

Jesch, Judith. 1991. *Women in the Viking Age*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.

Jómsvíkinga saga. 1962. tr. N. F. Blake. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.

--- 1874. utgifven af Gustaf Cederschiöld efter skinnboken 7, 4to å Kungl. Biblioteket i Stockhom.

Jonaitis, Aldona and Aaron Glass. 2010. *The Totem Pole*. University of Washington Press.

Jones, Gwen. 1984. *A History of the Vikings*, second edition. Oxford University Press.

Jóns saga helga. 1981 ed. Guðni Jónsson. Biskupa sögur II Hólarbyskupar. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgafan. 1-74.

Jørgensen, Lars. 2014. Norse Religion and Ritual Sites in Scandinavia in the 6th-11th Centuries. Mittelalterstudien. ed. Kerstin Hofmann, et al. Band 29. Paderborn.

Karnell, Maria Herlin. 2012. Gotland's picture stones: bearers of an enigmatic legacy. Gotländskt arkiv, v. 84. Visby: Gotland Museum.

Keithahn, Edward L. 1963. *Monuments in Cedar*. Seattle: Superior Publishing.

Kermode, P. M. C. 1907. *Manx Crosses*. London: Bemrose & Sons Limited.

Kessler, Herbert A. 1989. Old St. Peter's and Church Decoration in Vedieval Latium. *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*. ed. William Tronzo. Villa Spelman Colloquia – Vol. 1.

Kildal, Kristian. 1961. *Ornamentale og Abstrakte Uttrykksformer i Norsk Tre- og Metallkunst*. Oslo: Grøndahl & Søns Forlag.

Kjalnesinga saga. 1959. Íslenzk Fornrit XIV Bindi. Jóhannes Halldórsson gaf út. Reykjavík: hið Íslenzka fornritafélag.

Kopár, Lilla. 2012. *Gods and Settlers: The Iconography of Norse Mythology in Anglo-Scandinavian Sculpture*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

Kormak's saga. 1997. tr. Rory McTurk. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. I. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Kormáks saga. 1939. Íslenzk Fornrit VIII. bindi. Einar Ól Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Krafft, Sofie. 1956. *Pictorial Weavings from the Viking Age*. Oslo: Dreyers Forlag.

Kristján Eldjárn. *Icelandic Art*. 1957. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

--- 1953. Carved Panels from Flatatunga, Iceland. Acta Archaeologica XXIV: 81-101.

Kristni saga. 1953. Íslendinga sögur. Fyrsta bindi. *Landssaga og landnám*. Guðni Jónsson bjó til prentunar. Íslendingasagnaútgáfan.

Kristoffersen, Siv. 2010. Half beast-half man: hybrid figures in animal art. World Archaeology. Humans and Animals. Vol. 42(2): 261-272.

Krohn, Kaarle. 1905. Lemminkäinens tod < Christi > Balders tod. in Zeitschrift für Finnisch-Ugrische Sprach- und Volkskunde unter Mitwirkung von Fachgenossen herausgegeben von E. N. Setala und Kaarle Krohn. V Bandes V. Helsingfors: Druckerei der Finnischen Litteratur-Gesellschaft. pp. 83-138

Kuhn, Hans. Þórður hreða in Saga and *Rímur*. 2006. *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature: Sagas and the British Isles; Preprint Papers of The 13th International Saga Conference; Durham and York, 6th-12th August, 2006*, ed. John McKinnell, David Ashurst and Donata Kick, 1: 524-532. Durham: The Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Durham University, 2006.

Kusch, Eugen. 1964. *Alte Kunst in Skandinavien*. Germany: Verlag Hans Carl, Nürnberg.

La Farge, Beatrice and John Tucker. 1992. *Glossary to the Poetic Edda*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, George and Mark Turner. 1989. *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. University of Chicago Press.

Landnámabók (& *Íslendingabók*). 1986. Íslenzk fornrit I. bindi. Jakob Benediktsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Lawson, Graeme. 2006. Medieval Stone Buildings, Timber Halls and the Problem of the Lyre. in *Archaeoacoustics*. Chris Scarre, Graeme Lawson, eds. University of Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

--- 1998. Mounds, megaliths, music and mind: some thoughts on the acoustical properties and purposes of archaeological spaces. Archaeological Review from Cambridge. Vol. 15:1.

Laxdæla saga. 1934. Íslenzk fornrit V. bindi. Einar Ól Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Lebecq, Stéphane. 2007. Communication and exchange in northwest Europe. tr. Ian Wood. *Ohthere's Voyages*. Janet Bately & Anton Englert, eds. Roskilde, Denmark: The Viking Ship Museum. 150 - 56.

Liberman, Anatoly. 2004. Some Controversial Aspects of the Myth of Baldr. *Alvíssmál* 11: 17-54.

Lidén, Hans-Emil. 1969. From Pagan Sanctuary to Christian Church, the Excavation of Mære Church in Trøndelag. Norwegian Archaeological Review. Vol. 2: 25-32.

Lie, Hallvard. 1982. *Om sagakunst og skaldskap. Utvalgte avhandlinger*. Øvre Ervik : Alvheim & Eide.

Lindholm, Dan. 1969. *Stave Churches in Norway*. tr. Stella and Adam Bittleston. London: Rudolf Steiner Press.

Lindow, John. 2001. *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*. Oxford University Press.

--- 1997. *Murder and Vengeance Among the Gods: Baldr in Scandinavian Mythology*. Helsinki: FF Communications No. 262.

--- 1975. *Comitatus, Individual and Honor: Studies in North Germanic Institutional Vocabulary*. University of California Publications in Linguistics. Vol. 83. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

--- 1975. Riddles, Kennings, and the Complexity of Skaldic Poetry. Scandinavian Studies 47: 311-27.

--- 2015. *Skáru á skíði*: Vǫluspá 20 and the Fixing of Fate. pdf.

Lindqvist, Sune. 1941. *Gotlands Bildsteine* I. Stockhom: Wahlström and Widstrand.

Lucas, Gavin, ed. with numerous contributors. 2009. *Hofstadir: excavations of a Viking Age feasting hall in north-eastern Iceland*. Institute of Archaeology Reykjavik Monograph 1. Reykjavik: Fornleifastofnun Íslands.

MacDonald, George F. 1996. *Haida Art*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

--- 1983: *Haida Monumental Art*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Magerøy, Ellen Marie. 1961. Flatatunga problems. Acta Archaeologica, Vol. XXXII, København pp. 153–172.

--- 1953. Tilene fra Mødrufell i Eyjafjord. Viking: Tidsskrift for norrøn arkeologi. XVII. pp. 43-61.

Magnússon, Magnús, Rosemonde Nairac. 1973. *Viking expansion westwards*. London: Bodley Head.

Marold, Edith. 2012. *Poetry from the King's Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*. General Introduction section 5. Diana Whaley, ed. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols. pp. lxix-xc.

--- 2000. Die Húsdrápa als kosmologisches Gedicht. [PDF] from sydney.edu.au accessed: June 21, 2015.

--- 2000. Kosmogonische Mythen in der Húsdrápa des Úlfr Uggason. In: Studies Gerd Wolfgang Weber pp. 281-292.

McKinnell, John. 2002. Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr and *Hyndluljóð*. Mythological Women: Studies in Memory of Lotte Motz. R. Simek and W. Heizmann, eds. Wien: Fassbaender.

Meletinskij, Eleazar. 1974. Scandinavian Mythology as a System. Journal of symbolic anthropology. 1:43-58 (1973) 2:57-78 (1974).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2006. *Phenomenology of Perception*. tr. Colin Smith. London and New York: Routledge Classics.

Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben. 2002. Þórr's Fishing Expedition. *The Poetic Edda*. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington, eds. London: Routledge. pp. 119-137.

Miller, William Ian. 2008. *Audun and the Polar Bear: Luck, Law, and Largesse in a Medieval Tale of Risky Business*. Boston: Brill.

Montelius, Oscar. 1869. *Remains from the Iron Age of Scandinavia*. Stockholm: Ivar Hæggström.

Munch, Gerd Stamsø. 2003a. Jet, amber, bronze, silver and gold artifacts. *Borg in Lofoten*. eds. Gerd Stamsø Munch, Olav Sverre Johansen, Else Roesdahl. Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press.

---- 2003b. Borg as a pagan centre. *Borg in Lofoten*. eds. Gerd Stamsø Munch, Olav Sverre Johansen, Else Roesdahl. Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press.

Mundal, Else. 1974. *Fylgjemotiva i Norrøn Literature*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Munksgaard, E. 1978. Brakteaten. In Beck, H. & Müller, R. eds., Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde. III. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. pp. 337-341.

Möðruvallabók: AM 132 Fol. 1987. ed. Andrea Van Arkel-de Leeuw van Weenen, 2 vols. Leiden: Brill.

Neckel, Gustav. 1920. *Die Überlieferungen Vom Gotte Balder*. Dortmund: Fr. Wilh. Ruhfus.

Neiß, Michael. 2009. A Matter of Standards: Iconography as a Quality Indicator for Viking Age Brooches. Lund Archaeological Review 15 (2009), pp. 127-148.

--- 2007. The Ornamental Echo of Oðinn's Cult. *Cultural Interaction Between East and West*. eds. Ulf Fransson, Marie Svedin, Sophie Bergerbrant, Fedir Androshchuk.

Njal's Saga. 1960. trs. Magnus Magnusson & Hermann Pálsson. London: Penguin Books.

Njal's Saga. 1997. tr. Robert Cook. *Complete Sagas of Icelanders*. Vol. III. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Nordanskog, Gunnar. 2006. *Föreställd hedendom: Tidigmedeltida skandinaviska kyrkportar i forskning och historia*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Nordberg, Andreas. 2006. *Jul, disting och förkyrklig tideräkning: Kalendrar och kalendariska riter i det förkristna Norden*. Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur.

Nordeide, Sæbjørg Walaker. 2011. *The Viking Age as a period of religious transformation: the Christianization of Norway from AD 560 - 1150/1200*. (Studies in Viking and medieval Scandinavia ; v. 2) Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers.

--- 2011. Death in Abundance - Quickly! The Oseberg ship burial in Norway. Acta Archaeologica vol. 82: 7-15.

Norrman, Lena Elisabeth. 2005. Visual Poetry, Weaving Meaning: Micro narratives in the Nordic Oral Tradition. Viking and Medieval Scandinavia I. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers.

North, Richard. 2007. Image and Ascendancy in Úlfr's Húsdrápa. *Text, image, interpretation: studies in Anglo-Saxon literature and its insular context in honour of Eamonn O Carragain*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers.

Nylén, Erik and Jan Peder Lamm. 1988. *Stones, Ships and Symbols*. Stockholm: Gidlunds Bokförlag.

Näsman, Ulf and Else Roesdahl. 2003. Scandinavian and European perspectives - Borg I:1. *Borg in Lofoten*. eds. Gerd Stamsø Munch, Olav Sverre Johansen, Else Roesdahl. Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press.

Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar eptir Odd Munk Snorrason. 2006. Íslenzk Fornrit XXV. bindi. Óláfur Halldórsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Olsen, O. 1969. 'Comments' (to H.-E Lidén). Norwegian Archaeological Review. Vol. 2, Issue 1: 25-27.

Pering, Birger. 1941. *Heimdall; religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Verständnis der altnordischen Götterwelt*. Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup.

Perkins, Richard. 2001. *Thor the Wind-Raiser and the Eyrarland Image*. University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research.

Petersen, Th. 1934. Lade i Trøndelagen, belyst ved oldtidsminner og oldfund: foredrag på landsmøtet til landslaget for bygde- og byhistorie på Lade 17.-19. aug. 1934. Oslo.

Poetic Edda. 1996. tr. Carolyne Larrington. New York: University of Oxford Press.

Poole, Russell. 2013. Scholars and Skalds: The Northwards Diffusion of Carolingian Poetic Fashions. Gripla XXIV. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnüssonar í íslenskum fræðum.

--- 1991. *Viking Poems on War and Peace: A Study in Skaldic Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Price, Neil. 2006. What's in a name? *Old Norse religion in long-term perspectives*. eds. Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, Catharina Raudvere. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Prologue and *Gylfaginning*. 2005. Snorri Sturluson. *Edda*. ed. Anthony Faulkes. University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research.

Rácz, István & Peter Anker. 1970. *Medieval Norwegian Art*. Oslo: J.W. Cappelens Forlag.

Rajewsky, Irina O. 2005. Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality. Intermédialités: Historie et Théorie des Arts, des Lettres et des Techniques, 6, (2005 Autumn): p. 43-64.

Refrew, Colin and Paul Bahn. 1991. *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice*. New York: Thames and Hudson.

Rig-Veda. 1896. tr. Ralph T.H. Griffith. Republished 2008 by Forgotten Books.

Roy, Carrie. 2009. Practical Fastenings of the Supernatural. Viking and Medieval Scandinavia (2009) 177-212.

Rudbek, Olof. 1679. *Atlantica*. Uppsala: Henricus Curio S. R. M. & Academiæ Upsal. Bibliopola. http://hdl.handle.net/2077/33512. last visited 10/20/2015.

Rydberg, Viktor. 2004. *Investigations into Germanic Mythology* Volume II. The Proto Indo-European origin of the Baldur myth. Tr. William P. Reaves: http://www.germanicmythology.com/ugm2/UGM2TowardsBaldurMyth.pdf. last visited 10/20/2015

Rønne, A. P. 2012. Horg, hov og ve-et førkristent kultanlæg på Ranheim i Sør-Trøndelag. PDF accessed April 8, 2014. See also, Adoranten volum 2011.

Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins Vitra. 1960. eds. Sigurðr Nordal & G. Turville-Petre. tr. Christopher Tolkien. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd.

Saga of Gisli. 1963. tr. George Johnston. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Saga of the Jómsvíkings. 1955. tr. Lee Hollander. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Saga of the People of Eyri. 1997. tr. Judy Quinn. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. V. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Saga of the People of Laxardal. 1997. tr. Keneva Kunz. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. V. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Saga of the People of Vatnsdal. 1997. tr. Andrew Wawn. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. IV. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Saga of the Sworn Brothers. 1997. tr. Martin S. Regal. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. II. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Saga of Thord Menace. 1997. tr. Katrina C. Attwood. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. III. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Scheller, Robert W. 1995. *Exemplum: Model-Book Drawings and the Practice of Artistic Transmission in the Middle Ages (ca. 900 - ca. 1470)*. tr. Michael Hoyle. Amsterdam University Press.

Schier, Kurt. 1976. Die Húsdrápa von Úlfr Uggason und die bildliche Überlieferung altnordischer Mythen. *Minjar og Menntir*. Rekjavik Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs.

--- 1963: Die Erdschöpfung aus dem Urmeer und die Kosmogonie der Völospá. In: Märchen, Mythos, Dichtung. Festschrift zum 90. Geb. F. v. d. Leyens. eds. H. Kuhn und K. Schier. München.

Schjødt, Jens Peter. 2010. Ideology of the Ruler in Pre-Christian Scandinavia: Mythical and Ritual Relations. *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia 6*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepolis Publishers.

Schmeidler, B. ed. 1917: Adam von Bremen, *Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte*. *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae historicis recusi*. Hanover and Leipzig: Hahn.

Schulz, Katja. 2004. *Riesen: Von Wissenshütern und Wildnisbewohnern in Edda und Saga*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter

Selma Jónsdóttir. 1959. *An 11th Century Byzantine Last Judgement in Iceland*. Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafélagið.

Shetelig, Haakon. 1920. Vestfoldskolen. *Osebergfundet: bind iii*. Brøgger, A.W., Hj. Falk, Haakon Schetelig, eds. Kristiania: A. W. Brøggers Boktrykkeri A/S.

Simek, Rudolf. 1993. *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*. tr. Angela Hall. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer.

Simmons, D. R. 1985. *Whakairo: Maori Tribal Art*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Simrock, Karl. 1864. *Handbuch der deutschen mythologie*. Bonn: Adolf Marcus.

Sindbæk, Søren M. review of: Gavin Lucas (ed.) with numerous contributors. 2009. *Hofstadir: excavations of a Viking Age feasting hall in north-eastern Iceland*. Institute of Archaeology Reykjavik Monograph 1. Reykjavik: Fornleifastofnun Íslands, in Antiquity: A Review of World Archaeology. http://antiquity.ac.uk/reviews/sindbaek329.html Accessed: July, 2015.

Skáldskaparmál I, II. 1998. Snorri Sturluson. *Edda*. ed. Anthony Faulkes. University College London: Viking Society for Northern Research.

Skre, Dagfinn. 2011. Kaupang: between East and West; between North and South. *Things from the Town*. Kaupang Excavation Project Publication Series, Volume 3. ed. Dagfinn Skre. Denmark: Natayana Press.

--- 2007. The *Sciringes healh* of Ohthere's time. *Ohthere's Voyages*. Janet Bately & Anton Englert, eds. Roskilde, Denmark: The Viking Ship Museum. 150 - 56.

--- 1998. Missionary Activity in Early Medieval Norway. Strategy, Organization and the Course of Events. Scandinavian Journal of History, 23:1-2, 1-19. London: Routledge.

Sognnes, K. J. 2010. Vikings at Home: A Regional Perspective on Viking Age Norway. pdf.

--- 1999. *Det Levende Berget*. Trondheim: Tapir Forlag.

Sonne, Lasse Christian Arboe. 2013. *Thor-kult i vikingetiden*. København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag.

Sorheim, Helge. 2011. The Norse Vikings – Where Did They Come From? Acta Archaeologica, 82: 49–54.

Steinsland, Gro. 2011. Origin Myths and Rulership. *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Middle Ages*. eds. Gro Steinsland, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, Jan Erik Rekdal and Ian Beuermann. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.

--- 2005. Norrøn Religion: myter, riter, samfunn. Oslo: Pax Forlag A/S.

Stephens, George. 1881. *The Old-Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England*. Vol. III. Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate.

Storli, Inger. 2010. Court Sites of Arctic Norway: Remains of Thing Sites and Representations of Political Consolidation Processes in the Northern Germanic World during the First Millennium AD? Norwegian Archaeological Review, 43:2, 128-144.

--- 2006. *Hålogaland før rikssamlingen: Politiske processer i perioden 200-900 e. Kr*. Oslo: Novus forlag.

Sullivan, Karen. 2006. Member for Member Category Metonymy in Norse Skaldic Kennings. Handout: Berkeley Germanic Linguistics Roundtable. http://www.academia.edu/2688047/Norse_skaldic_kennings accessed March 16, 2015.

Sundqvist, Olaf. 2014. Religious and Ideological Aspects of Hall Interiors in the Late Iron Age. *Runsa Borg - Representative Life on a Migration Period Hilltop Site - a Scandinavian perspective*. Michael Olausson, ed. Jengel Förlag.

--- 2014. Freyr – More than a Fertility God? (Abstract) Interpreting Eddic Poetry: Mythology in Eddic Poetry. St John's College Research Centre, Oxford July 10–12, 2014. http://www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/7113/1.MEP_Abstracts.pdf.download. Accessed: 12/1/2015.

--- 2011. An Arena for Higher Powers. Cult Buildings and Rulers in the Late Iron Age and the Early Medieval Period in the Mälar Region. *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Middle Ages*. ed. Gro Steinsland, et al. Leiden: Brill.

--- 2002. *Freyr's Offspring: Rulers and Religion in Ancient Svea Society*. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Historia religionum; 21. Uppsala: Universitet.

Tacitus. 2009. *Agricola and Germania*. tr. Harold Mattingly. Revised with an Introduction by J. B. Rives. New York: Penguin Books.

Tacitus, P. Cornelius. 2012. *Simply Latin: The Agricola, The Germania & The Dialogues*. Simply Latin Books.

Tale of Ogmund Bash. 1997. tr. John McKinnell. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. II. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Tale of Thorleif, the Earl's Poet. tr. Judith Jesch. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. I. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Tale of Thorstein Bull's-Leg. 1997. tr. George Clark. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. IV. ed. Viðar Hreinsson. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing.

Tolley, Clive. 1996. Heimdallr and the Myth of the Brísingamen in Húsdrápa. Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek. Vol. 17, Nr 1.

Tollnes, Roar L. 1998. *Kaupang-funnene* bind III A. Drammen: PDC Tangen.

Tune Finds, The. 2012. UiO: Museum of Cultural History. http://www.khm.uio.no/english/visit-us/viking-ship-museum/exhibitions/tune/. Accessed 19 Feb. 2014.

Turville-Petre., E .O. G. 1976. *Skaldic Poetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

--- 1964. *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*. New York: Holt, Finehart and Winston.

Tylor, E. B. 1958. *Religion in Primitive Culture*. Part II Primitive Culture. Originally published in 1871. New York: Harper Brothers.

Uppsala Edda: DG 11 4to. 2012. ed. Heimir Pálsson. tr. Anthony Faulkes. Viking Society for Northern Research. University College London: Short Run Press Limited.

Vatnsdæla saga. 1939. Íslenzk fornrit VIII. bindi. Einar Ól Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Vésteinsson, Orri. 2007. Archaeology of Economy and Society. *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*. ed. Rory McTurk. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing. pp. 7-26.

Viðbætir úr Niðjatali Ketils hörðakára i Crymogæu. 1959. Tr. Jakob Benediktsson. Ed. Jóhannes Halldórsson. *Íslenzk fornrit* XIV. *Kjalnesinga saga*. Reykjavík: Ízlenska forniritafélag. pp. 248-50.

Vries, Jan de. 1955. Der Mythos von Balders Tod. *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 70: 41-60.

Wellendorf, Jonas. 2010. The Interplay of Pagan and Christian Traditions in Icelandic Settlement Myths. Journal of English and Germanic Philology- January. University of Illinois Press.

Wicker, Nancy and Henrik Williams. 2012. Bracteates and Runes: Review article. Futhark International Journal of Runic Studies. Vol. 3.

Wicker, Nancy L. 2003. The Scandinavian Animal Styles in Response to Mediterranean and Christian Narrative Art. *The Cross Goes North*. ed. Martin Carver. York: York Medieval Press.

Wilson, David. 2005. Tierornamentik, Germanische. In Beck, H. & Müller, R. eds. Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde. XXX. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. pp. 597-605.

Wilson, David & Ole Klindt-Jensen. 1966. *Viking Art*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Würth, Stefanie. 2007. Historiography and Pseudo-History. *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*. ed. Rory McTurk. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 155-172.

Zoëga, Geir T. 1952. *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Zori, Davide & Jesse Byock (ed.). 2014. *Viking archaeology in Iceland. Mosfell Archaeological Project*. Cursor 20. Turnhout: Brepols

Þóra Kristjánsdóttir. 2010. A Nocturnal Wake at Hólar The Judgement Day Panels as a Possible Explanation for a Miracle Legend? The Nordic Apocalypse. eds. Terry Gunnell and Annette Lassen. pdf. 2010.

Þórðar saga hreðu. 1959. Íslenzk Fornrit XIV Bindi. Jóhannes Halldórsson gaf út. Reykjavík: hið Íslenzka fornritafélag.

Þorleifs þáttr jarlsskálds. 2001. Íslenzk fornrit IX bindi. Jónas Kristjánsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Þorsteins þáttr uxafóts. 2009. Íslenzk fornrit XIII bindi. Þórhallur Vilmundarson og Bjarni Vilhjálmsson gáfu út. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritfélag.

Appendix Figures



Figure 1. Oseberg ship excavation September 29, 1904. From Brøgger, 1917. *Osebergfundet bind i*.



Figure 2. Oseberg ship prow reconstructed. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 2.a. Detail of Oseberg ship *brandr* (stem, prow or "beak" of ship). Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.

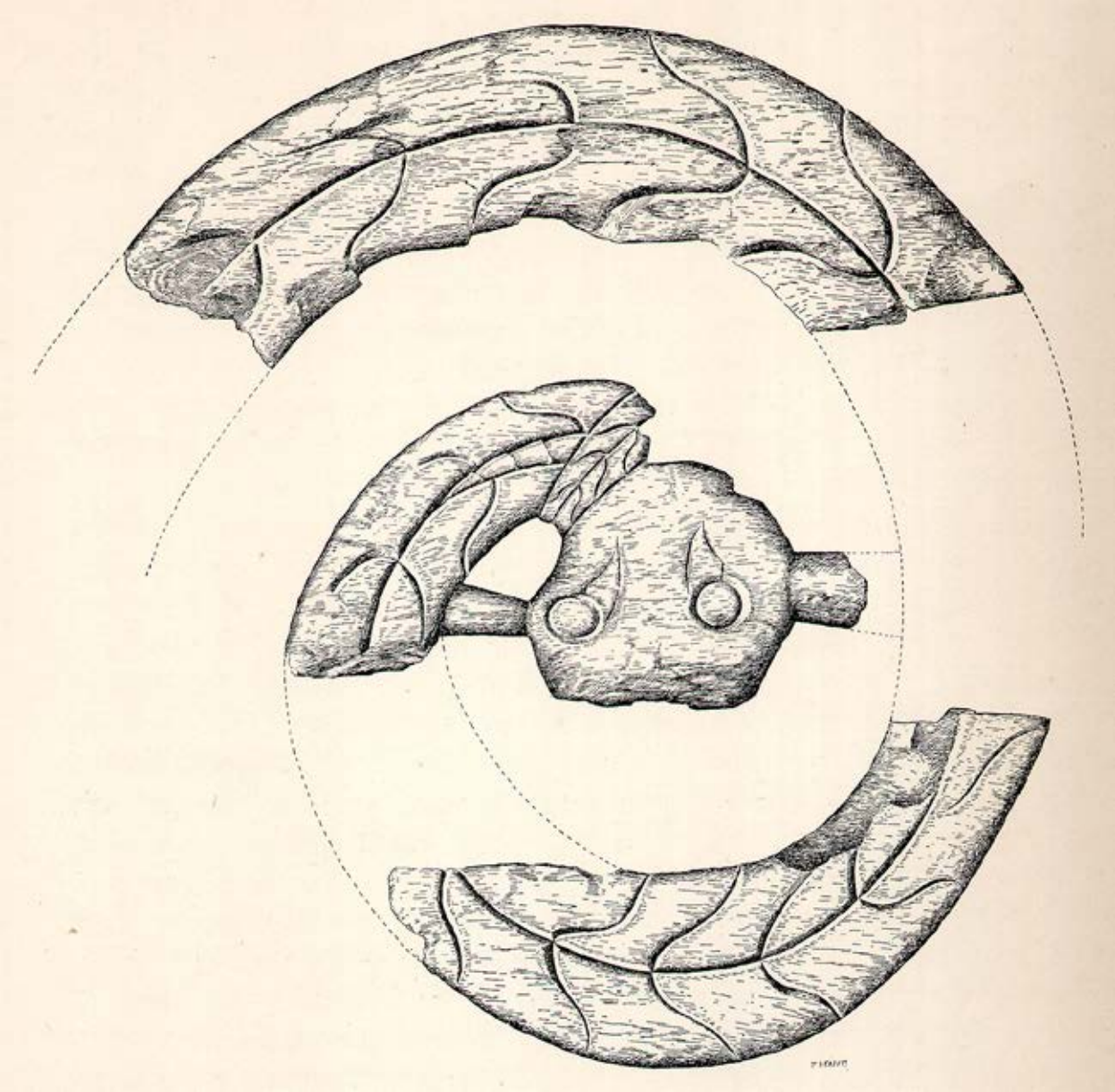


Figure 2.b. Sketch of Oseberg ship terminating spiral-head. Shetelig 1920.



Figure 2.c. Detail of reconstructed Oseberg ship prow. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 3. Reconstructed *hǫfðafjǫl*, span board. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 3.a. *Tingl* fragment. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.

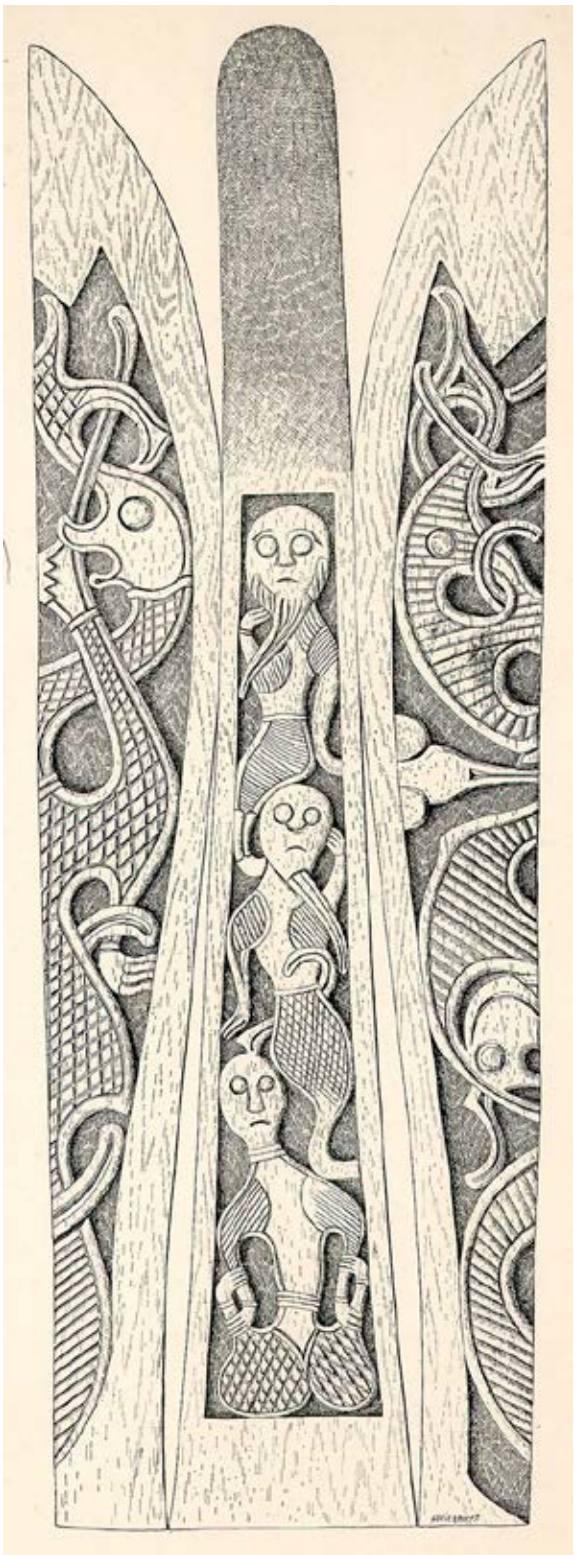


Figure 3.b. Sketch of the uppermost board on the interior stem of the Oseberg ship. Sketch by Sofie Krafft. Shetelig 1920.



Figure 4. Oseberg ship anthropomorphic figure detail. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.

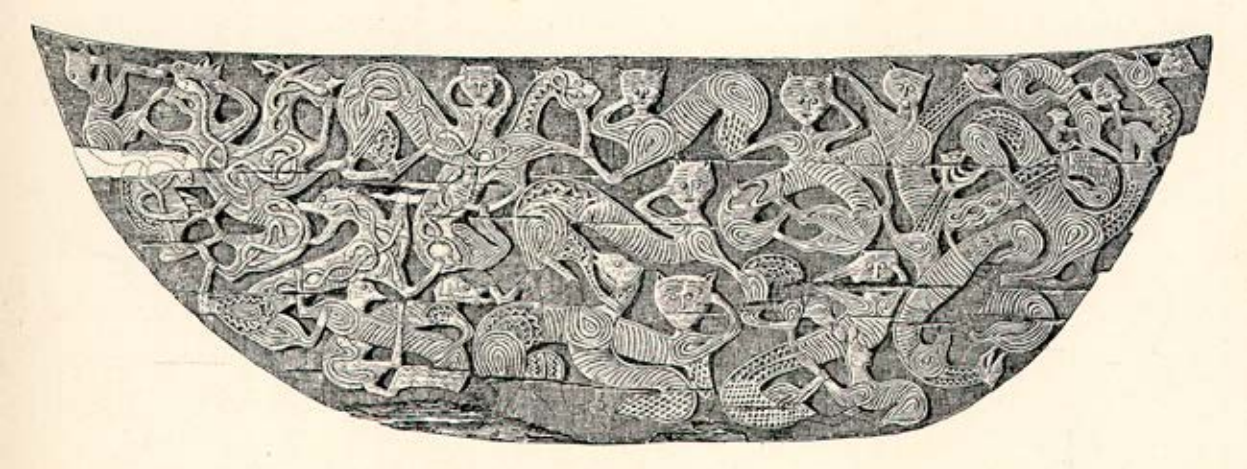


Figure 5. Sketch of Oseberg wagon back. *Osebergfundet bind iii*. 1920: 29.



Figure 6. Oseberg wagon front detail. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 7. Oseberg wagon front. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 8. Sketch of Oseberg wagon right side. *Osebergfundet bind iii*. 1920: 31.



Figure 9. Oseberg wagon side - details of engravings within contours of figures. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 10. Oseberg wagon front head post detail. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.

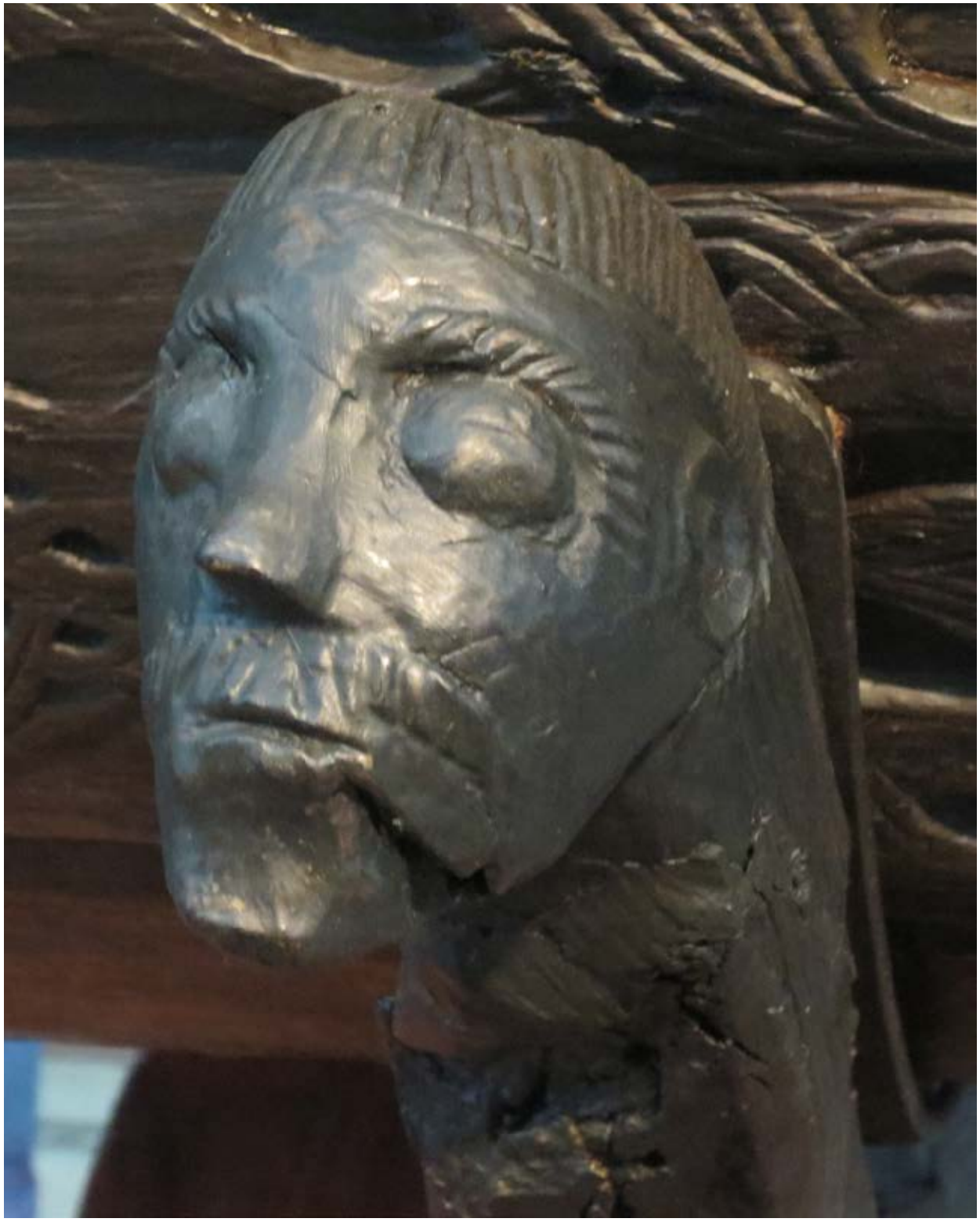


Figure 11. Oseberg wagon back head post detail. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 12. Oseberg wagon truss detail. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 13. Oseberg *dyrehodestolpe* detail. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 14. Oseberg *rangle*. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.

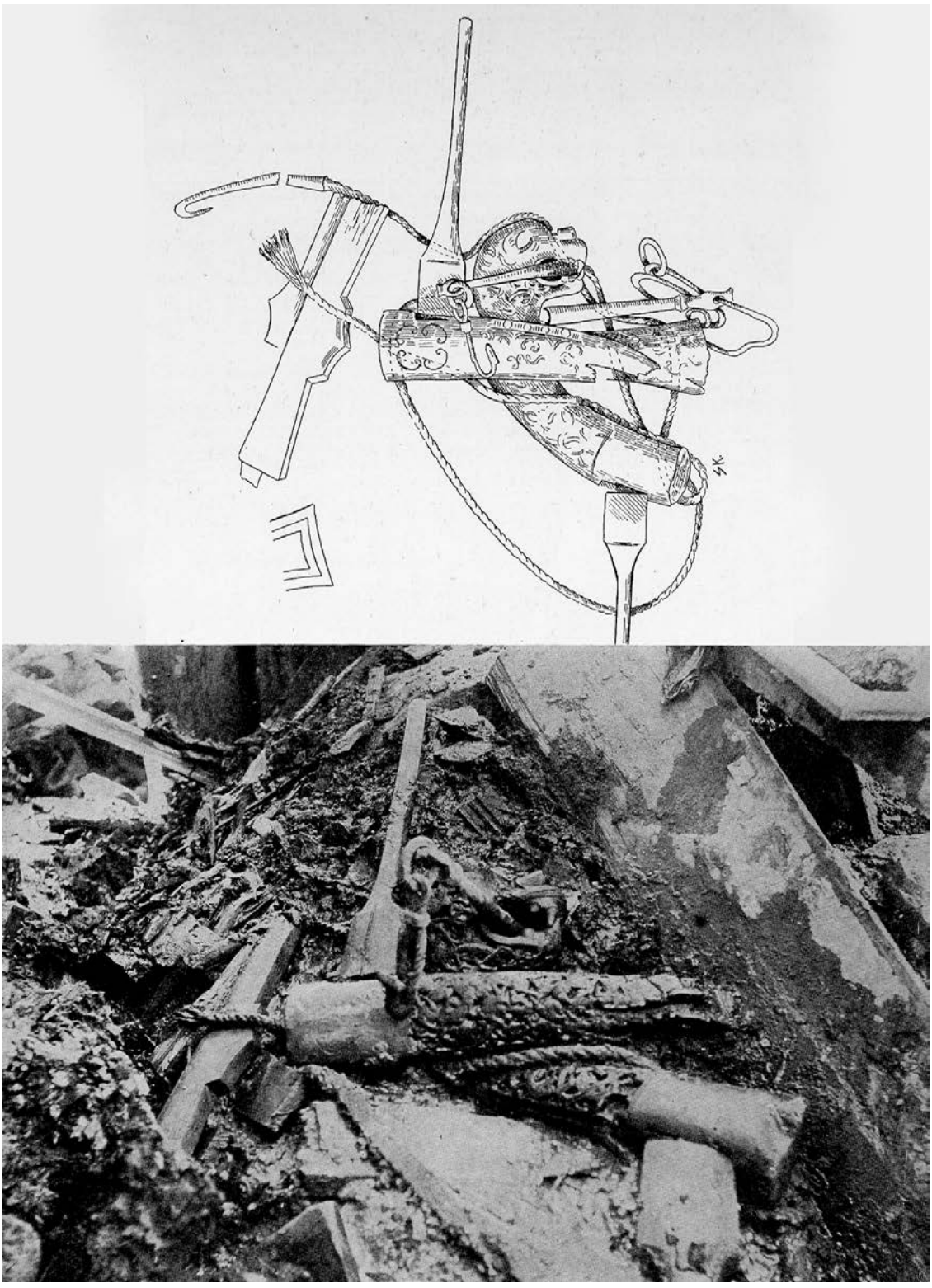


Figure 15. Sketch and photo of the two *dyrehodestolper* and a *rangle* found together in the grave chamber. From Brøgger. *Osebergfundet bind i*, 1917: 42-3.



Figure 16. Head and engravings on *dyrehodestolpe* #174. Shetelig 1920: 76.

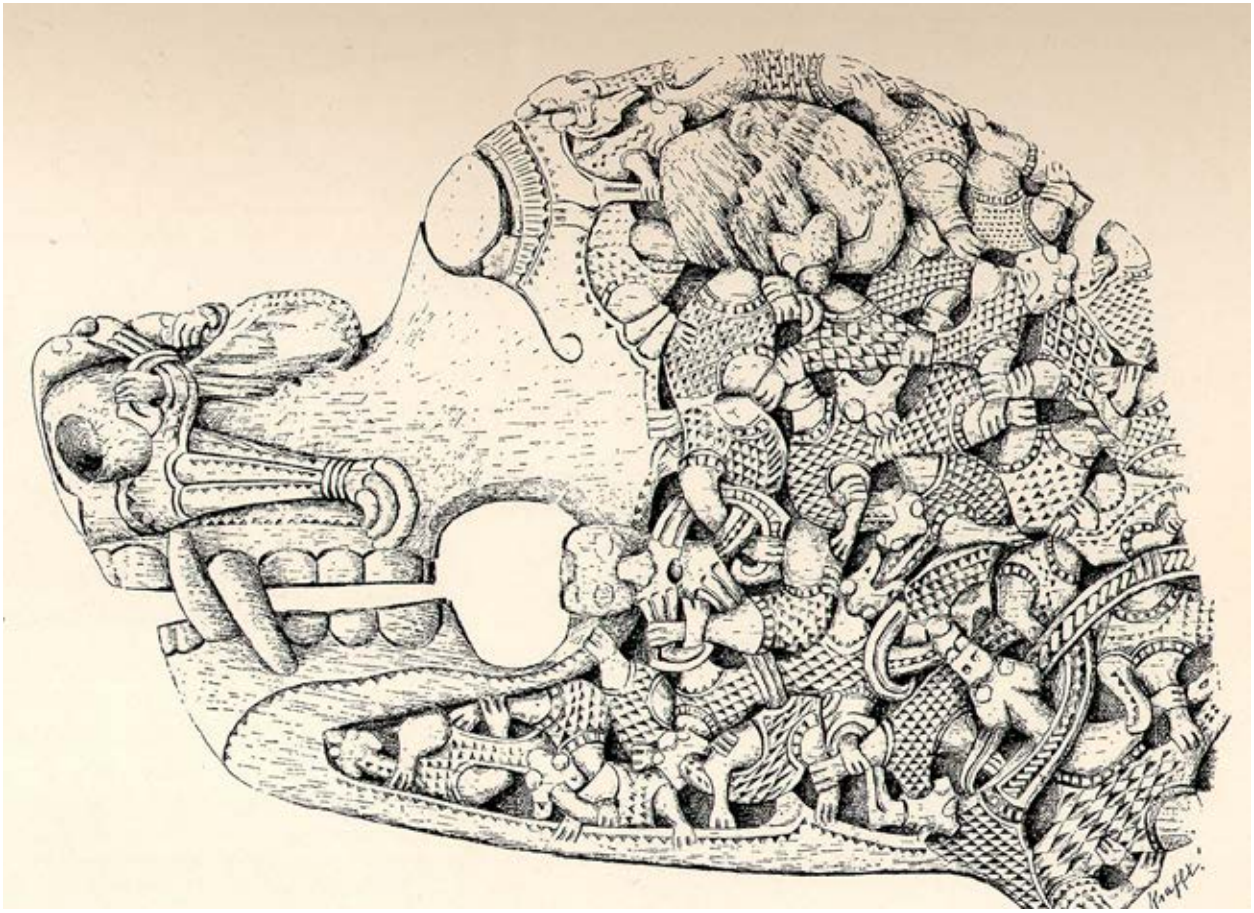


Figure 16.a. Sketch of profile and engravings on head of the "Carolingian" *dyrehodestolpe*. Shetelig 1920: 116.

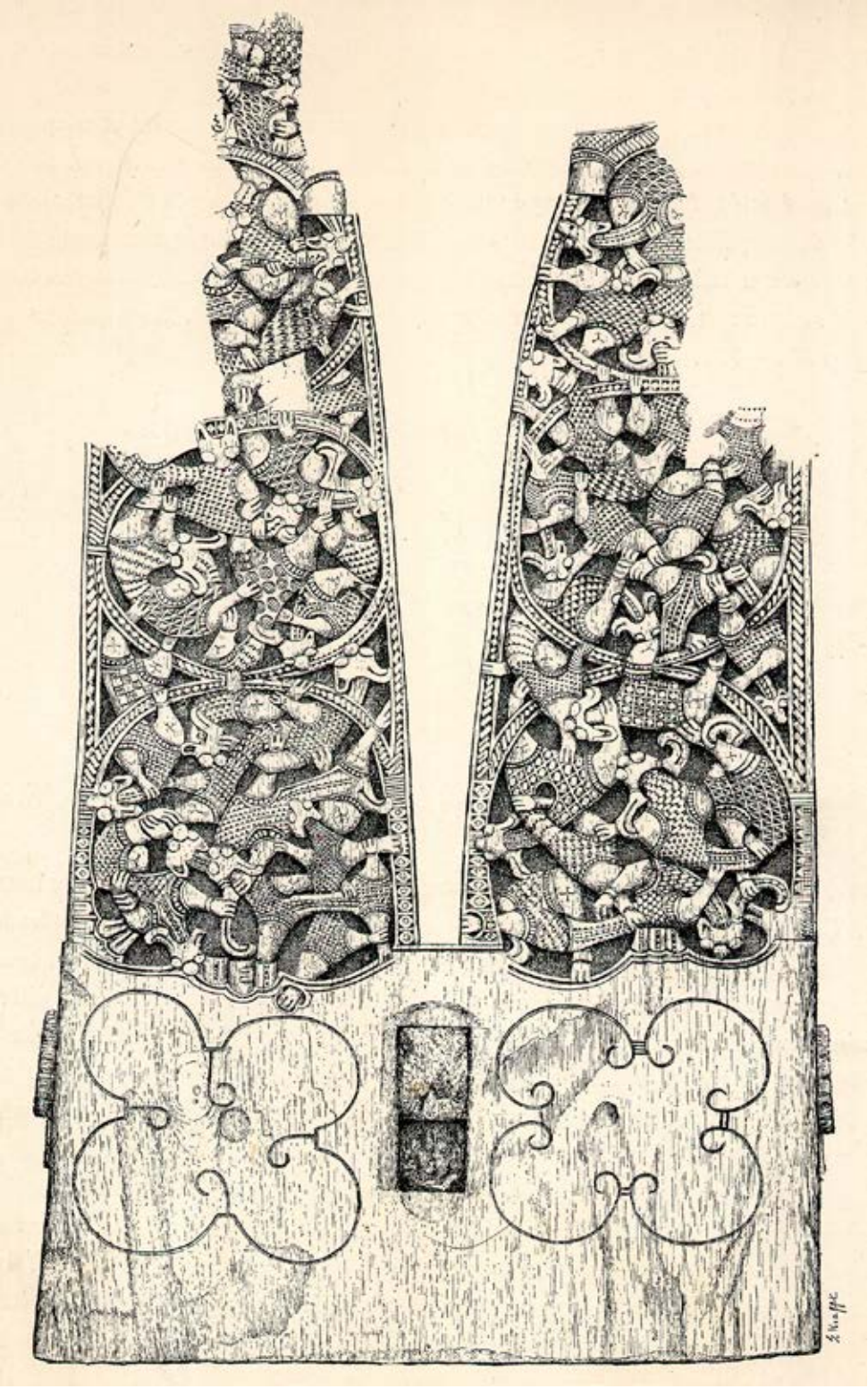


Figure 16.b. Sketch of engravings on neck of the "Carolingian" *dyrehodestolpe*. Shetelig 1920: 119.



Figure 17. Head detail showing some of the engravings on *dyrehodestolpe* #174. Shetelig 1920: 78.

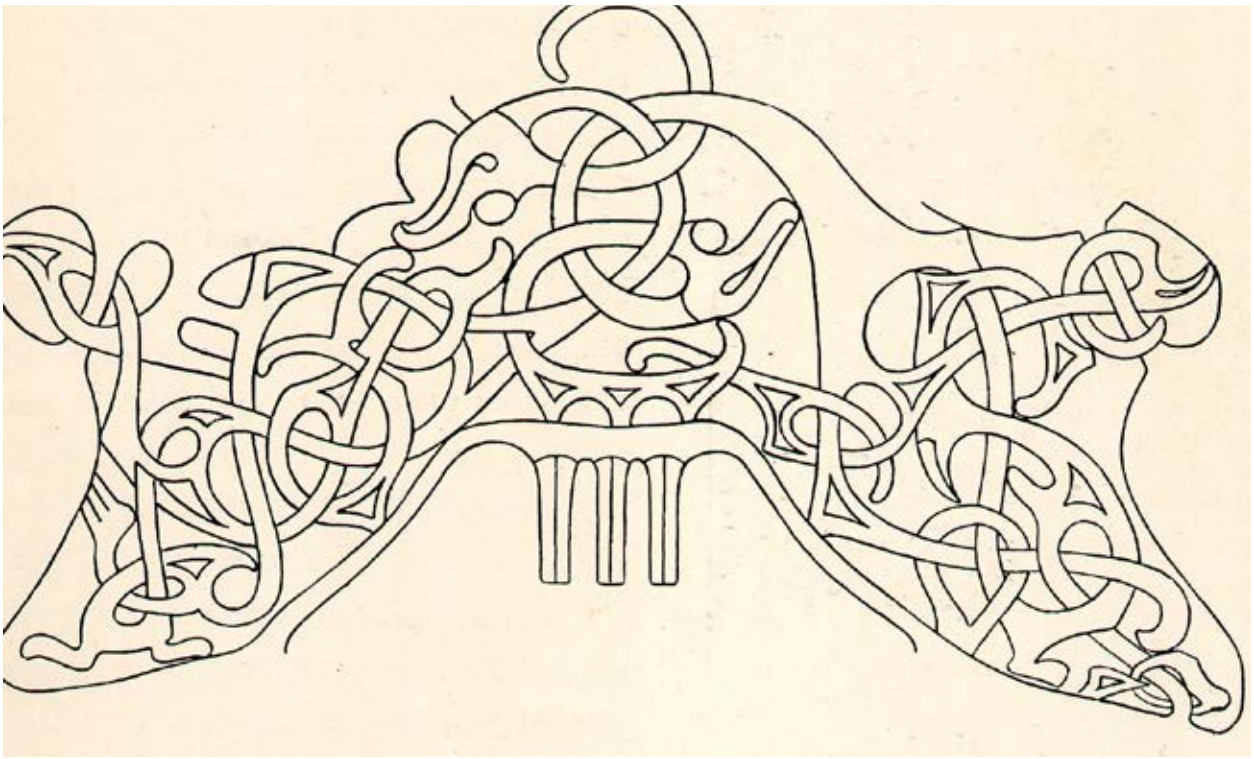


Figure 17.a. Sketch of bird patterns that wrap around the head and neck of *dyrehodestolpe* #174. Shetelig 1920: 79.



Figure 17.b. Sketch of anthropomorphic figure on top of the head of *dyrehodestolpe* #174. Shetelig 1920: 77.



Figure 18. The “Fourth” Oseberg sled. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 19. Detail of the “Fourth” Oseberg sled. Viking Ship Museum. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 20. Detail of one of *"daarlige sengehestene"*. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 21. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “2”. Drawn by Sophie Krafft, 1917.

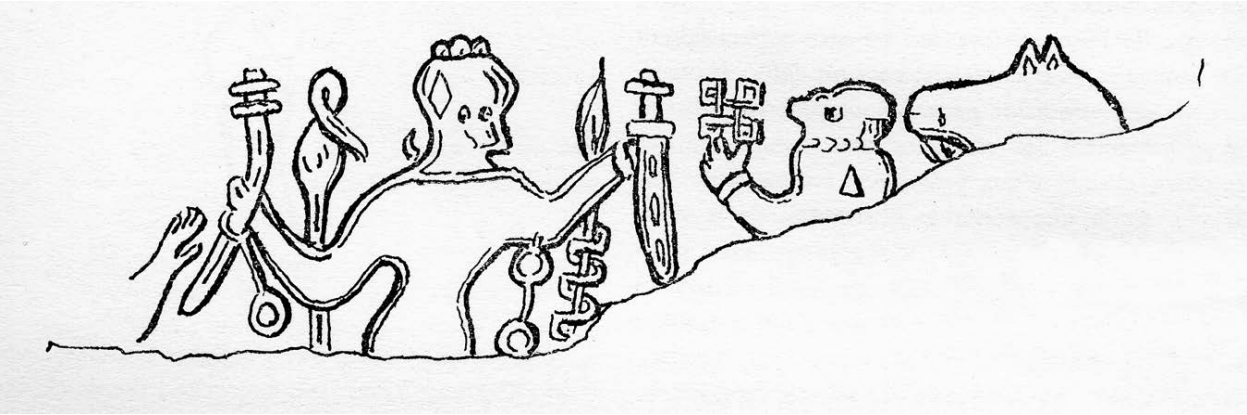


Figure 22. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “2” detail. Drawn by Sophie Krafft.

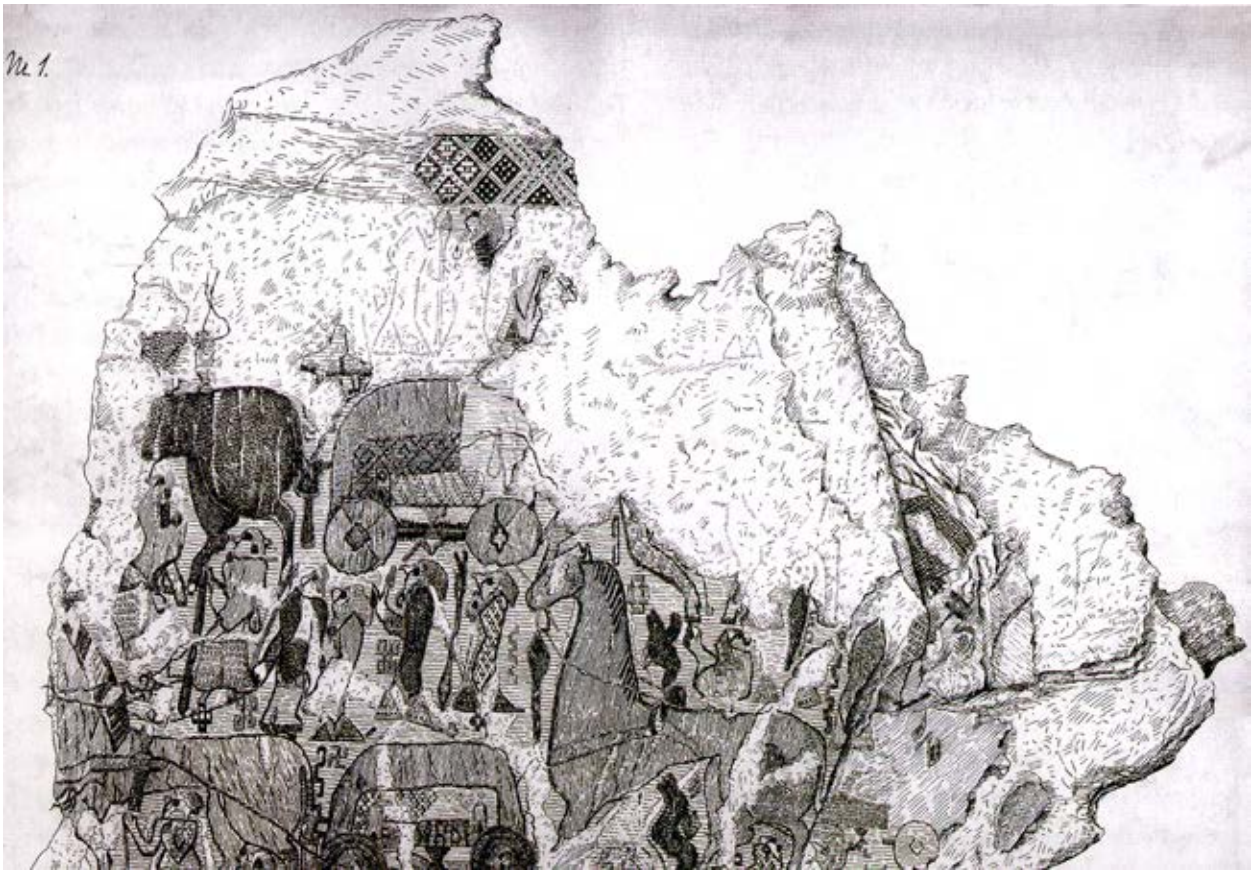


Figure 23. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “1”. Drawn by Sophie Krafft, 1916.

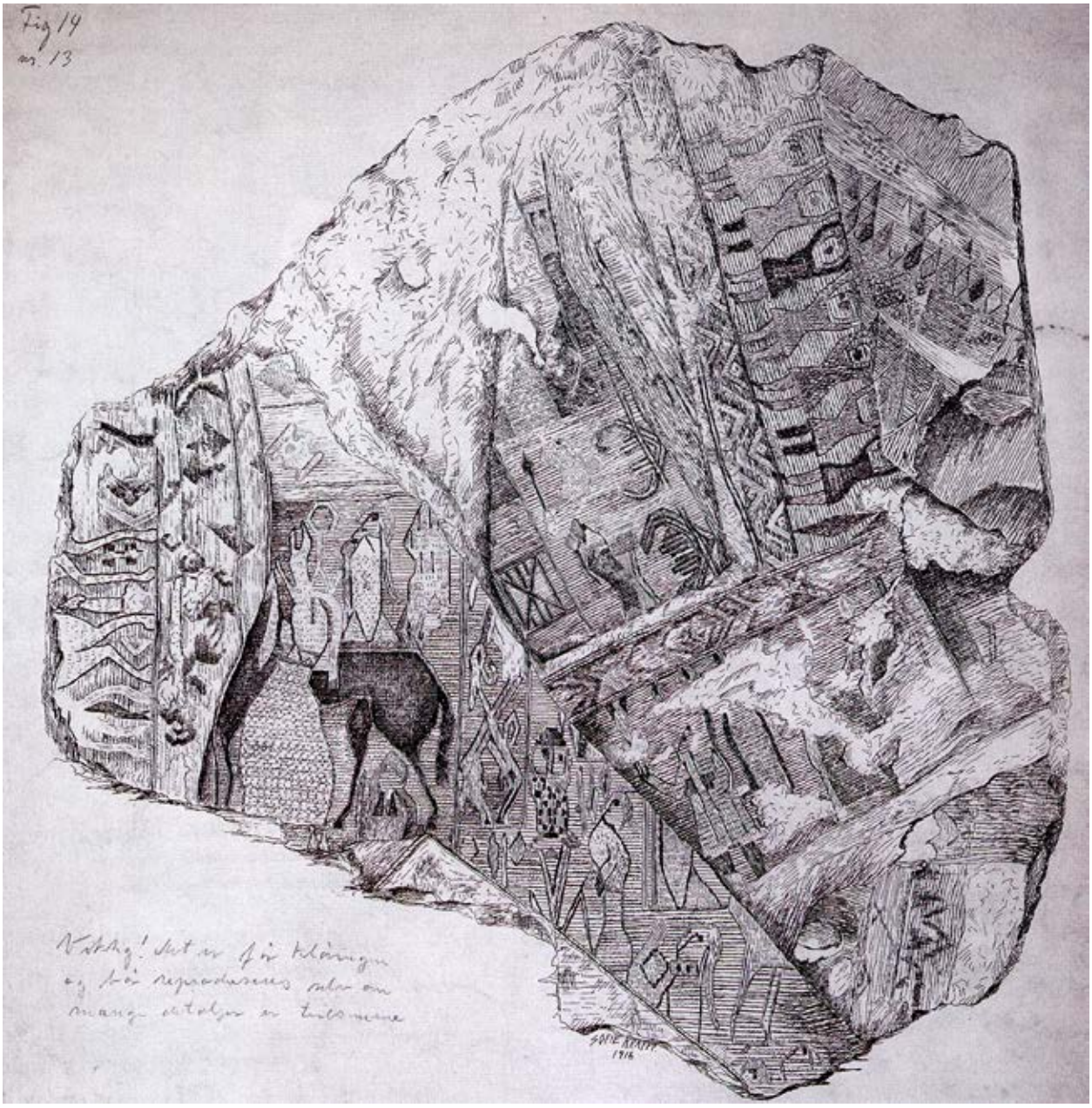


Figure 24. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “13” prior to splitting. Drawn by Sophie Krafft, 1916.

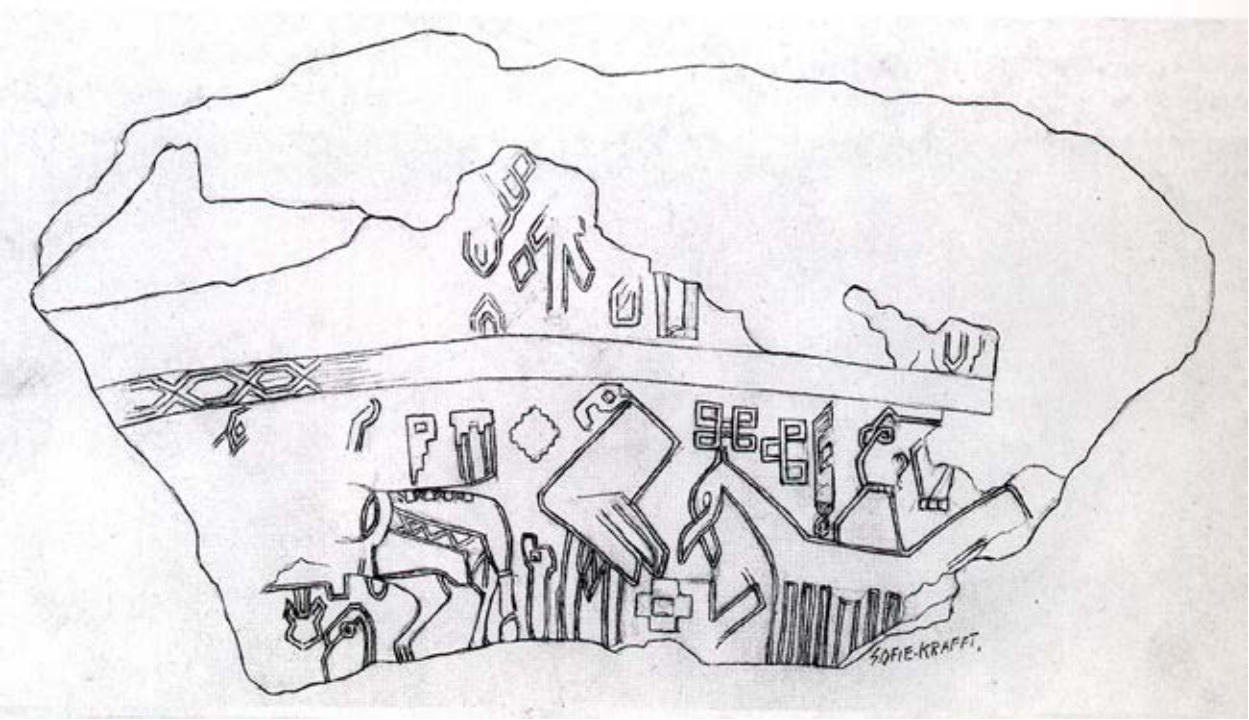


Figure 25. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “7B”. Drawn by Sophie Krafft.

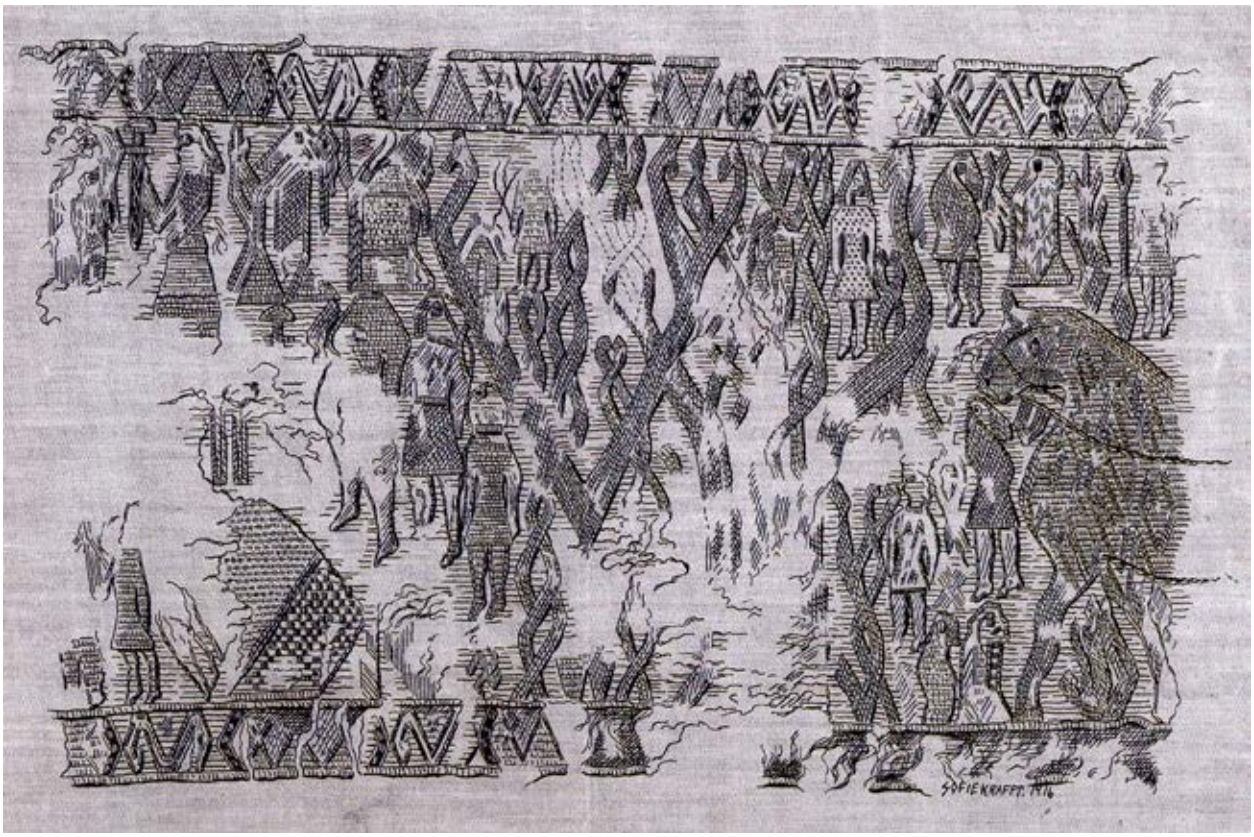


Figure 26. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “4”. Drawn by Sophie Krafft, 1916.

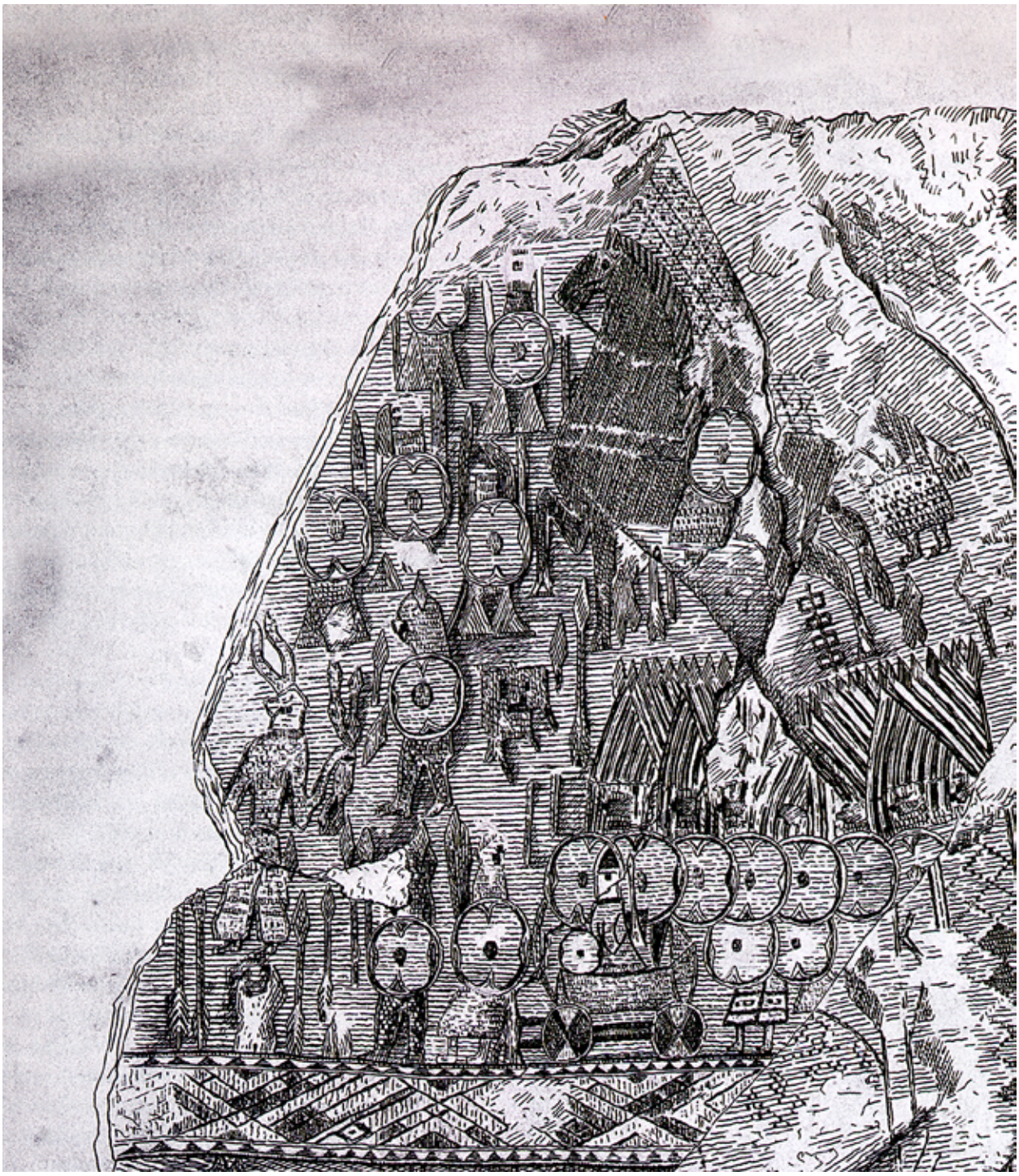


Figure 27. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “13B2”. Drawn by Sophie Krafft, 1916.

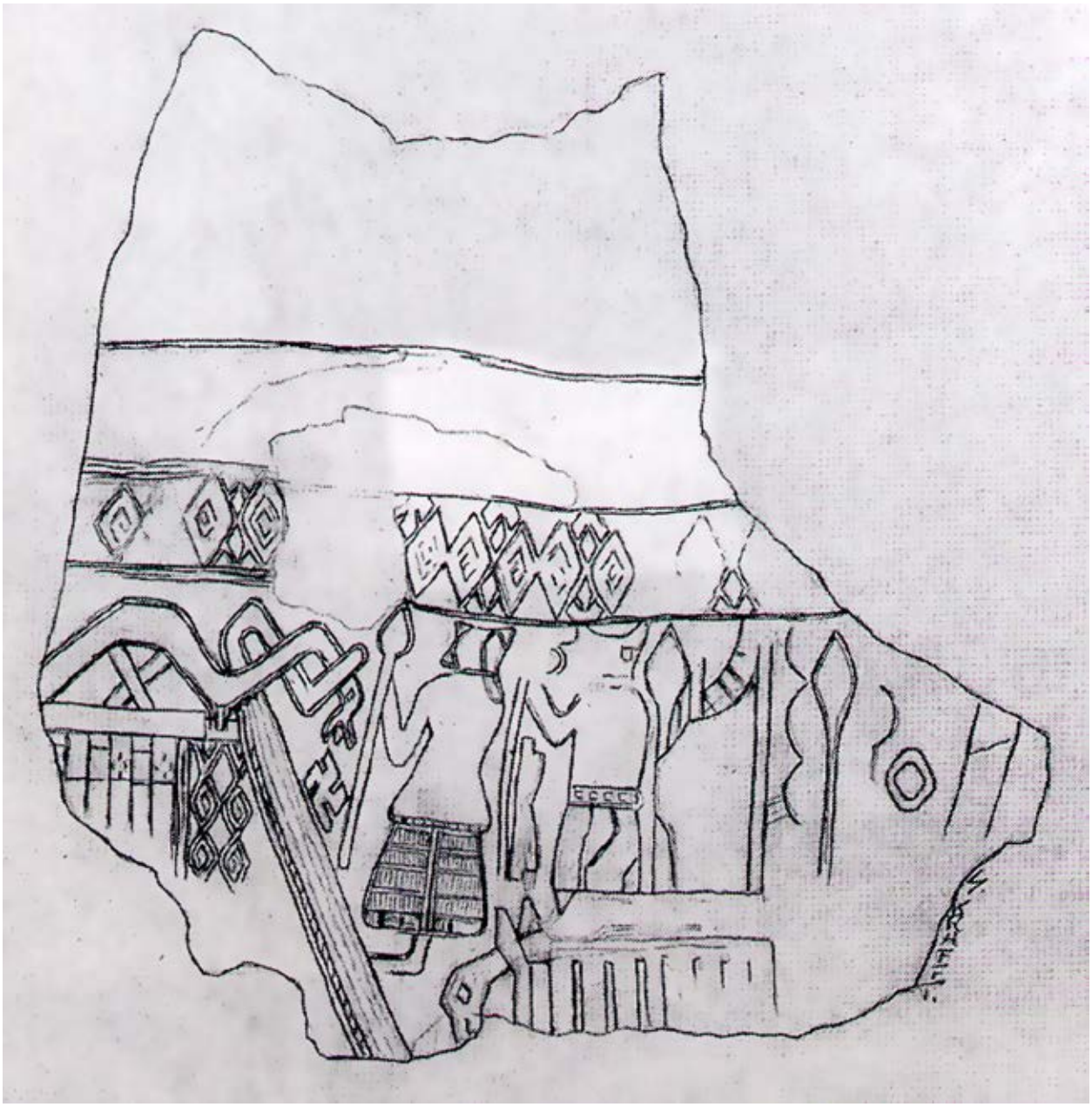


Figure 28. Sketch of a portion of Oseberg tapestry fragment “7A”. Drawn by Sophie Krafft.

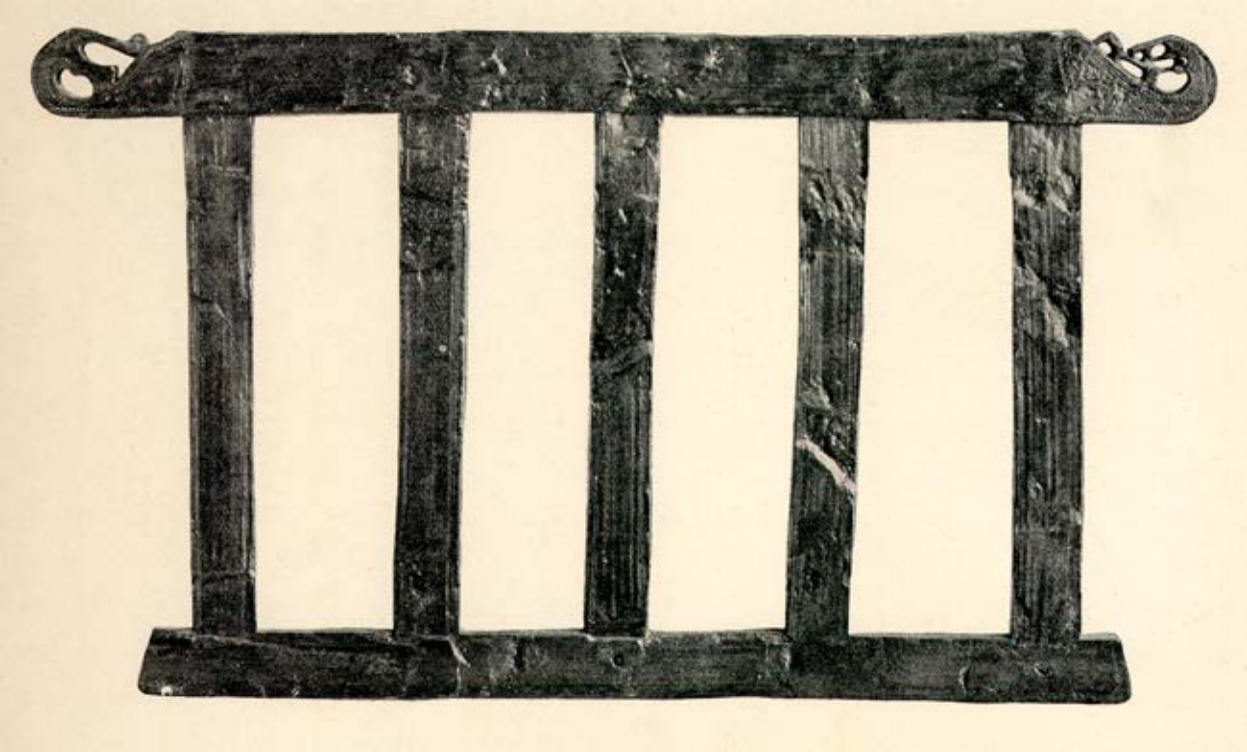


Figure 29. *"Den gode sengehesten"*. *Osebergfundet bind iii*. 1920.

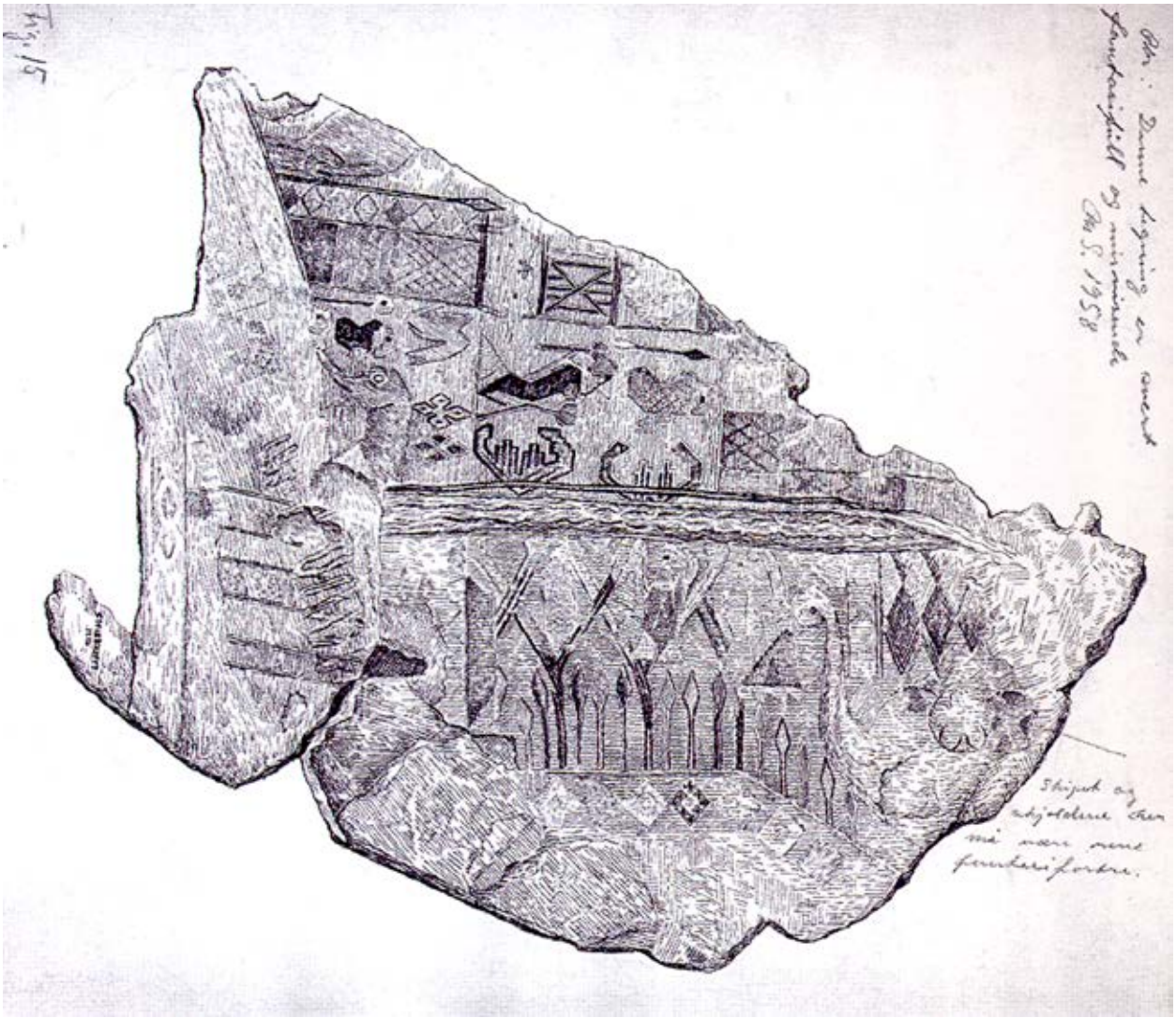


Figure 30. Sketch of Oseberg tapestry fragment “13” after separating. Drawn by Sophie Krafft, 1916.



Figure 31. Borre style bridal mounts. Historisk museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 32. Borre style bronze trefoil brooch. Historisk museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 33. Borre style gilded bronze buckle. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 34. Bedposts.
Left: from Oseberg. *Osebergfundet bind iii*. 1920.
Right: from Gokstad. Viking Ship Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 35. View from Lade, looking northwest. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 35.a. Sketch and photo of gold bracteate from Mjønes. From Hauck: *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: 2,2 Ikonographischer Katalog*.

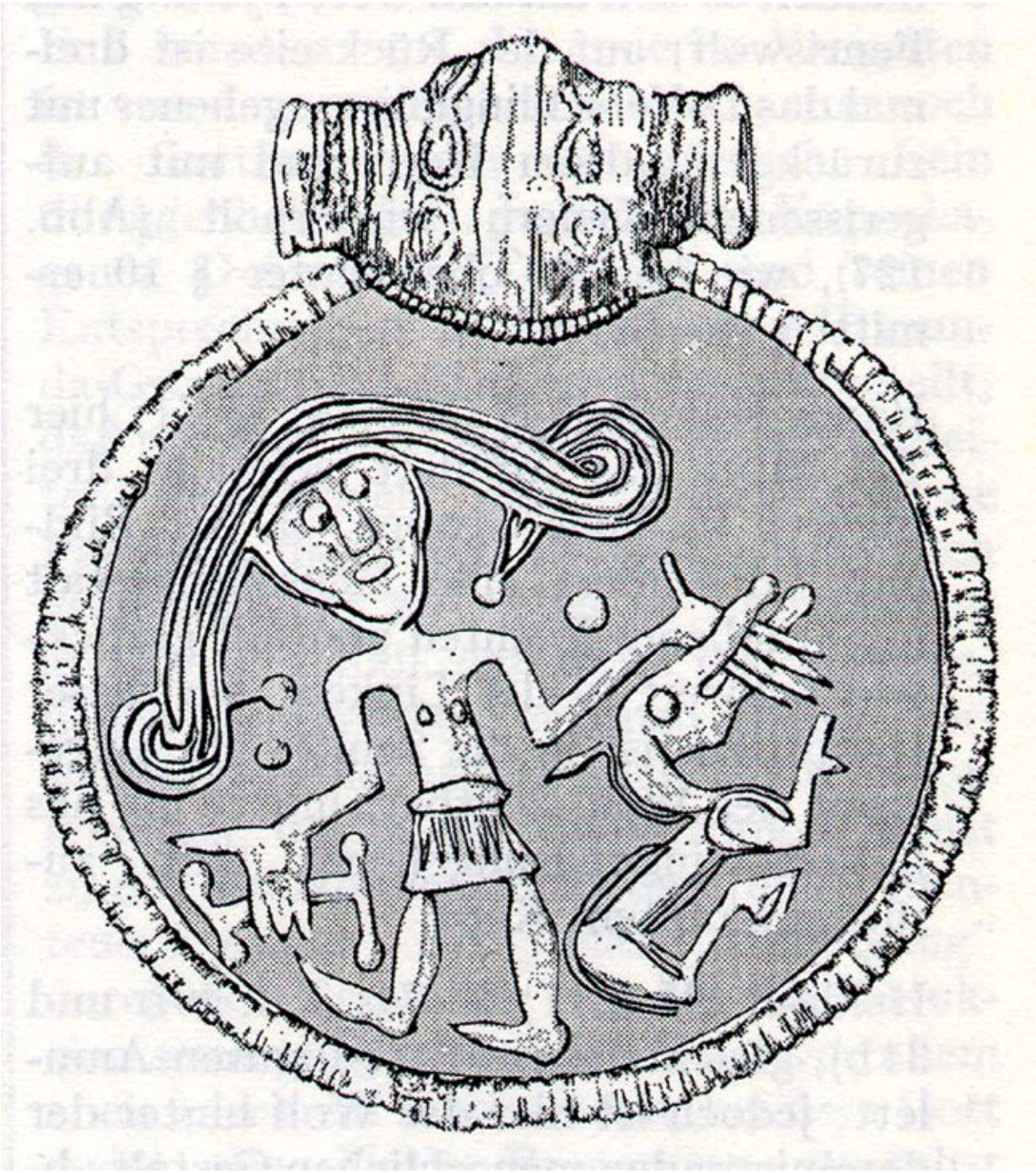


Figure 35.b. Sketch of Trollhätten bracteate. From Hauck: Brakteatenikonologie, in Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde.



Figure 35.c. Sketch of Faxe bracteate. From Hauck: Brakteatenikonologie, in Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde.



Figure 35.d. Sketches and photos of Dalum bracteates. From Hauck: *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: 2,2 Ikonographischer Katalog*.



Figure 35.e. Sketches of Rømul bracteates. From Hauck: *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit: 2,2 Ikonographischer Katalog*.



Figure 36. Urnes style carved panels. Vitenskapmuseet, Trondheim. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 36.a. *Seið Yggr til Rindar* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction - Erik Schjeide.



Figure 36.b. *Komsk Urðr ór brunni* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction - Erik Schjeide.

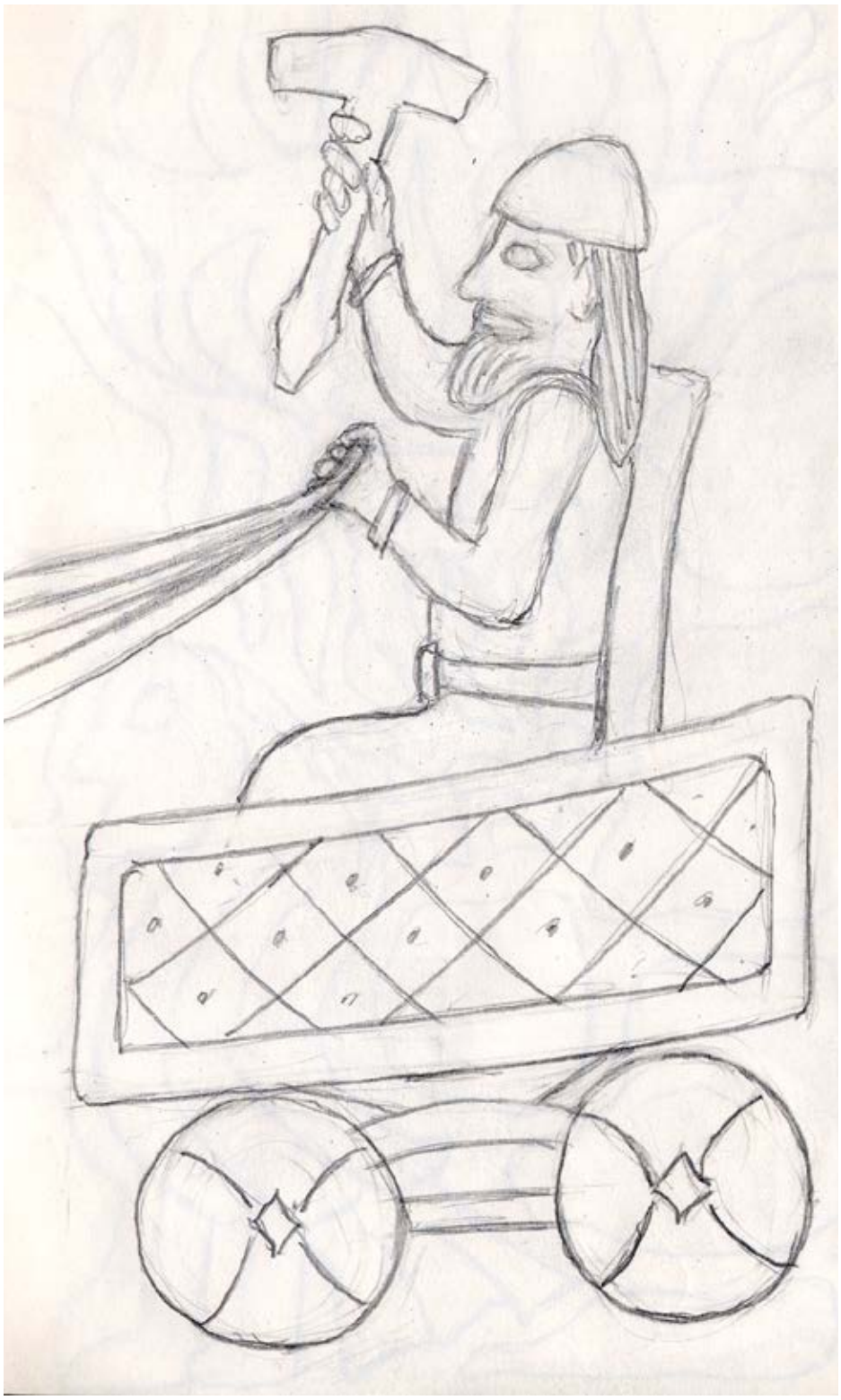


Figure 36.c. *Sitr Þórr í reiðu* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction - Erik Schjeide.

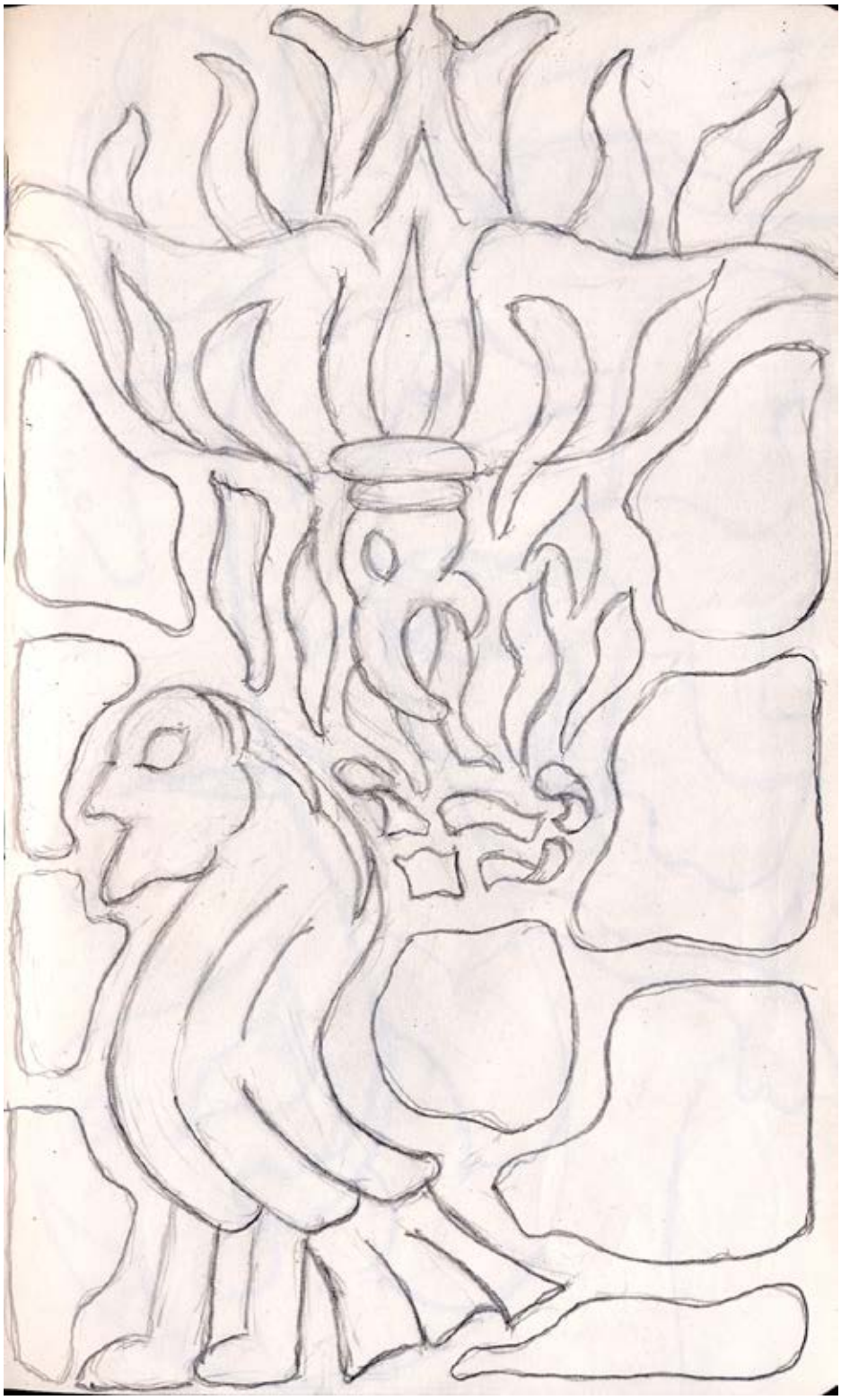


Figure 36.d. *Véltu goð Þjatsa* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction - Erik Schjeide.



Figure 36.e. *Vá Gramr til menja* - sketch for hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction - Erik Schjeide.



Figure 36.f. *Fór Hroptr með Gungni* - hypothetical wood-carved reconstruction - Erik Schjeide



Figure 37. Reconstructed Viking hall at Borg, Lofoten. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.

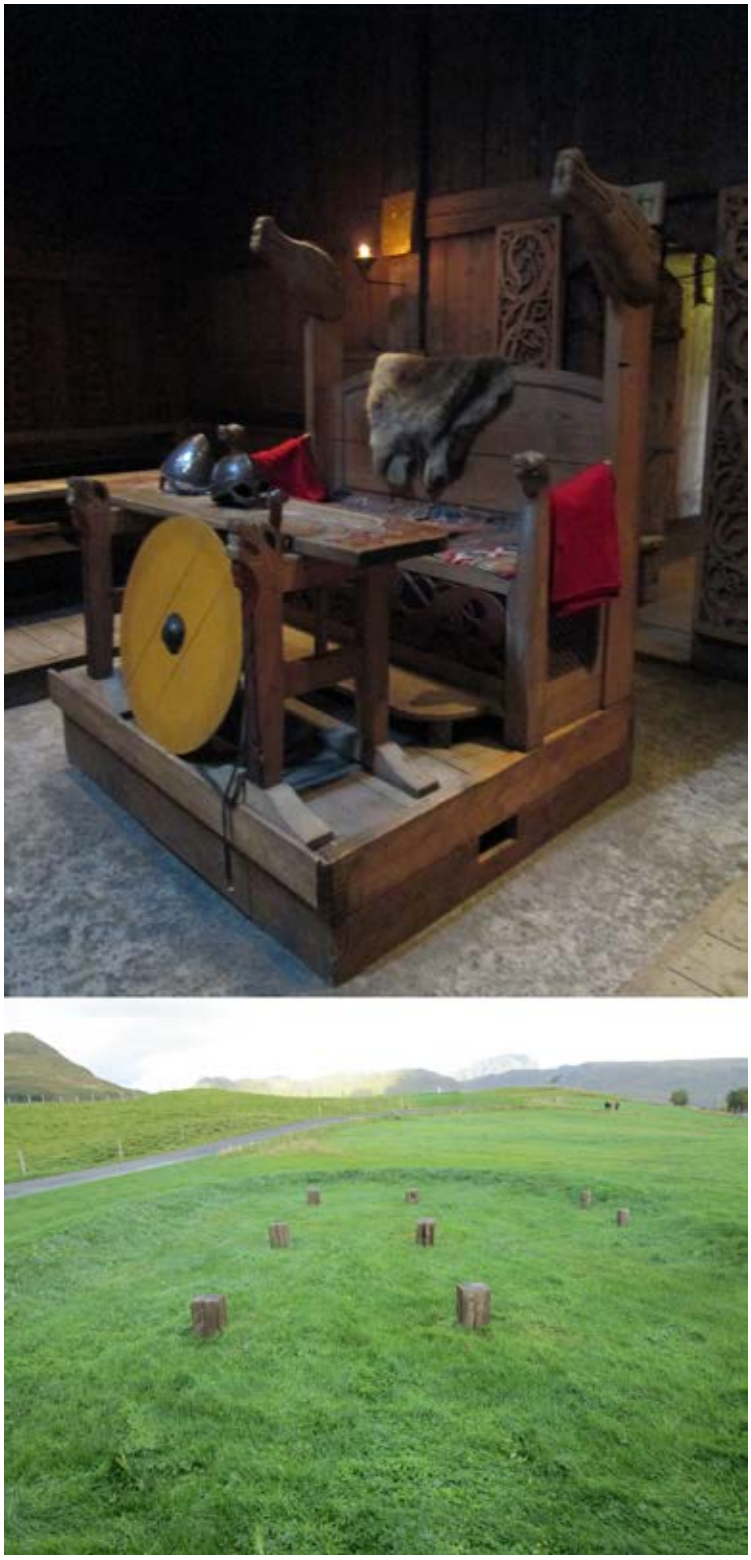


Figure 38. Interior reconstruction of the high seat at Borg museum, Lofoten and the actual location and site of the chieftain's hall. Photos: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 39. Gold foil found at Borg, Lofoten. Digitally remastered copy from Munch 2003a: 247.

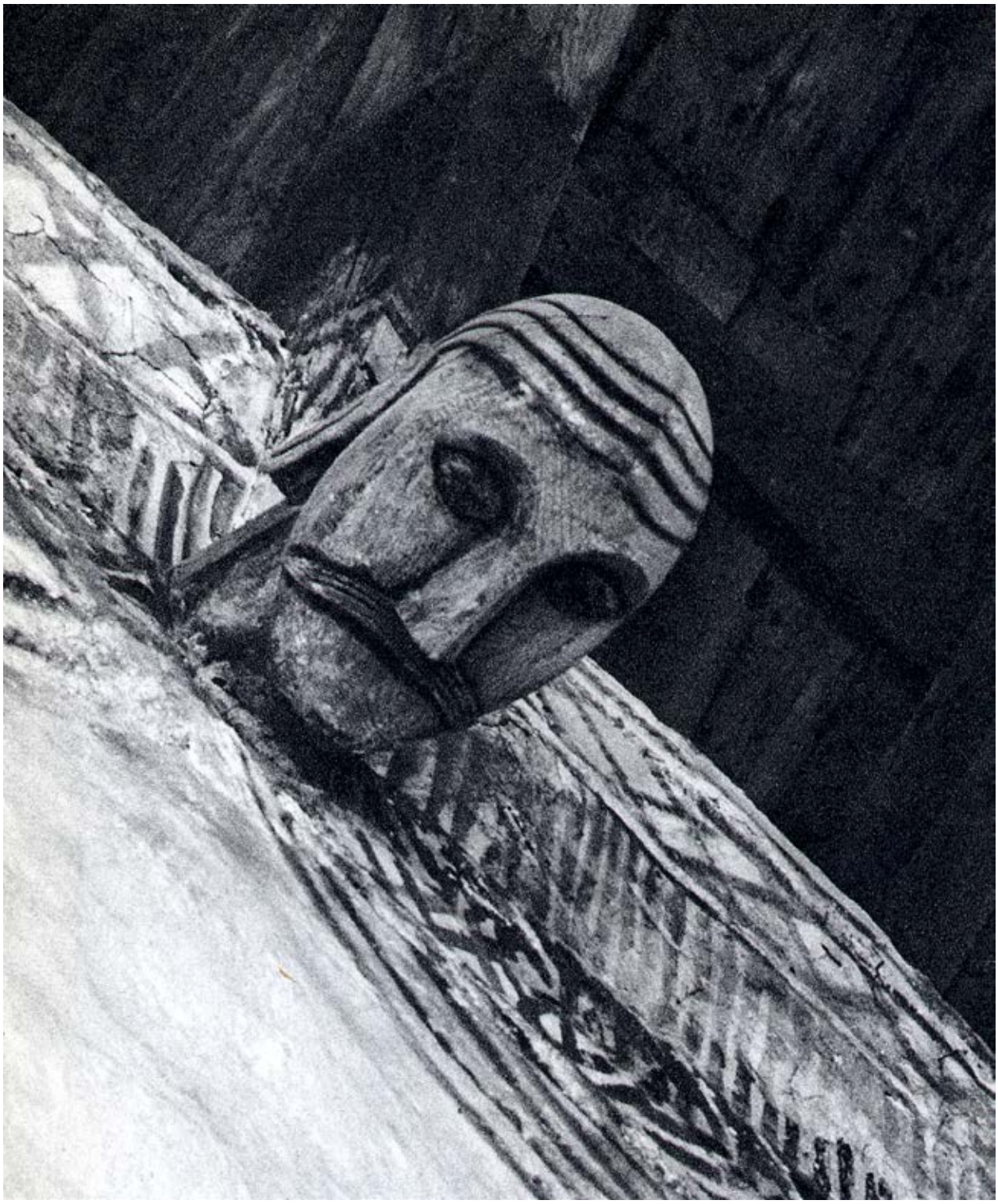


Figure 40. Wooden sculpted head in Værnes church. From *Medieval Norwegian Art*.



Figure 41. Serpent head at Lom church. From *Stave Churches*.

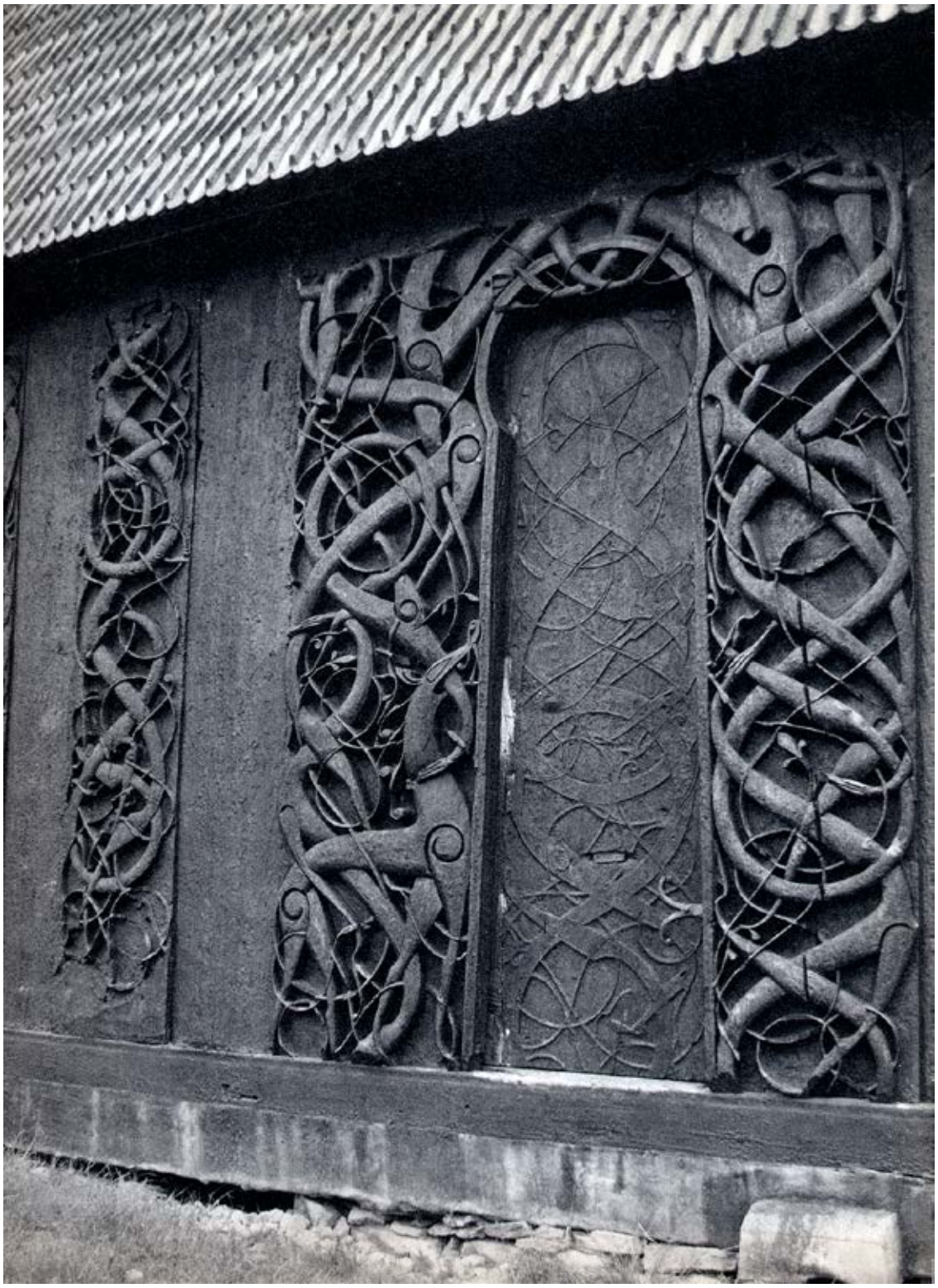


Figure 42. Urnes portal. From *Medieval Scandinavian Art*.



Figure 43. Ulvik portal. From *Medieval Scandinavian Art*.



Figure 44. Mammen style - Søllested horse collar. From *Viking Art*.



Figure 45. Detail of the Gosforth Cross. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 46. Heggen weathervane. Historisk museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 47. Detail of Rennebu portal. From: *Medieval Norwegian Art*.



Figure 48. Óðinn brooch. Historisk museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 49. Column with mask. From: *Stave Churches*.



Figure 50. Bench end from Torpo church in Hallingdal. From: *Medieval Norwegian Art*.



Figure 51. Hylestad church portal detail. Historisk museum, Oslo. Photo by Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 52. Hypothetical prototype of wood-carved Óðinn mask at Hlaðir ca. 985. Carving and photo by Erik Schjeide.

Table 1. *The Art Nexus*

PATIENT \ AGENT	Artist	Index	Prototype	Recipient
Artist	Artist as source of creative act / Artist as witness to act of creation	Material inherently dictates to artist the form it assumes	Prototype controls artist's action, appearance of prototype imitated by artist. Realistic art.	Recipient cause of artist's action (as patron)
Index	Material stuff shaped by artist's agency and intention	Index as cause of itself: 'self-made' / Index as a 'made thing'	Prototype dictates the form taken by index	Recipient the cause of the origination and form taken by the index
Prototype	Appearance of prototype dictated by artist. Imaginative art	Image or actions of prototype controlled by means of index, a locus of power over prototype	Prototype as cause of index / Prototype affected by index	Recipient has power over the prototype. Volt sorcery.
Recipient	Recipient's response dictated by artist's skill, wit, magical powers, etc. Recipient captivated.	Index source of power over recipient. Recipient as 'spectator' submits to index.	Prototype has power over the recipient. Image of prototype used to control actions of recipient. Idolatry.	Recipient as patron / Recipient as spectator

Figure 53. The Art Nexus. From *Art and Agency*. Gell 1998: 29.

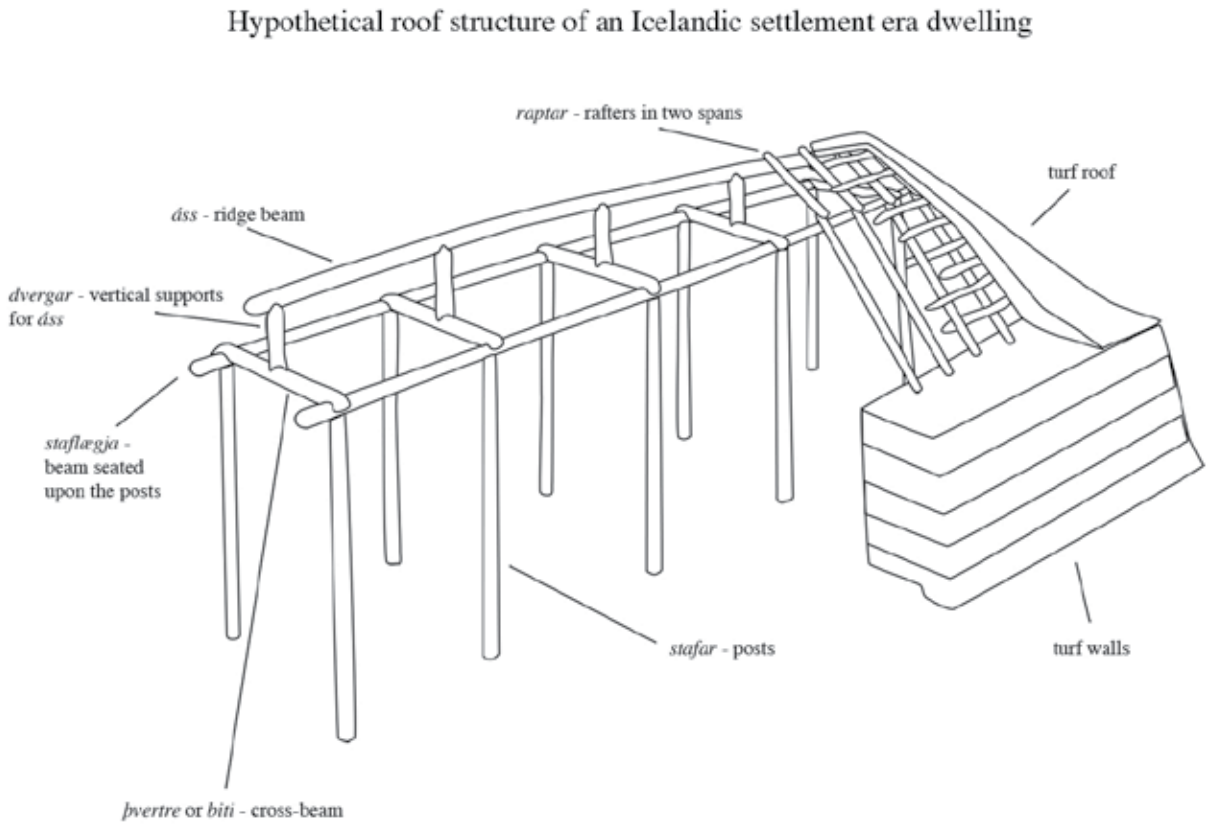


Figure 54. Sketch of Viking Age roof structure. Based on Byock 2001: 361.



Figure 55. Eyrarland bronze figure. Þjóðminjasafn Íslands. Photo: Wolfgang Sauber.



Figure 56. Bjarnastaðahlið panels. From Selma Jónsdóttir 1959.

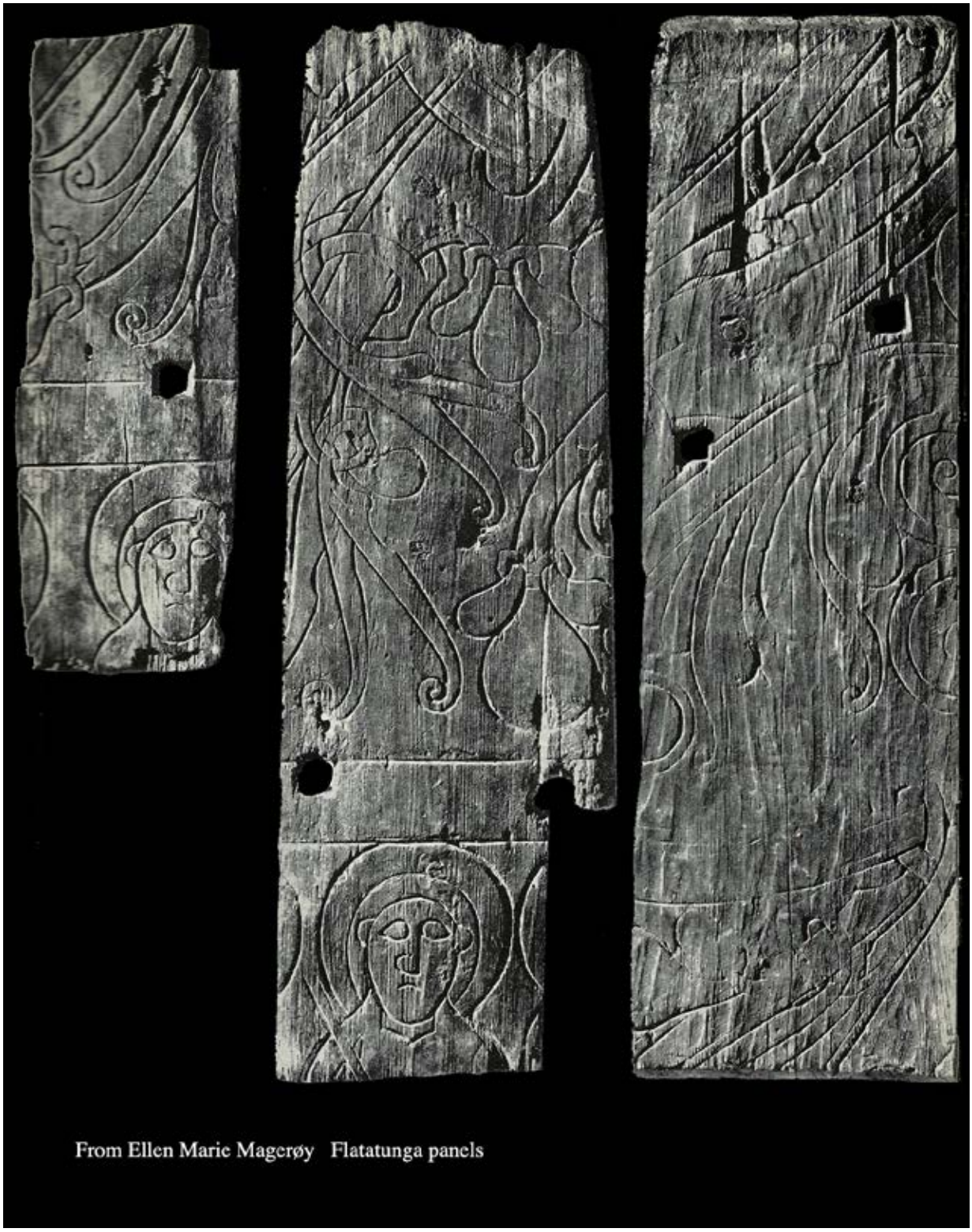


Figure 57. Flatatunga panels. From Magerøy 1961.

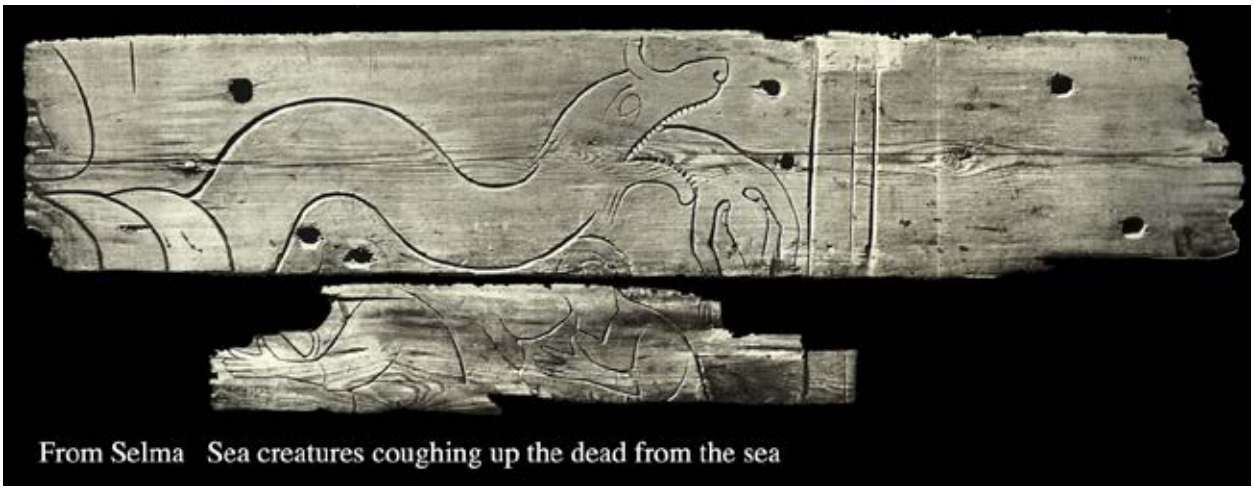


Figure 58. Bjarnastaðahlið panel featuring the damned. From Selma Jónsdóttir 1959.

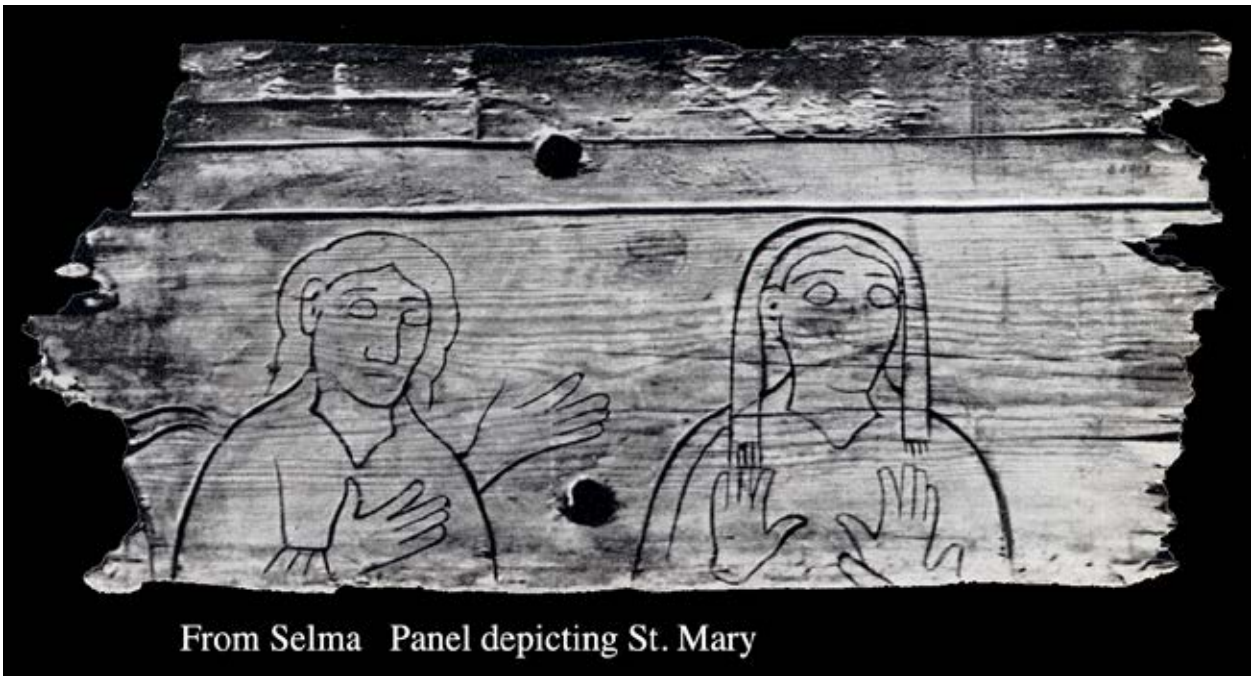


Figure 59. Bjarnastaðahlið panel depicting St. Mary. From Selma Jónsdóttir 1959.



Figure 60. Bjarnastaðahlið and Flatatunga panels side by side. From Selma Jónsdóttir 1959.



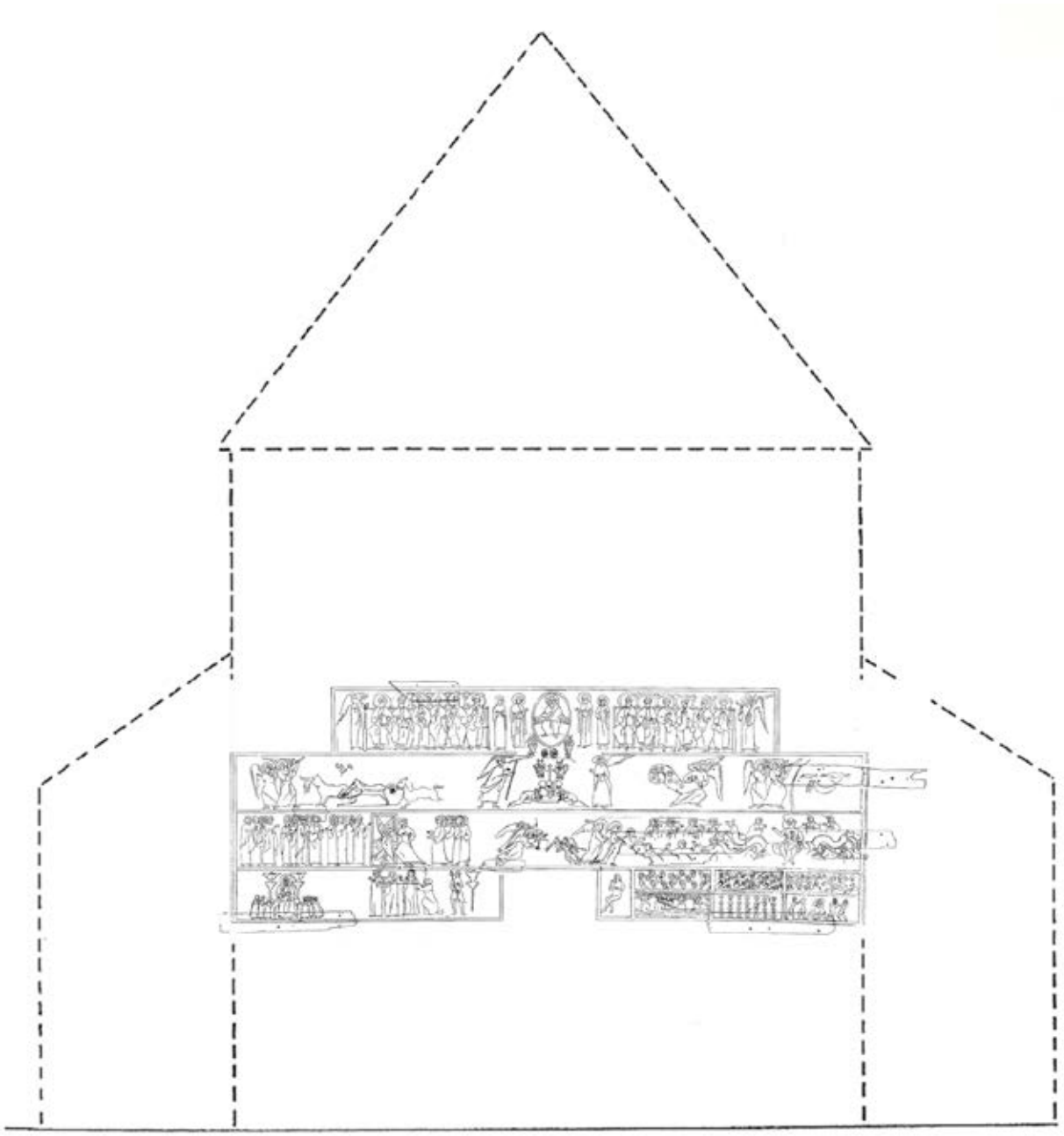
Figure 61. Photo of fragments of St. Cuthbert's coffin. Unknown photographer. From Anglo-Saxon Archaeology: Bede's world at Jarrow. http://users.stlcc.edu/mfuller/canterbury/jarrow.html. Accessed Dec. 1, 2015.



Figure 62. Manuscript illuminations as possible source inspiration for Flatatunga carvings. From Magerøy. 1961.



Figure 63. “V-groove” parting tool demonstration. Photo: Erik Schjeide.



Drawing by Hörður Ágústsson showing how the remaining panels
may have fit an original mural in Hólar Cathedral

Figure 64. Hypothetical placement of a wood-carved Last Judgement Mural in Hólar Cathedral. From Hörður Ágústsson 1989.

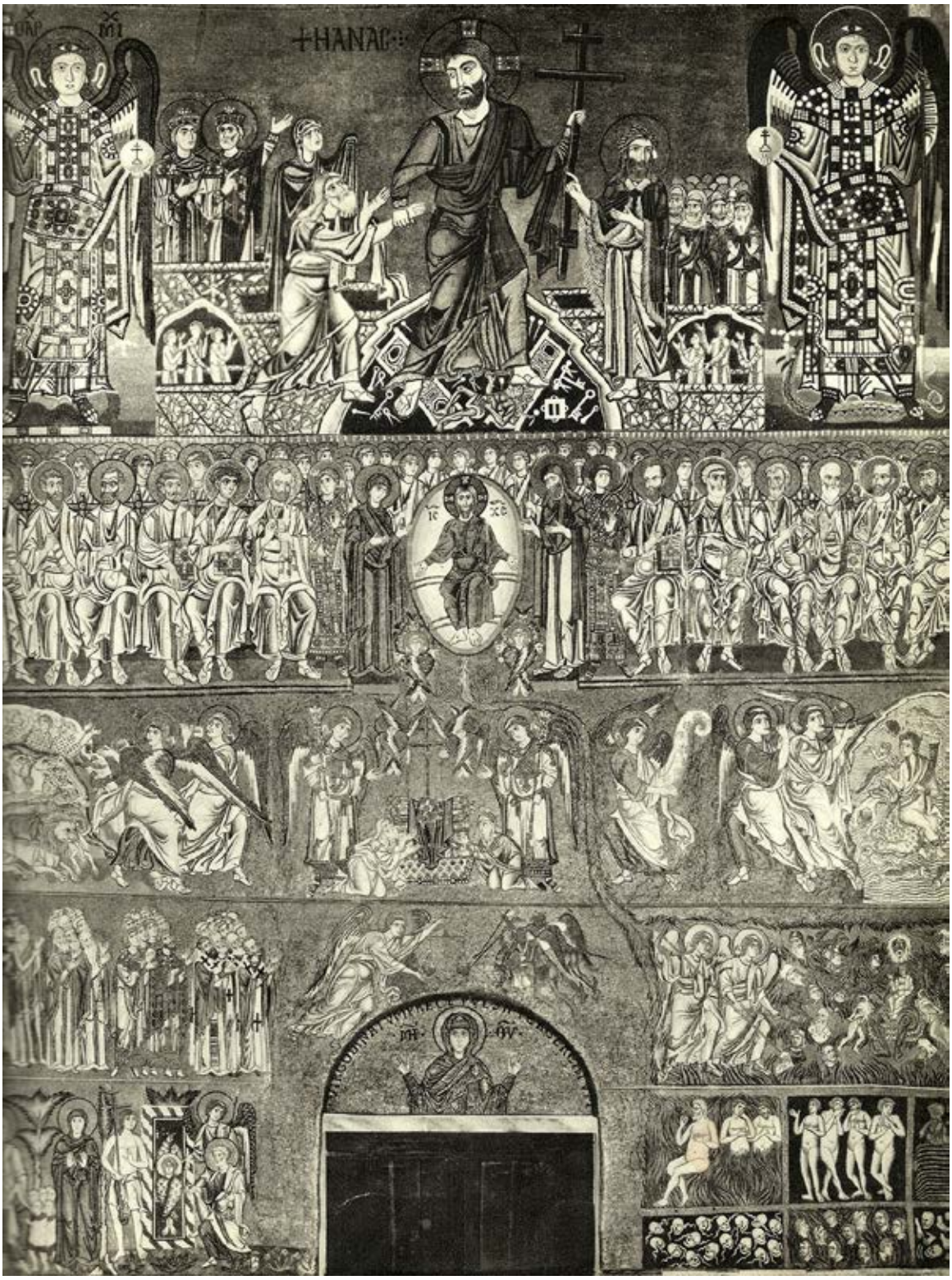


Figure 65. Mosaic in the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello. From Selma Jónsdóttir 1959.



A sample from *Teiknibókin*

Figure 66. *Teiknibók*, a medieval sketchbook. From Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum. http://www.arnastofnun.is/page/arni_magnusson_teiknibokin. Accessed December 1, 2015.



Figure 67. Möðrufell plank details. From Magerøy 1953.



Figure 68. Carved stone in Jurby, Isle of Man, possibly featuring Heimdallr with his horn. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 69. Ardre VIII picture stone, originally in Gotland, now in the Swedish History Museum. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 70. Bridle ornaments from Broa, Gotland. From: *The Vikings*.



Figure 71. Carving in antler known as the Sigtuna warrior. Sigtuna Museum. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 72. Gosforth Cross. St. Mary's Church, Cumbria. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 73. Tängelgårda I picture stone. Gotland. From Lindqvist.



Figure 74. Gaut's Cross at Kirk Michael, Isle of Man. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 75. Heimdallr on Gosforth Cross, St. Mary's Church, Cumbria. Detail engraving by Petersen. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 76. Loki on Gosforth Cross, St. Mary's Church, Cumbria. Detail engraving by Petersen. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 77. Stora Hammars I picture stone. Bunge open air museum, Gotland. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 78. Ardre VIII detail indicating transition of facing figures. From Lindqvist.



Figure 79. Klinte Hunninge I picture stone. Historical Museum of Gotland. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 80. Viking Age gold necklace. Historisk Museum, Oslo. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 81. Hypothetical reconstruction of the woodcarving described by Úlfr in *Húsdrápa* stanza 2. Woodcarving and photo: Erik Schjeide



Figure 82. Bronze Age stone carving from Vitlycke. From: The Vitlycke Rock Carvings and the Bronze Age Farm - a guided tour. http://www.vastsverige.com/en/Tanum/products/109763/The-Vitlycke-Rock-Carvings-and-the-Bronze-Age-Farm-a-guided-tour/. Accessed Dec. 1, 2015.

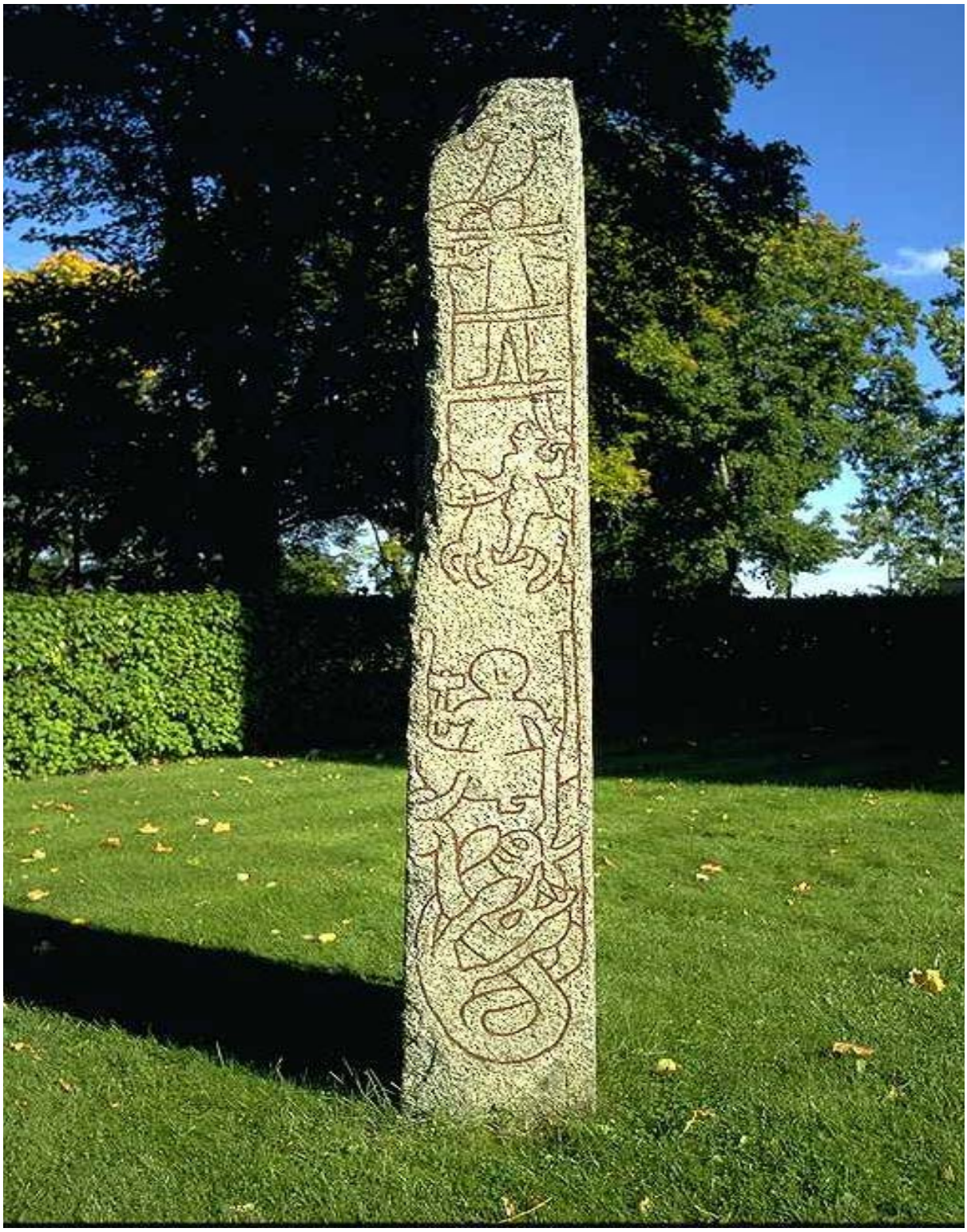


Figure 83. Altuna picture stone. Photo: The Altuna Runestone - the Picture Stones. http://thepicturestones.weebly.com/the-altuna-runestone.html. Accessed: December 1, 2015.



Figure 84. Gosforth fishing slab. St. Mary's Church, Cumbria. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Fig. 155. Schetelígs slæde, en av meiene. Fotografi.

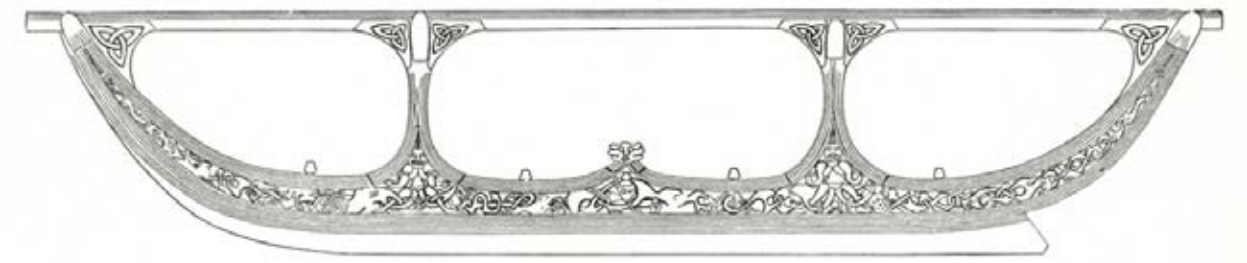


Fig. 156. Schetelígs slæde, oprids av en av meiene.

Figure 85. Triquetrae on *"Schetelígs slæde"*. From Shetelig 1920.



Figure 86. Hørdum stone. Photo: Nationalmuseet: Danske Runeindskrifter. http://runer.ku.dk/VisGenstand.aspx?Titel=Hørdum-billedsten. Accessed: December 1, 2015.

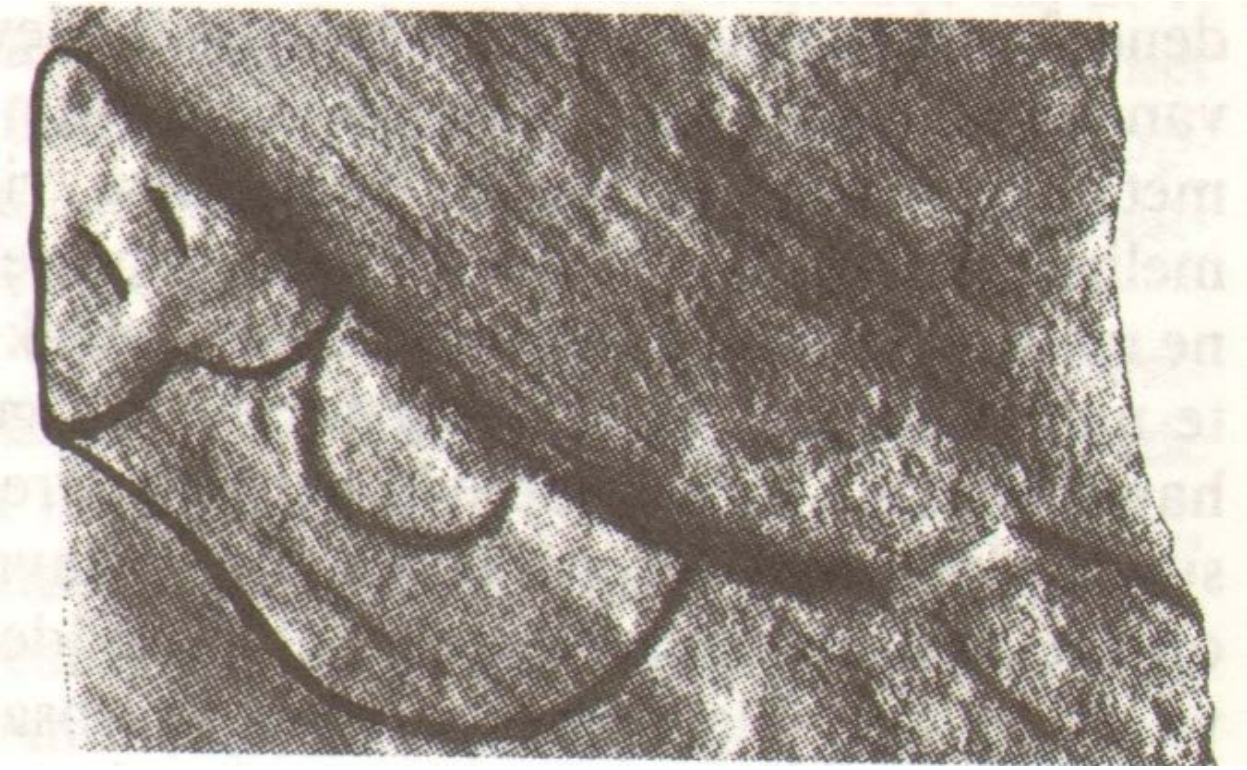


Figure 87. Hørdum stone detail. Photo: Nationalmuseet: Danske Runeindskrifter. http://runer.ku.dk/VisGenstand.aspx?Titel=Hørdum-billedsten. Accessed: December 1, 2015.



Figure 88. Ardre VIII detail. From Lindqvist.



Figure 89. Eyrarland image. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. Accessed December 1, 2015.



Figure 90. Walrus ivory figure from Lund. Photo: Kulturen, Lund.



Figure 91. Amber image from Feddet, Denmark. Photo: Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



Figure 92. Sketch of bronze image from Chernigov, Ukraine, by Elena Kruchina. Perkins 2001: 71.



Figure 93. Whalebone image from Baldursheimur. Photo: Þjóðminjasafn íslands.



Figure 94. Runic stone at Norra Åby, Södermanland, Sweden (Sö 86). Photo: Maskesten - Billedsten fra Vikingtiden. http://www.arild-hauge.com/arild-hauge/se-rune-aeby-vaestermo.jpg. Accessed: December 1, 2015.



Figure 95. Þórr's hammer pendants. Images: Wikimedia Commons, Danish National Museum, Thor's hammer. http://www.odinsvolk.ca/thorshammer.htm. Accessed December 1, 2015.



Figure 96. Freyr miniature. Photo: The Swedish History Museum. https://www.pinterest.com/pin/236579786647665742/. Accessed December 1, 2015.



Figure 97. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarving of Þórr's fishing expedition. Illustrator: Erik Schjeide.



Figure 98. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarving of Þórr's fishing expedition in Hjarðarholt ca. 983. Illustrator: Erik Schjeide.



Figure 99. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarving of Baldr's funeral procession in Hjarðarholt ca. 983. Illustrator: Erik Schjeide.



Figure 100. Multiple views of the Ledberg picture stone. Image posted by User:OlofE on the Swedish Wikipedia. Photo: Olof Ekström 2004-12-31. Montage. Accessed: December 1, 2015.



Figure 101. Stone-carved boar at Maughold, Isle of Man. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 102. Carved animals, including boars on the Sandulf's Cross, Andreas, Isle of Man. Photos: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 103. Óðinn with spear, ravens & being attacked by the wolf Fenrir. Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 104. Ninth century silver Valkyrie pendant found in Denmark. Photo: The National Museum of Denmark. http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/03/viking-world-british-museum-neil-macgregor-exhibition. Accessed: December 1, 2015.



Figure 105. Stone-carved giantess figure from Jurby, Isle of Man. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2012.



Figure 106. Hunnestad picture stone possibly featuring Hyrrokkin. Photo: Hedning~commonswiki.

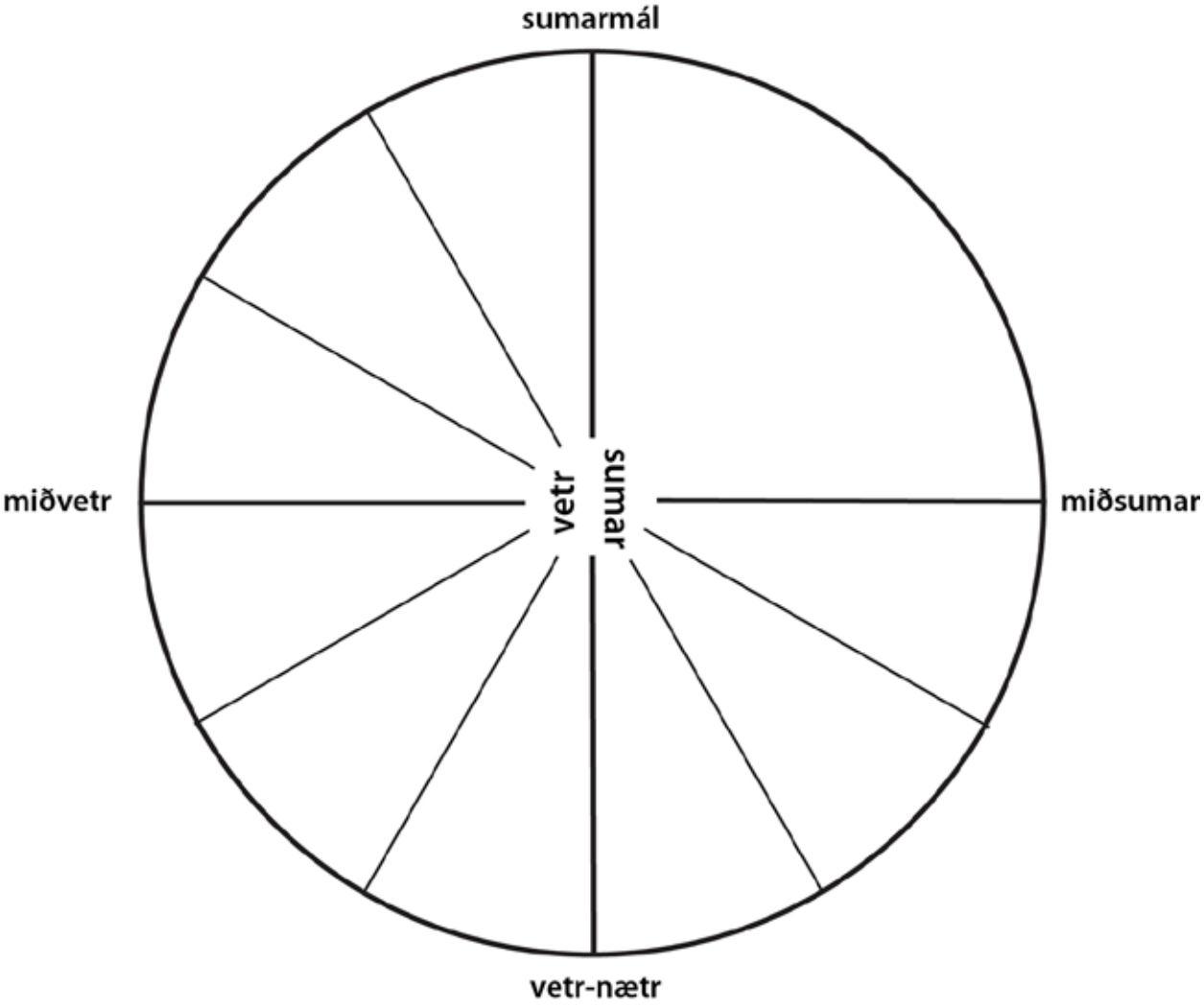


Figure 107. Graph showing divisions of seasons in two halves, quarters and months. Based on Hastrup 1985.



Figure 108. Gundestrup cauldron detail. Photo file: Malene Thyssen, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Malene. Accessed December 1, 2015.

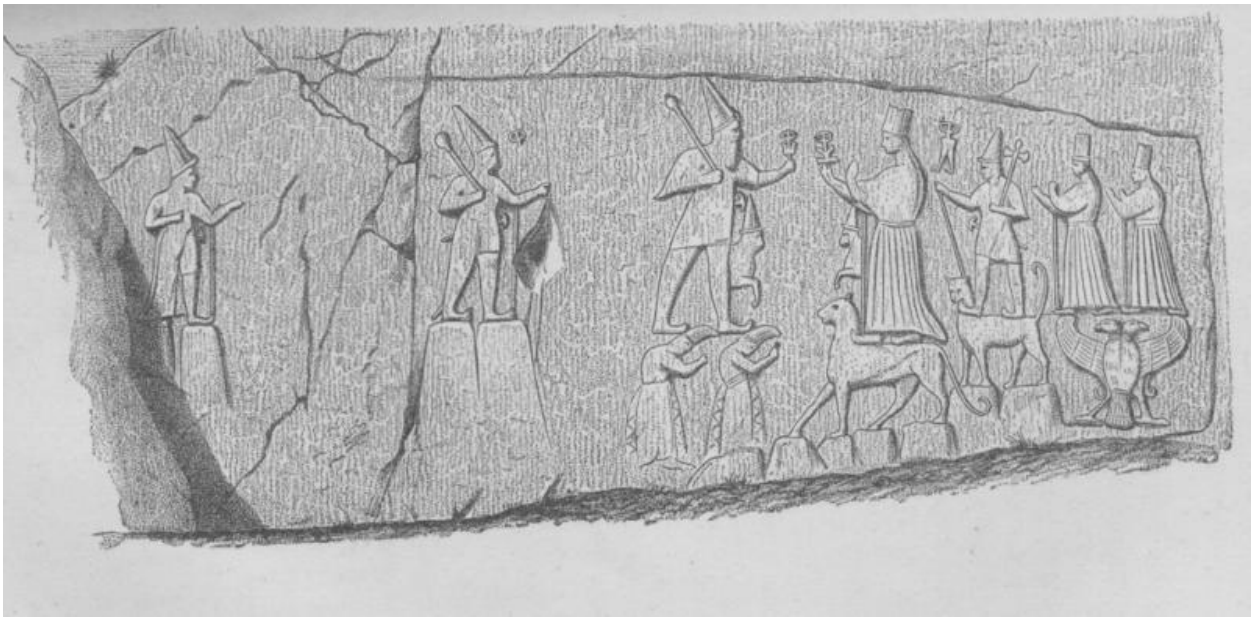


Figure 109. Sketch of stone carving at Boghaz-Keui. Image: The Project Gutenberg eBook, The Hittites, by A. H. Sayce. http://eremita.di.uminho.pt/gutenberg/4/0/2/4/40243/40243-h/40243-h.htm. Accessed: December 1, 2015.

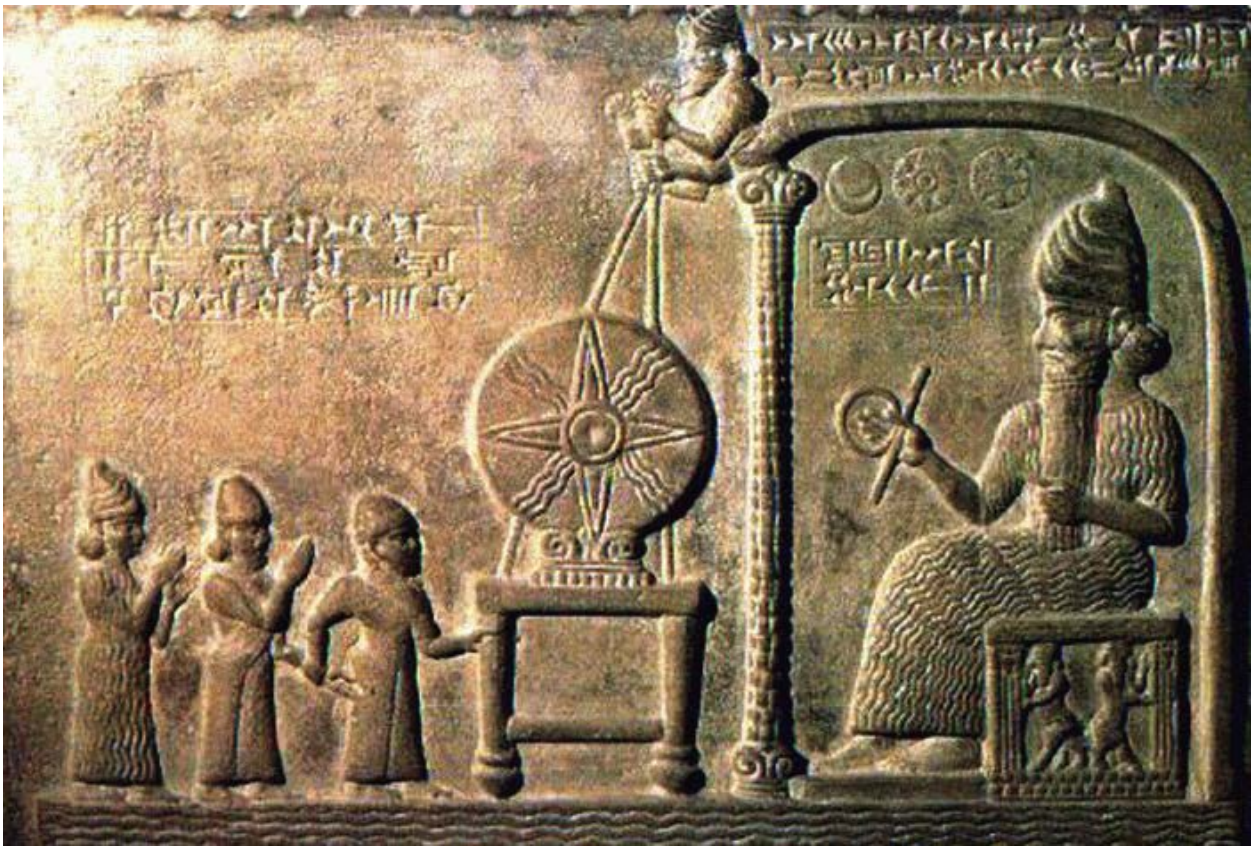


Figure 110. Limestone tablet depicting Shamash the sun god holding rod and ring symbols of kingship, 860 BCE - 850 BCE. Image: http://therealsamizdat.com/tag/shamash/. Accessed December 1, 2015.

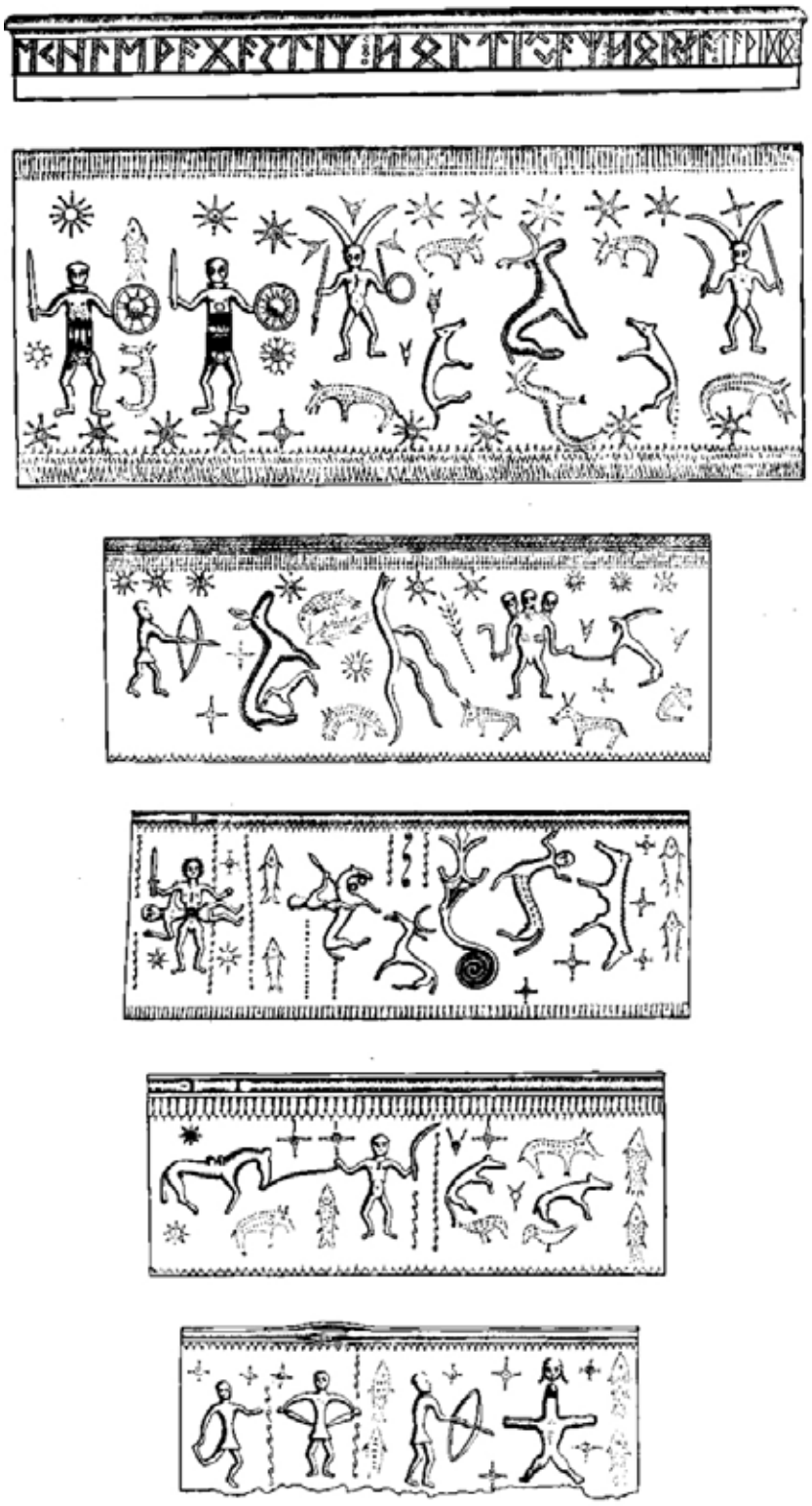


Figure 111. Sketch of the iconography on the small Gallehus horn. The top central figure holds a rod and ring. Image: Wiki. Drawing of the image panels of the smaller of the Gallehus Horns, projected onto a flat surface, by J. R. Paulli (1734), immediate source titus.uni-frankfurt.de.

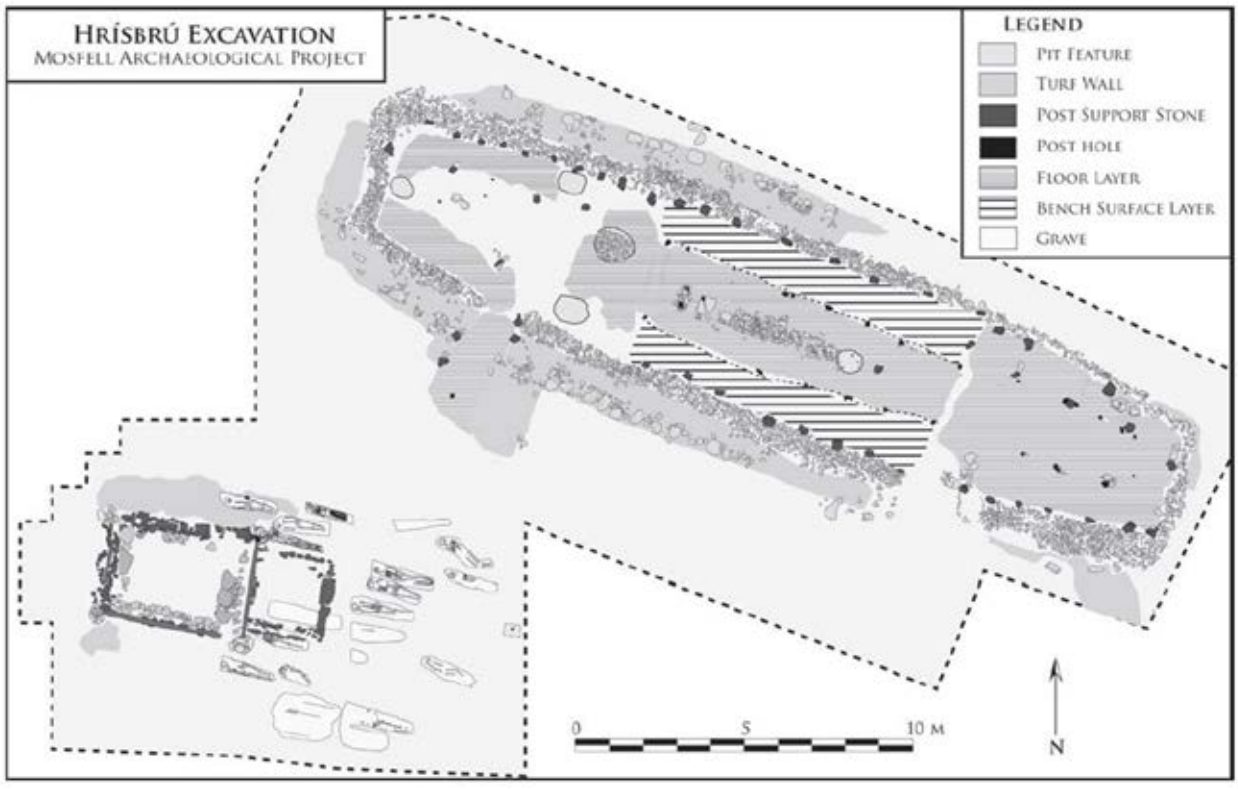


Figure 112. Foundation plan of the Hrísbrú excavation. From Zori, Byock 2014. Mosfell Archaeological Project.

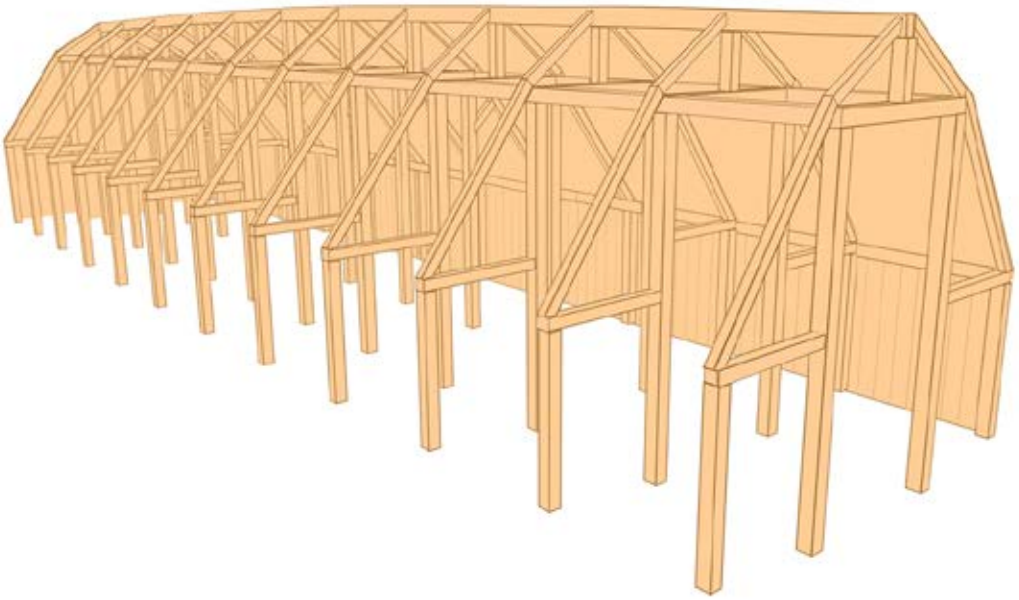


Figure 113. Sketch of Viking Age three aisle construction. Illustration: Erik Schjeide.



Figure 114. Stöng foundation excavation. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2015.

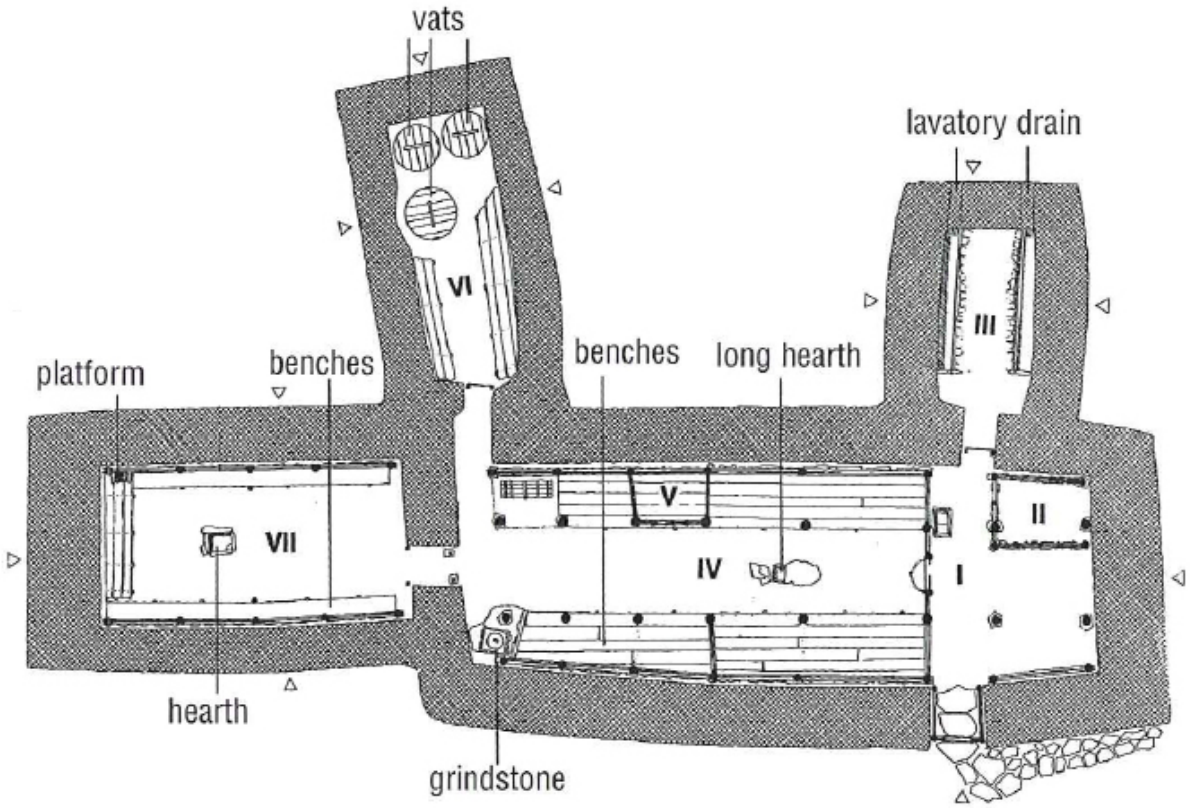


Figure 115. Stöng floor plan. Þjóðveldisbærinn website: http://www.thjodveldisbaer.is/byggingar/baerinn/

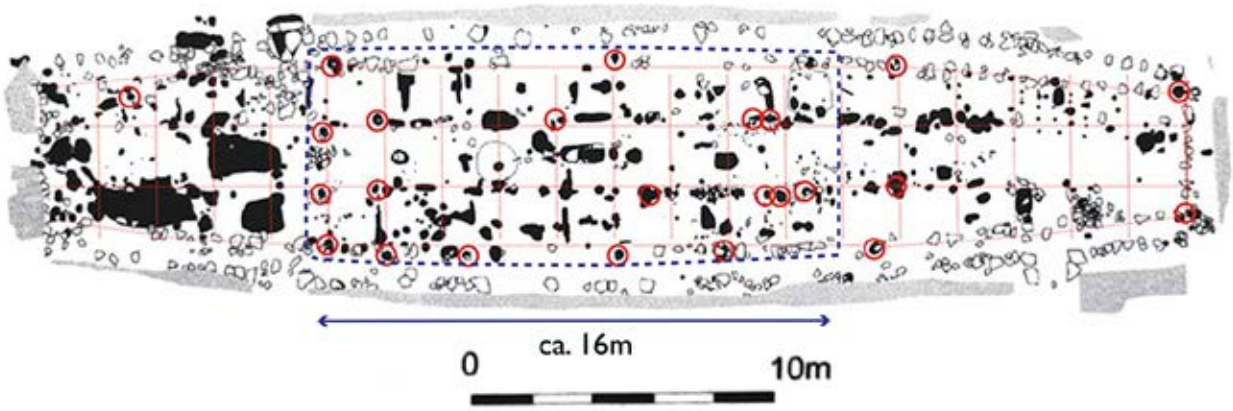


Figure 116. Hofstaðir floor plan showing area of central hall. From: http://antiquity.ac.uk/reviews/sindbaek329.html. Accessed: July, 2015.

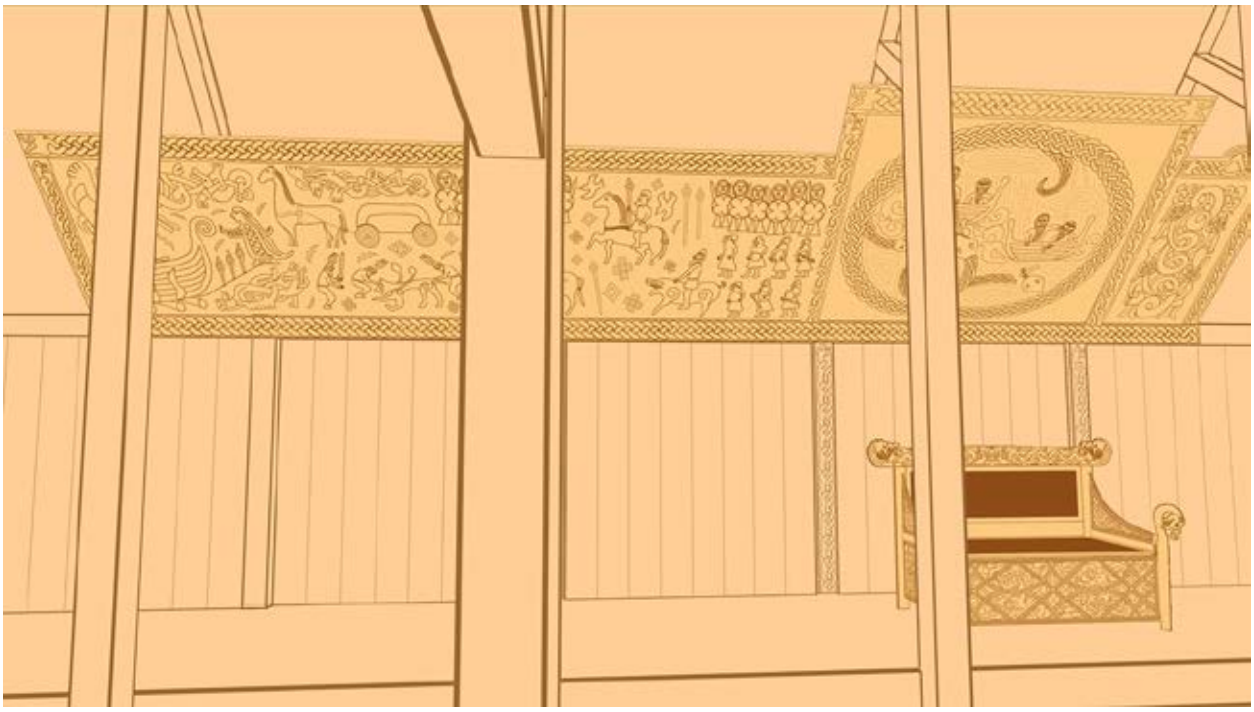


Figure 117. Hypothetical placement of woodcarvings on ceiling. Illustration: Erik Schjeide.

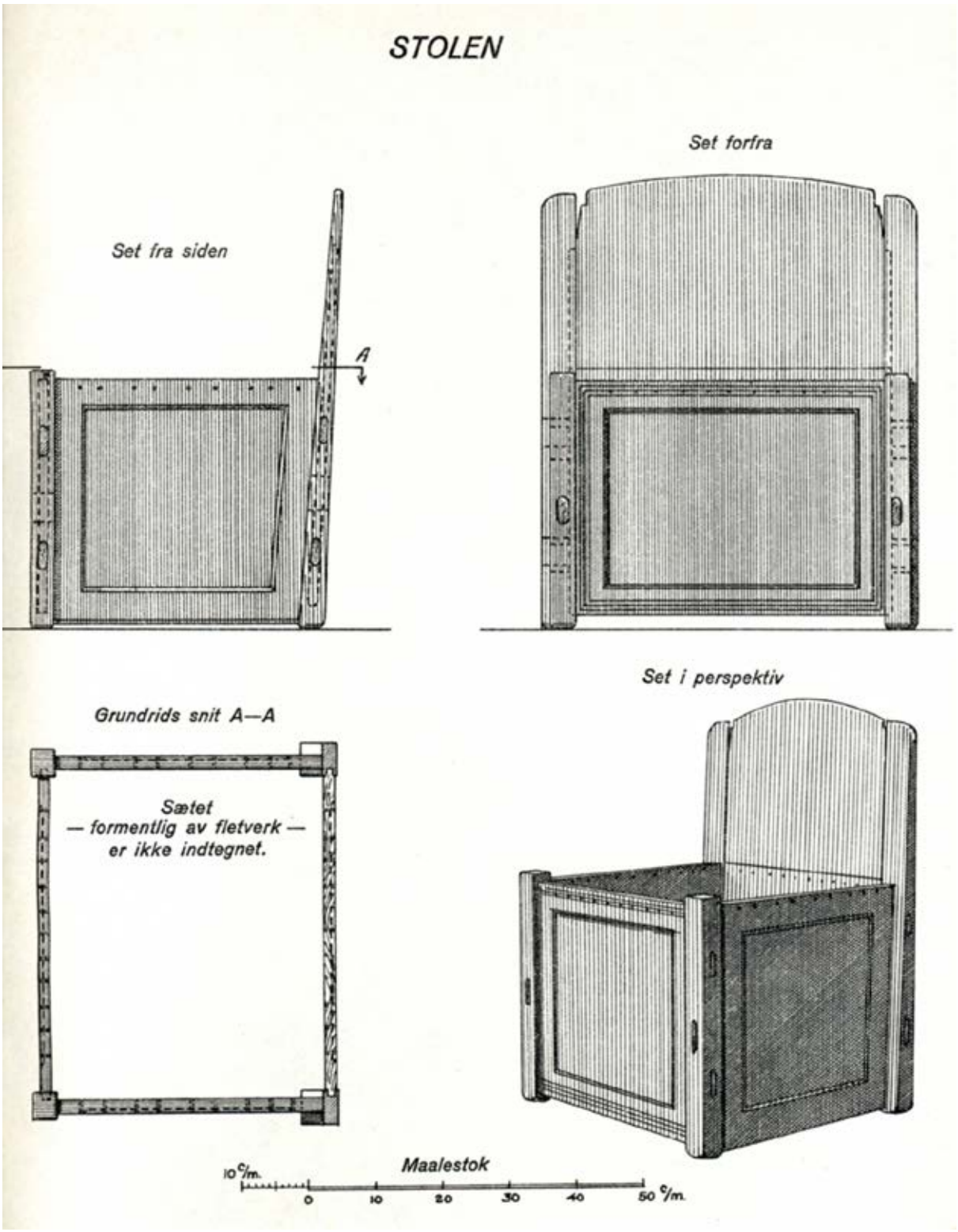


Figure 118. Drafting of Oseberg beech chair. From: Grieg 1928.



Figure 119. Top left: Oseberg chair. Photo: Eirik Irgens Johnsen. Top right: Blakarstolen. Photo: Kulturhistorisk museum. https://hoveloghage.wordpress.com/2014/05/06/middelalderens-stolpe-stol/. Accessed December 1, 2015.
Bottom left: Gåråstolen. Photo: Grieg 1928. Bottom right: Gålås-stolens back. Photo: https://hoveloghage.wordpress.com/tag/stol/. Accessed December 1, 2015.



Figure 120. Silver miniature from Lejre. Photos from: Ole Malling, Roskilde Museum.



Figure 121. Hypothetical *ǫndvegi*. Illustration: Erik Schjeide.

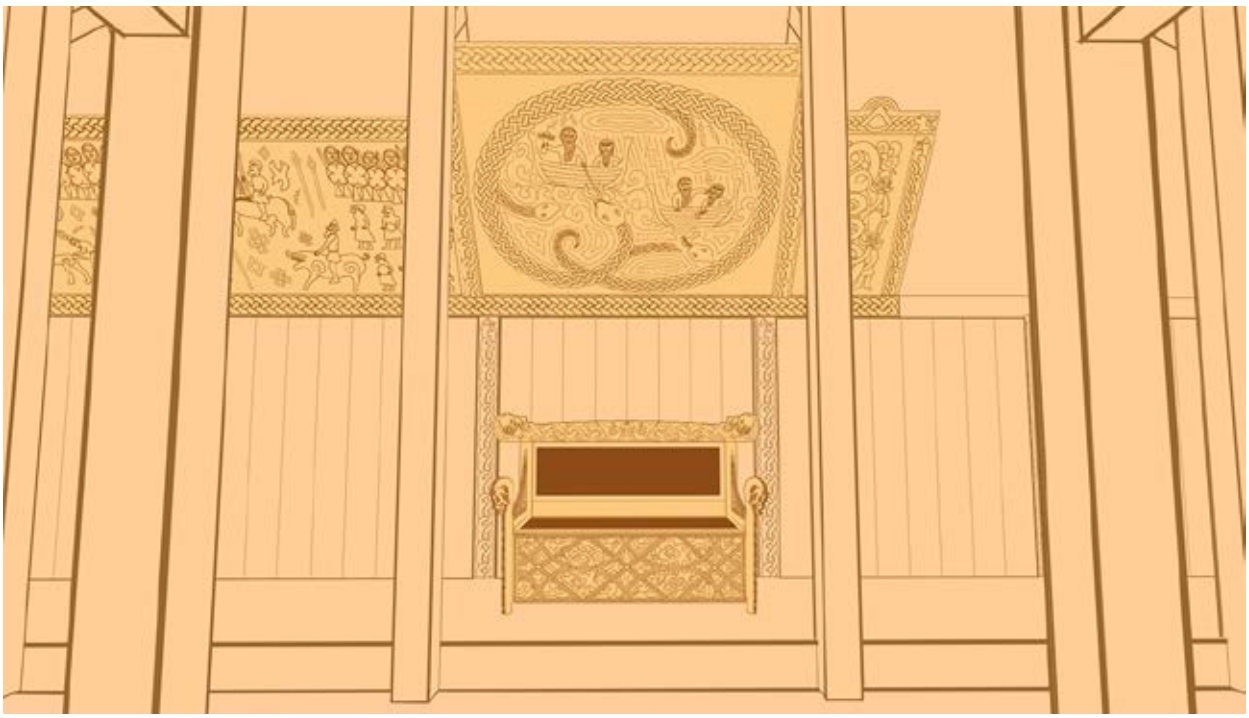


Figure 122. View from *óæðra ǫndvegi*. Illustration: Erik Schjeide.



Figure 123. Þingvellir National Park. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2009.

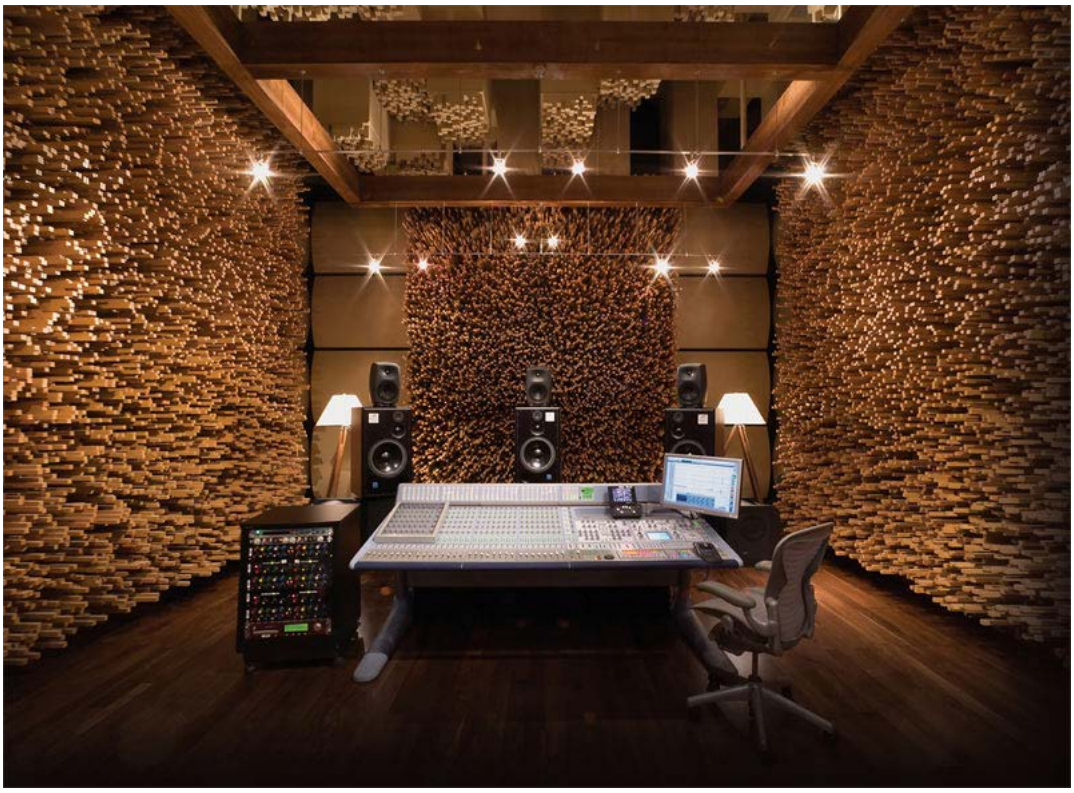


Figure 124. Blackbird's Studio C in Nashville. Photo: Digizin www2.digidesign.com.



Figure 125. Smoke hole at the reconstructed dwelling at Stöng. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2015.



Figure 126. Possible site for Óláfr's *eldhús* at Hjarðarholt. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2015.



Figure 127. Stones at a possible site for Óláfr's *eldhús* at Hjarðarholt. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2015.



Figure 128. Photo of contemporary farm from across the river showing possible sites for Óláfr's *eldhús* at Hjarðarholt. Photo: Erik Schjeide. 2015.

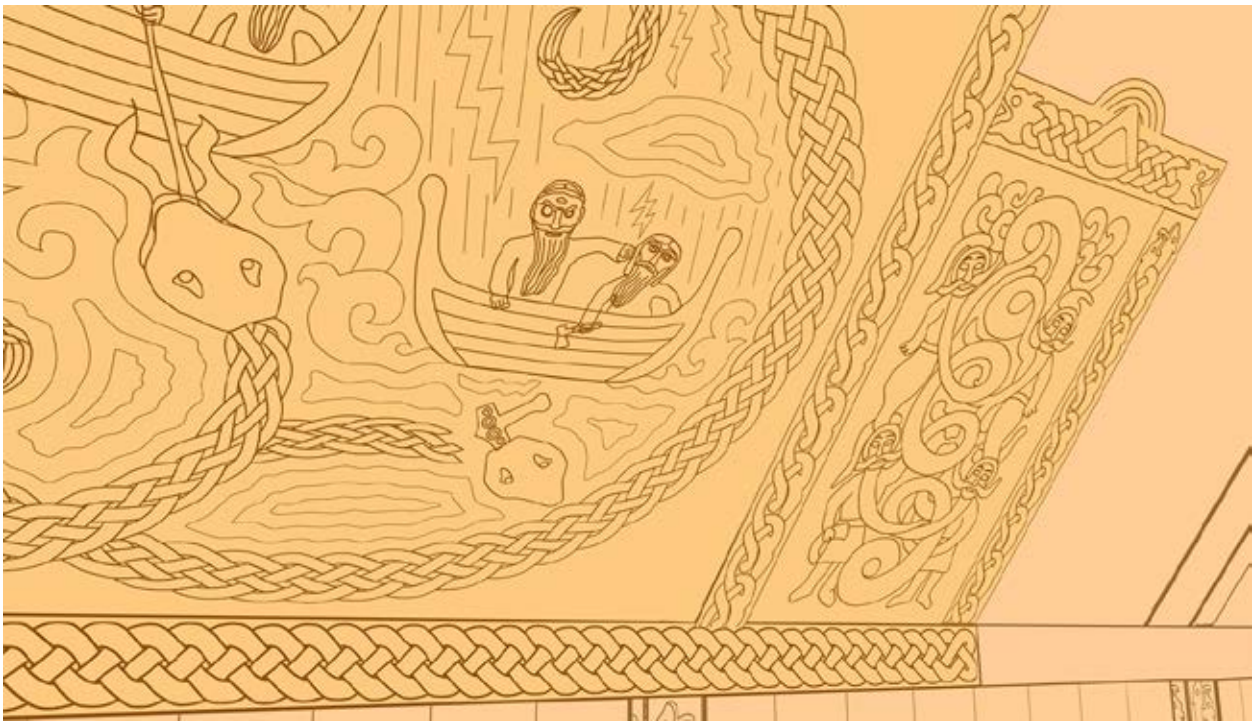


Figure 129. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarvings looking east. Illustration: Erik Schjeide.



Figure 130. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarvings looking north. Illustration: Erik Schjeide.

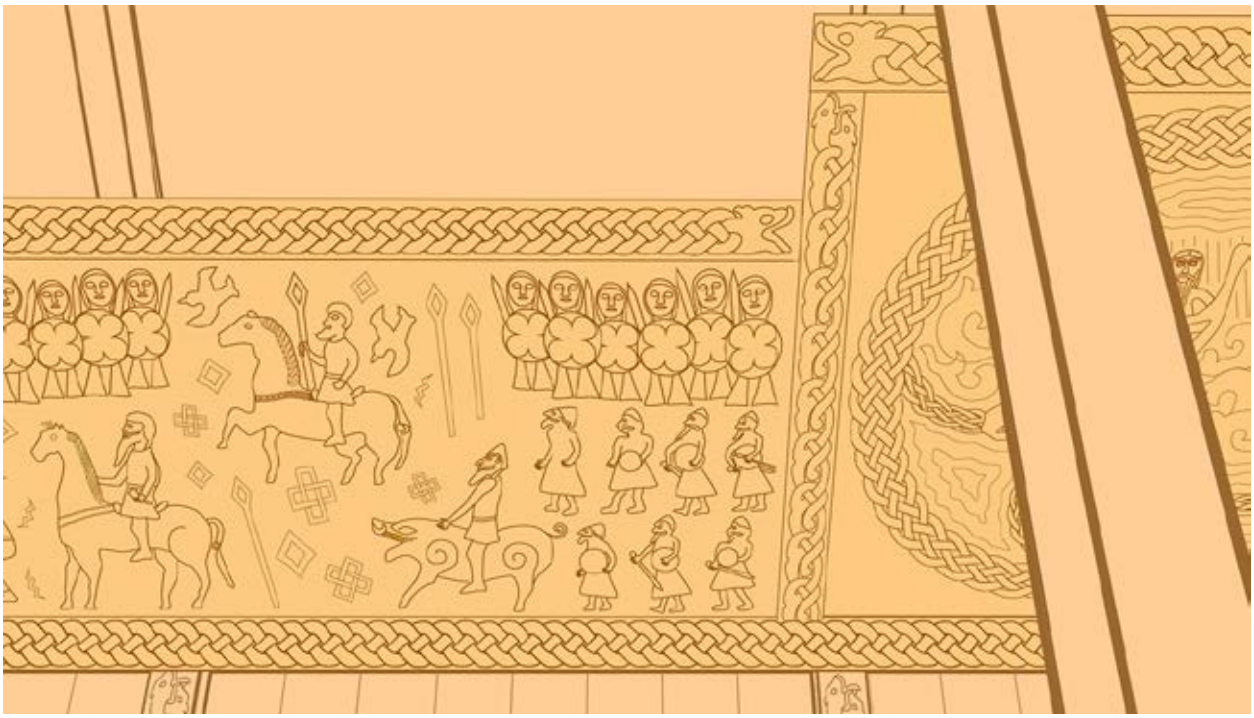


Figure 131. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarvings ambling west. Illustration: Erik Schjeide.



Figure 132. Sketch of hypothetical woodcarvings looking west. Illustration: Erik Schjeide.