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Forfatter: Karina Delin Morales

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Veileder: Ellen Fenzel Arnold

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The Norse way of Traveling

Across country, at Sea, and in Imagined spaces, in the late Iron Age and Viking Age.

by

Karina Delin Morales

Master Thesis in History,
University of Stavanger,
Institutt for kultur- og språkvitenskap,
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Abstract:

This paper is looking at what kinds of modes the Norse people are traveling with, on land, at sea and in imagined spaces. With the use of the Icelandic sagas, objects, and research done with reconstructing and reenactment of tools and methods of traveling this paper explores a new perspective on mode of traveling. The paper looks at how the Icelandic sagas can be representational to modes of traveling and what's happening during the voyages for the Norse people in combination with archeological findings of objects that have been used to travel with or have been brought during the voyage. The paper is also looking at how the Norse people are using their knowledge of storytelling and readings of nature to travel from place to place. The Imagined travels happens in imagined spaces which is created through the storytelling of the Icelandic Sagas, both the dreamed space and what happens around death.

Abstrakt:

Denne oppgaven ser på hvilke reisemåter det norrøne folket har brukt, på land, til havs, og i imaginære rom. Ved bruk av Islendinge sagaene, objekter, forskning av rekonstruksjon og *reenactment* av verktøy, redskaper og objekter brukt til å reise med har denne oppgave utforsket de forskjellige måtene det norrøne folk reiste på. Oppgaven ser på hvordan Islendinge Sagaene kan brukes som representativ for de forskjellige reisemåtene i en kombinasjon med arkeologiske funn. Noen av funnene er brukt til å utføre reisen med eller har vært noe de har tatt med seg under reisen. Oppgaven ser også på hvordan det norrøne folket har bruk historier og kunnskap om å lese naturen til å reise og forflytte seg. Det er gjennom historiefortelling at den imaginære reisen oppstår, både i form av drømt rom og det som skjer rundt døden.

This process has been challenging, fun and interesting. There have been days where I would feel like I had all the energy in the world and felt I did so much progress, and there have been days where I could not wait until I would be done. I would like to thank all the people who have been supporting me through this year, and with my work. There are some I would like to give an extra thanks to.

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I really appreciate all friends and family that have understood that I would not be available all weekends and afternoons for social events and thanks to all my colleagues who have been reading and discussing my thesis with me. I want to thank all my peers for the excellent class environment, where it has been possible to discuss all our projects and for supporting each other. I'm looking forward to seeing how we all are doing in the end.

Karina Delin Morales, May 2023.

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Introduction

Every Monday morning, I stand at the door at the Iron Age farm in Stavanger, waiting for a group of tourists. The group that I'm waiting for reached port of Stavanger with a cruise ship while I have been driving into work with my car. The white diesel bus rolls into the parking and stops. The automatic doors opens and out from the buss comes a group of about thirty guests, in their fancy clothes. They don't notice me, but their buss guide tells them that the Lady of the House is waiting for them. The look in their eyes when they see me in my costume makes me smile. I can see that some of them are a bit confused, some don't seem to take notice that my clothes are different than theirs, and others get big round eyes, and their jaw drops before some of them dare to ask if they can take a picture of me. They are here to join me for a tour that's called 'Iron age way for a day'. Some of the guests come with an expectation of hearing about Vikings and some have the expectation that the 'Viking way of life' starts at 793AD when the first raid of Lindisfarne happens.¹ It's around that period we have some of the first written records of the Viking age. What I see that they often forget is that the people of the Viking age did not just suddenly appear in 793, and that the people in the North have a continuity in culture, language, tradition, religion, and knowledge that goes further back in time. While I'm standing and waiting for them to gather themselves after the bus ride and walking like a flock of sheep over the parking lot, I'm starting to think about the difference in traveling modes. How did the Norse people get from point A to point B, and what happened on these travels? What kind of objects did they use or bring? What can the sagas tell us about the different travels they were doing, or what don't they tell us?

The Viking age is counted to be from 800 to 1030AD and the Iron Age is about 500BC to 500AD and between these two periods are the migration period.² The people in these periods did not use the technology of writing and record everything like we are doing today with all our gadgets and machines. Consequently, the closest text from this period then are the Sagas which are written from about year 1000 to at the latest, 1300.³ It is when Christianity comes to the Nordic counties that the oral stories are starting to be written down. To narrow down my thesis I have chosen the time framing from about 500AD to about 1400AD. The reason for this is because of the sagas and the people that I'm investigating. The people that lived in the Iron age were not too different from the people of the Viking age.

¹ Jón Vidar Sigurdsson and Anne Irene Riisøy, *Norsk Historie 800-1536*, (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget. 2011), 22.

² Bergljot Solberg, *Jernalderen i Norge*, (Oslo: Cappelens Forlag. 2003), 212.

³ Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, red. *Islendingesagaene, Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d I* (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), XXIX.

They had the same culture, language, religion, and traditions until around year 1000AD when the Nordic countries were slowly starting to convert to Christianity. The process of conversion and adjustments takes time and it's not something that happens overnight. The people of the Viking age were still building their way of life on how their ancestors lived.

The period that is called 'The Viking Age' is a small period of time and it got the name 'Viking' out from one of the most known aspects. And that is the action that the people of the Scandinavian lands did, namely going on a *Viking*. The word Viking is not a name of a people, but a verb and an action. What it means is that the people or person would travel out from their homestead or where they were occupying themselves at that moment, to raid or trade with others. Today the word Viking is commonly used as a label or a noun on the Norse people living within the time of the Viking age. Since this 'label' is a modern label on a people but used in a misleading way, in my opinion, I have decided to not use the word Viking for the people I am talking about. I would rather use the Norse people, which I believe is more appropriate. It might be that scholars and academia are commonly using terms like the Norse people and such, but I find it still to common amongst tourists to use the word 'Viking' and not knowing what it actually means.

The Norse people didn't one spring, just figure out that they should build a boat and start raiding, trading, and travel to other places. This traditional knowledge had been part of their cultural heritage for a long time. There has been a development in the technology of all the objects that they use while traveling to something that is more advanced than what they previously had. Therefore, I will look at the late Iron Age as well for my thesis so that the deeper foundation of their culture heritage and the development of their knowledge around traveling can be included and understood in this thesis. My goal with this paper is to bring together a variety of knowledge and to show modes of traveling as a whole.

State of the Field

There are many who have been studying the Norse people, where they went, their culture, the everyday life, the religion of the Norse people, the sagas and so many other topics about this people and period. They have been a subject of study in several fields and not only in history. Therefore, it is reasonable to be in a conversation with not only research done by traditional historians but also with archeologists, museums and other fields that are doing research on the Norse people.

Since my main textual sources are the Icelandic sagas it is necessary to know some of the research that have been previously done on them. Already in the 15 – 1600 scholars had

an interest for the sagas as text and a historical product.⁴ Later in time there have been a need to collect some of the more recent studies and introduce the field for students and others who are interested in the sagas, and not just as entertainment. In 1985 Carol Clover and John Lindow edited a book that had that purpose, *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature – A Critical Guide*.⁵ This collection of six bibliographical essays is a good introduction to a bigger field of the saga studies, where a student or others who would want an easy overview of all the research done in the late 1800 to the early 1900 could get that. Within academia it is common knowledge that the sagas can't be used as factual accountings of the past, that they are filled with 'magic', superstition, and myths. Therefore, it is an effective way to introduce oneself to the saga studies with reading *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature – A Critical Guide*.⁶

However, now in more recent times the field of Nordic studies or 'Viking' studies has become more and more popular to combine written text and archeological findings or other fields of studies to challenge some of the already established studies. *Viking worlds, Things, Spaces and Movement* is another book where fourteen different essays have been collected after an international conference held in Oslo in 2013.⁷ The conference had a goal to give space to new voices and approaches to both saga studies and the study of the period of Iron age and Viking age, which is well represented in this collection of essays. There has also been done solid research where the story is told through objects that has been found instead of only relying on written text, like Cat Jarman have done in her book *River Kings The Vikings from Scandinavia to the Silks Roads*.⁸ Her research is solid and written not only for academia, but also for the not academic people who are interested in history. She argues that there was a closer bond between east and west than what was believed. The same thing has Anders Winroth done in his book *The age of the Vikings*, where he is introducing the reader to the age of the Vikings with a realistic perspective on the society of the Vikings.⁹ He argues that earlier monkish chronicles, stressed the violence and exotic nature of their Viking ancestors. Winroth strips away all the modern pop culture fiction that has been applied to the Vikings in general and he touches on several topics in his book.

⁴ Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d I*, XXIX.

⁵ Clover, Carol J. And Lindow, John, ed. *Old Norse – Icelandic Literature a critical guide*. (London: Cornell University press, 1985).

⁶ Clover, Carol J. And Lindow, John, ed. *Old Norse – Icelandic Literature a critical guide*. (London: Cornell University press, 1985).

⁷ Eriksen, Marianne Hem. *Viking Worlds: Things, Spaces and Movement*. Oxford: Oxbow books, 2019.

⁸ Cat Jarman, *Elvekonger, En ny historie om vikingene. Fra Skandinavia til silkeveiene*, (Oslo: Forlaget Press, 2021).

⁹ Anders Winroth, *The age of the Vikings*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 2014).

It has also been starting to be popular to study the Iron age and Viking age with an environmental view. Both for established historians and students of history. Vicki Ellen Szabo took it upon herself to explore the early industry of whaling in the Viking society in her book *Monstrous fishes and the Mead-Dark Sea: Whaling in the medieval north Atlantic*.¹⁰ Where she is looking at the written laws, sagas and other medieval sources of and on the Vikings and how they hunted for whales and the complex situations that occurs around whales. She is looking at how the environment affects the Vikings at sea and how rules control where the Vikings would go or how to act on land and at sea when there is a possibility for getting hold of resources like whales. Reinhard Hennig is a literary scholar who has done solid research on Natural resources as sustainable commons in the sagas in his paper *Sagas for Sustainability? Commons, conflict and cooperation in the sagas of Icelanders*.¹¹ His paper is compellingly arguing how the sagas as written text could be promoting ‘behavior that could lead to long-term sustainability in the managing of natural resources as commons [...]’¹² Another take on the sagas with an environmental view, is the Master Thesis of Markus Armstrong Jonassen done in 2021 where he is using five Icelandic bishop sagas to explore the presence of the environment. His *Between garden and God: and exploration of the environmental presence in five Icelandic bishop sagas* is building on a growing interest for environmental studies of the Viking age.¹³ He argues that the bishop sagas show a bigger association to and control over the Icelanders’ local environment than the ocean and other more distant phenomena.

The mysteries of the religion of the Norse people have been interesting not only for the business of entertainment but also in the academic field. Folke Ström did his research on Norse religion in the fifties and sixties and published amongst the books *Norsk Hedendom*¹⁴ and *Diser, Nornor, Valkyrjor Fruktbarhetskult och sakralt kungadöme i Norden*.¹⁵ Where he is discussing the mythology of the Norse people. Else Mundal specialized herself on *Fylgja* in the sagas with her research book *Fylgjemotiva i norrøn Litteratur*.¹⁶ Her book gives a good

¹⁰ Vicki Ellen Szabo, *Monstrous fishes and the Mead-Dark Sea: Whaling in the medieval north Atlantic*, (Boston: Brill. 2008).

¹¹ Reinhard Hennig, «Sagas for Sustainability? Commons, conflict and cooperation in the sagas of Icelanders.» *Scania Journal of Medieval Norse Studies* N. 3, (2020), [https://www.academia.edu/44085910/Sagas_for_Sustainability_Commons_Conflict_and_Cooperation_in_the_Sagas_of_Icelanders/].

¹² Hennig, *Sagas for Sustainability?*, 60.

¹³ Markus Armstrong Jonassen, *Mellom hage og himmel: en utforskning av miljøets tilstedeværelse i fem islandske bispesagaer*, (Master Thesis, University of Stavanger, 2021).

¹⁴ Folke Ström, *Norsk Hedendom*, (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1961).

¹⁵ Folke Ström, *Diser, Nornor, Valkyrjor Fruktbarhetskult och sakralt kungadöme i Norden*, (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1954).

¹⁶ Else Mundal, *Fylgjemotiva i norrøn Litteratur*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlagets trykningssentral, 1974).

foundation to understanding this concept of *Fylgja* within the Norse religion. Later there has been an interest to reexplain some of these concepts and ideas in a more modern voice. Gro Steinsland is building some of her research on Folke Ström and Else Mundals' research in her book *Norrøn Religion Myter, riter, samfunn*.¹⁷ But there has also been an interest in using the research to explore new aspects, like Eldar Heide does in his paper *Gammalnordisk sjelsførestellingar i samband med angrep*.¹⁸

With modern times comes new approaches and new areas of interest, studies of tools and objects have had a rise in more recent times. Researchers have found new ways of finding answers through reenactment, reconstruction, and experimental archeology. The Viking ships have given us a way to understand where the Norse people traveled, their trading and raiding. There has been plenty of this type of research. Through reconstructing ships like the project *Toogtyvende tværfaglige Vikingsymposium* and testing of building of techniques and sailing the ships, we have gained somewhat knowledge of the Norse people's way of travels.¹⁹ The project started in a small scale with reconstructing a ship in paper and then building a full-scale ship of Skuldelev 2.

Writing as a technology didn't reach the Nordic countries before around year 1000 AD, and Gísli Sigurðsson has done research on the sagas as text that stems from an oral tradition in his book *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*.²⁰ He is talking about the oral tradition behind the sagas and how the oral tradition and that the tradition of writing can be problematic when they are put together like the sagas have been done. One of the terms that he is using in his research is *Verisimilitude*, which also Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn are doing in their book *Writing Faith Text, sign, & History in the Miracles of saint foy*.²¹ *Verisimilitude* is a term that is used for a technique in writing text, when something needs a more detailed explanation to appear more convincing.²² This 'Verisimilitude effect' appears in several of the sagas when places or actions that are unrealistic is being described by the storytellers. The storytellers being Christian men writing a couple of hundred years later than the happenings of the story might have actively used this

¹⁷ Gro Steinsland, *Norrøn Religion Myter, riter, samfunn*, (Oslo: PAX Forlag, 2005).

¹⁸ Eldar Heide, «Gammalnordisk sjelsførestellingar i samband med angrep,» In *Krig och fred i vendel- och vikingtida traditioner*, ed. H. Rydving and S. Olsson, (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2016).

¹⁹ Niels Lund, ed. *Toogtyvende tværfaglige Vikingsymposium* (Denmark: Hikuin og Afdeling for Middelalderarkeologi, 2003).

²⁰ Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*, (Cambridge Mass: Milman Parry Collection 2004).

²¹ Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, *Writing Faith Text, sign & History in the miracles of saint foy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

²² Ashley and Sheingorn, *Writing Faith*, 29.

effect to convince the readers of the time. Therefore, it is crucial to be aware of this term and writing technique when reading sagas and *tættir*. Nevertheless, the Norse people that had the oral tradition of telling the stories and that started to tell these stories might also use the *verisimilitude* effect to make the stories more believable for the listener.

Another term that is useful to have in mind when working on the Iron age and Viking age is the term ‘the past’, which Herman Paul explains in detail in his book *Key Issues in Historical Theory*.²³ His book is a technical book where he discusses ideas and theories around historical thinking. In chapter two he examines the term ‘the past’ and how it can be divided into four categories. The four sub terms that he is using are, *the chronological past*, *the completed past*, *the strange past* and *the present past*.²⁴ He further goes on to define each of these sub terms of the past. The chronological past as a line of the time with an understanding of past, present future.²⁵ The completed past as ideas that is done and replaced with new ones.²⁶ The strange past as a past that differs from our present so much that it becomes a kind of otherness.²⁷ And the present past as something from the past existing in our present, like objects and such.²⁸ These terms and his conclusions have been an inspiring instigator to think of the development of the way the Norse people are traveling and what kind of items they are using to move and travel.

Approach and method

For this project I have done a process where I have used quite much of my time with my primary sources being the Icelandic sagas. I have varied my reading between close reading and surface reading to be able to do a selection of the sagas and *tættir* that I’m using here in this paper. By doing a quick reading over the collection of the sagas I was able to get an overview of which of the sagas and *tættir* that would be interesting for a close reading. After I had done the rough selection of the sagas and *tættir* it was clear which kind of objects I would have to research and find to fill in the gaps of the information that was needed or to strengthen my arguments. To be able to have a balanced base of the sagas, I did choose a variety of both well-known sagas and *tættir* and those who are not well known. Since several of the sagas and *tættir* in the collection I have used contain those who have not been

²³ Herman Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2015).

²⁴ Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory*, 19.

²⁵ Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory*, 19.

²⁶ Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory*, 21.

²⁷ Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory*, 23.

²⁸ Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory*, 25.

translated before 2014, I got access to a lot of those who have not been thoroughly used previously.

I'm not arguing that any of the sagas and *tættir* are true but I'm using them as textual representation of the Norse people's knowledge around moving and traveling from point A to point B, and what kind of mode they are doing their moving and traveling.

The structure of this paper is done in a theme-based order, it starts with the more concrete, moving of the body, and how the Norse people are traveling on land followed by the sea, and then moved on to the more abstract traveling of the imagined traveling. Every section is followed by a more complex way of traveling, so that it is building from a 'simpler' way of traveling and moving to the more complex and abstract way of moving and traveling. The Icelandic Sagas talk about certain travels and modes of travel, yet there are times where they are lacking information. And that is where all the findings of objects come in. Museums and magazines are filled with objects from the past. Some of them are mentioned in textual sources and others are not. Therefore, archeological findings can be used to fill in the gaps in the Sagas and vice versa. The paper will use the objects and sagas side by side to fill in those gaps or to strengthen the arguments. The textual sources will be quoted first in Norwegian and then by (my own) translation to English. Either in the text or in footnotes there will be cited what chapter in the Saga or the *tátt* the quote is taken from. There will be a brief discussion on some of the theories that have emerged from earlier research that have been interesting in connection with this research. For those who are not familiar with the Icelandic Sagas I have made a handlist with short summaries of the sagas and *tættir* I have used for this paper.

Reconstruction, reenactment, and experimental archeology are three things that have been a big part of shaping some of the ideas this paper is building on. Sometimes the textual sources and the found objects do not tell us everything and its only through reconstructing, reenactment, and experimental archeology that the next level of information and knowledge can be found. I am also using some of my experience as a guide at the Iron Age farm in Stavanger and my experience as a reenactor there. The digital museum page has been a base for searching for objects and findings while the Iron Age farm has been the main source to see, hold, and try out some of the reconstructed objects in this paper. The page forminne.no is also worth mentioning as it has been a source to provide a finding that could root skis as a cultural heritage that goes even further back in time than the Iron age.

For every mode of traveling, there will be objects that correspond with the traveling, nevertheless, there are no objects that can be directly used for the imagined travel. Therefore, will there be an absentee of physical objects in the last chapter, but there will be an imaginary

and metaphorical object that corresponds with those modes of travels. The objects in this paper are objects that are either a necessity to do the travel, made it easier to do the travel, or as a representation of the travel that has been done or not. Some of the individual objects that have been included here are also representing all the equal objects that are found or not found. Others are unique and show some of the richness some could have diversity in economy, and access to different building material in the Iron age and Viking age. Some of the objects are also the type of object that we don't have many findings of due to organically material that disappears over long time.

To implement and use the objects in this paper I have used Karen Harvey's book *History and Material Culture, a student's guide to approaching alternative sources*. Her book has provided me with a pattern of thinking about the objects and how they can be used. The book is an introduction to how to use alternative sources in research. As historians and students have a long history of practicing their research skills on textual source, Harvey's book on how to develop new research skills with different source material is useful when using objects as part of the basis for the research. Harvey has divided the thinking pattern into three different categories *history from things* 'objects as primary sources', *history of things* 'the historical analysis of the relationship between objects, people and their representations' and *history and things* 'the capacity to unlock more necessarily mediated by written languages in books and articles produced by professional historians'.²⁹ I have used a combination of these three ways of using objects in my paper.

Why does this matter?

Why do this research? Well, Herman Paul says, 'Whenever a new idea presents itself, the old idea, together with the society it characterizes, becomes 'past'. The past is therefore a graveyard of ideas which once reigned supreme but have meanwhile been replaced by new ones.'³⁰ The Norse people had traditions that had been a part of their culture for a long time and there are so many things that we are still building on in our own culture from theirs. And when the Nordic countries converted to Christianity the entire process took time, and the people did not just instantly throw away everything they knew and their old beliefs. There were a conversation and a negotiation on what to merge of the different 'ideas' that was there from before and the 'new' ones that came in. This whole process of negotiating changes reminds me of a quote: 'We all live in more than one time, even if we are taught to refuse the

²⁹ Harvey, *History and Material Culture*, 28-29.

³⁰ Herman Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 21.

idea.³¹ We are constantly in conversation with our past since none of our ideas and culture pops out from nowhere, thus the idea of a completed past cannot exist, I would rather say that all of the ideas come from a continuing past.

As historians we are storytellers, and we always seek the truth of the past. The Norse people are part of a past that for some is strange but for others it's more familiar. For some it may seem like a strange past until they discover that their own traditions and cultural aspects are built on the traditions and culture of the Norse people. Which makes that past a *present past*. Many have studied the Norse people and the Vikings. And we still do not know everything there is to know about the Norse people yet. I believe that the topic I'm looking at here has not been thoroughly researched before. I believe that the combination of sources that I'm using and with my perspective as a guide and a reenactor at the Iron Age farm can give a new light on how the Norse people understand places, how they find their way from A to B, what tools they were using and how do the sagas convey all this information. I also believe that it's important that we take our time with both the concrete and the abstract to get an understanding of how it all fits together in a bigger perspective. It has been normal to see these topics as separate themes, but by putting them all together, side by side and giving them equal importance, we will gain new perspectives and come closer to a deeper understanding of the Norse people as a whole.

³¹ Bathseba Demuth, *Floating Coast an environmental history of the bearing strait* (United states of America: Norton, 2020), 314.

The Sagas

In this chapter I will explain what Sagas are and what *tættir* is. These two types of text are what I'm going to mainly work with throughout this paper. I will start with explaining what sagas are and then move over to the *tættir*. I will also bring up some theories that have been relevant to look at with this research I'm doing. *Islendingesagaene, Samtlige sagaer og fœrtini tættir* is a collection of the translated Icelandic sagas and *tættir*. I will clarify the reason for choosing this collection further down. In this collection the editors made some criteria for this newer translation that then left us with forty Icelandic sagas.³² The making of this translated collection was a project where several translators and other people worked together to create. The stories in the Sagas and *tættir* took place around 870-1000 AD, however, most of the Sagas are written 2-3 hundred years after the stories allegedly took place.³³ They are also written by anonymous authors, even though many researchers have done extensive work in trying to figure out who wrote the different sagas.³⁴ Jon Gunnar Jørgensen gives a good explanation to why the authors remained anonymous. 'The saga gives an impression of being built on an oral tradition. The term 'Saga' is related to the verb 'to say' or 'what's being told'. [...] The author wants if nothing else to create an illusion that he is building on a tradition. [...] He can't know more than what people are telling, have seen, or heard. He only refers to the action and site what's being told.'³⁵ That might have been the intention of the saga writers, but when we read the sagas, we do notice that they are influenced by Christianity and the time of the writing of the texts. To be totally objective is impossible. Just by writing these stories down on parchment the stories have been influenced by the writing technology and ways of preservation of the Middle Ages. This causes for some problems as Gísli Sigurdsson talks about in his book *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition A Discourse on Method* when changing an oral story to written text there must be done certain changes to make the story still flow on parchment.³⁶

The sagas are stories about people who lived or had their homestead in Iceland, nevertheless, most of the events happens outside of Iceland, in Norway, Vinland, Greenland, Denmark, or Sweden. There are even mentions of *Miklagard* and Rome. The sagas are both

³² Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, red. *Islendingesagaene, Samtlige sagaer og fœrtini tættir B.d I* (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), XXIII.

³³ Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d I*, XXV.

³⁴ Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d I*, XXXII.

³⁵ Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d I*, XXXII.

³⁶ Sigurðsson, «*The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, ».

real stories and fiction and it's not always easy to separate facts from fiction in them.³⁷ Vicki Ellen Szabo describes the sagas as ' [...] in short, are not simple prose narratives. They are complicated literary renderings of a host of historical, political, and social issues.'³⁸ Which means they can be used as representational for the period the stories are about, from and written in. They are originally written in Icelandic or the old Norse language, but they have not been written down in futhark or the middle-ages runes. The Latin alphabet came to Scandinavia with Christianity around 1000AD, and it's the use of ink and parchment that follows that, that gives the foundation to start writing down the oral stories which is part of their culture.³⁹

We don't have any of the original 'documents' with the Icelandic sagas and *tættir* on, everything we have is rewritten, put together by several fragments or some are even completely lost.⁴⁰ *Tættir* is also a part of these preserved stories in this collection and *tættir* (plural), and a *tátt* (singular. Norse: *páttir*) is a short story. The meaning of a *tátt* is 'part of a bigger whole' and these stories are shorter than the sagas.⁴¹ They sometimes are a piece of a bigger saga but can be taken out and stand alone.

I chose this collection because it's the first full collection on the Icelandic Sagas in Norwegian. The project of putting together a collection of all the Icelandic Sagas in Norwegian happened in 2014. The project had some criteria for which of the Sagas and *tættir* that would be included in this collection. Since this would be the first time for some of the Sagas and *tættir* to be translated there are some of them that have not been used too much in earlier studies or are not commonly known. For convenience I would have all of them in one place. The reason for using the Icelandic sagas is because they do not only reveal the culture and lives for a few people, but they can be used to see the broader culture, traditions, everyday life, e.g., for the whole Norse people and society. Not only have they been used for a ton of studies, but they still can give us new information when we see them in a new angle or light. The sagas are among the oldest written sources we have in the Scandinavian countries, and the sagas can then be seen as the Epics of the North.

Within the sagas and the *tættir* there are also *kvad*, a *kvad* is a saying or a poem that allegedly the *skald* is supposed to have made. However, they can be a bit problematic as there

³⁷ Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d 1*, XXVI.

³⁸ Szabo, *Monstrous fishes*, 215.

³⁹ Sigurdsson and Riisøy, *Norsk Historie 800-1536*, 15.

⁴⁰ Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d 1*, XXIX.

⁴¹ Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d 1*, XXV.

is a discussion going on if they are ‘real’ and it’s difficult to know who have created them.⁴² The way the sagas and *tættir* are written makes it hard to put them in organized groups, because all of them will at some point overlap with several groupings and create problems with the organization of them. However there have been scholars and researchers who have tried to create categories so that it would be possible to organize the sagas and *tættir*. ‘The American saga researcher Joseph Harris (1989) have listed up seven thematical categories of the *tættir*[...] the Iclander with the king [...] conversion to Christianity, family feuds, dreams, travels, fights against trolls and framework narratives to *kvad*.’⁴³ Whereas the Icelandic researcher Vésteinn Ólason created a system where the sagas can be put into five different categories: Skaldic sagas, sagas about feuds, older kindred sagas, classic family sagas and tragedy.⁴⁴

The sagas have been of interest in many fields and for many scholars over time. Theories have been made, some have been disapproved of and others not. And Carol J. Clover argues that there might be a revival of the theory on the sagas being created out of combining several *tættir*.⁴⁵ This she explains as binding devises. These binding devises are small sentences that could bind two *tættir* together without inventing a whole new story. These types of small accounts can give you explicit information on how the people in the stories are moving, what kind of tools they are using, weather conditions or other details. They could also sometimes convey it in a more implicit way where they don’t necessarily use the words like walk, run, stroll and so on, but they use words like ‘went’. When words like ‘went’ are being used the focus turns more towards the directions they are moving in, and the environment are being described more than the actual action of the traveling or moving.⁴⁶ There are quite a lot of these sentences in all the sagas where the person is just transported to a new location. And it becomes this moment where there is a character who ‘poof’ is gone and reappears in a different country or miles away from where they just were. These moments are lacking in explicit information. *Kormaks saga* has an excellent example of this ‘poof’ moment. In the third chapter the main character, Kormak, and one of his workers, Toste, went

⁴² Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d 1*, XXXIX.

⁴³ Joseph Harris, «pættir, » In *Dictionary of the Middle Ages B.d. 12*, ed. Joseph Strayer, (New York: Scribner, 1989), 1-6.

⁴⁴ Vésteinn Ólason, «Íslendigasögur og pættir,» In *Íslensk bókmenntasaga II*, ed. Bödvar Gudmundsson, et al, (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1993).

⁴⁵ Clover, Carol J. And Lindow, John, ed. *Old Norse – Icelandic Literature a critical guide*. (London: Cornell University press, 1985), 291.

⁴⁶ Jan Ragnar Hagland, «Soga om Gunnar, Tullingen på Keldugnup,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 418.

to *Gnupsdal*. ‘Kormak dro sammen med ham til Gnupsdal, [...]’ ‘Kormak went with him to Gnupsdal, [...]’⁴⁷ There is no more information on what kind of roads they were using or if they were using roads at all or if something happened, did they have a conversation during the travel, did they walk or ride horses? You get the reason for why they are going to *Gnupsdal* and what happened when they arrived, but nothing in between. The same thing is happening two pages later, where all you get to know is that Toste comes down from the mountain and they went home. ‘Toste kom ned fra fjellet og de dro hjem.’ ‘Toste came down from the mountain and they went home.’⁴⁸ Then there are moments where the storyteller tells you that the people went from a place to another and that the travel or weather was good or bad and they arrived at their destination. ‘Så dro Finnboge ut på havet. Reisen gikk bra, og de kom til Grekenland.’ ‘Then Finnboge went to sea. The travel went well, and they arrived in *Grekenland*’⁴⁹ These smaller sentences of information (or with no information) might be a form of ‘binding devices’ to combine smaller *tætter* together to create a bigger saga. However, the absentee of information can also indicate that whatever information that is being omitted could be common knowledge to the audience to an extent where it’s not necessary for the storyteller to convey it. And in this case where the sagas are written text it might have been sufficient for the writer to omit certain common knowledge to limit the length of the saga.

When we now have in mind some of the possible changes that could have happened to the stories as they were written down it’s easy to understand that we can’t trust the Icelandic Sagas completely. They are not only influenced by editing to flow easier on paper, but they also contain much fiction, superstition, and magic. To read them with critical eyes is a must. Since perhaps not everyone is familiar with the Icelandic Sagas and *tætter*, I have made a short summary of all the Icelandic Sagas that I’m using here in this paper. Some of these summaries are short due to the length on the *tætter* being relatively short sometimes. I have organized them alphabetically here as organizing them can prove difficult since several of them have overlapping themes.

⁴⁷ Ødegård, «Kormaks Saga,» 143.

⁴⁸ Ødegård, «Kormaks Saga,» 146.

⁴⁹ Arnhild Mindrebø, «Finnboge den sterkes saga,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tætter B.d.* 3, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 239.

Short summaries of the used Sagas and Tættir

Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga, the events of this saga is mostly taking place in the west side of Iceland and the main characters are named Gunnlaug, Hallfred and Kormak. The main conflict is about a woman, and they fight with both poetry and sword. Some parts of the story follow a more fictional storyline where the hero fights a dragon on their travels. In other parts the story contains more of the *kvad* that the hero uses in his fight against others.⁵⁰

Finnboge den sterkes saga follows the life of a child who was set out to die after he was born. This child is found by someone who takes care of him, and he grows up to be the man known as Finnboge the strong and he becomes a man with hero qualities. His adventures around and his travels leaves him with many skills and a good reputation amongst people.⁵¹

Gisle Surssons Saga is a story about the hero Gisle, who is described as a good man with many qualities. His journey is not so much around in the physical world but more of a journey in life. He is being pulled between both good and bad powers and he and his loved ones suffers for it.⁵²

Grettes Saga is also a kind of hero story. It's about Grette who shows that he has qualities that are more than normal for humans, and he fights both humans and ghosts and other non-human beings. In the end he is convicted as an outlaw but regains respect when he wins a fight where the opponent uses magic.⁵³

Kormaks saga is a love story. When Kormak meets the lady Steingerd he falls in love with her and she with him. This becomes the main reason for the actions Kormak is doing in the saga. Kormak travels around trying to find a way to get the love of his life Steingerd, but he doesn't succeed in his wishes in marrying her.⁵⁴

Njálssoga is amongst the longest Icelandic sagas and very well-known due to early translations and an early interest from scholars and academia. The saga itself could be divided in two parts where the first half has more of a love and conflict theme, caused by a woman. While the second half mainly consists of *Ting* where the reader will get a view on politics and the laws of the Norse people. Njál is a man who is known to be well versed in the laws. I read

⁵⁰ Gro-Tove Sandmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 1*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014) 215-263.

⁵¹ Mindrebø, «Finnboge den sterkes saga,» 221-267. The translation in the collection used in this paper is mostly based on *Mödruvallabók* and supplemented with AM 510 4to.

⁵² Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, «Gisle Surssons saga,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 1-47.

⁵³ Kjenn Arils Pollestad, «Grettes Saga,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 49-195.

⁵⁴ Ødegård, «Kormaks Saga,» 141-187. is handed over in *Mödruvallabók* from the middle of the 14th century. In addition, there are fragments of the saga in another manuscript (AM 162 fol.) from the end of the 14th century.'

this story as many stories about different people who end up having contact with Njál at the *Ting* in some kind of way.⁵⁵

Sagaen om Floafolket is a story where we meet the main character Torgils who travels to Greenland due to his father's death. Torgils travels and life is challenging, and he meets the God Thor under his voyage to Iceland, where his wife loses her life. He and his newborn reach Iceland and he raises his child there.⁵⁶

Sagaen om Hord og Holmverjene is a story about a man called Hord. His story starts before he is born with his mother dreaming a dream which lays a curse on him. His life is filled with excitement and adventurous things. He needs to live his life with a reputation as a criminal even if he is a good man.⁵⁷

Sagaen om Kjalnesigene is a saga about the hero Bue who travels to Norway to the king. Here he gets many tasks and challenges, one of them is to travel to Dovre to recollect a board game to the king from the giant. In Dovre he meets the daughter of the giant king of Dovre, and he has a child with her. Bue gets into a lot of trouble in his life, but his stepmother helps him out of them with magic.⁵⁸

Sagaen om Vatnsdølene is generally accepted as a family saga. The story mainly follows the character Ingemund Torsteinsson and his life in Iceland. We do also get the background story of his ancestors.⁵⁹

Sagaen om øyrbyggene Is a saga that contains a lot of people and it's hard to know who the main character is, but many counts Snorre Góde as the main character in this story. The saga itself is filled with fiction, like ghost stories and stories whit other supernatural elements.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Jan Ragnar Hagland, «Njálssoga,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014) 1-220. This saga has been preserved in many manuscripts from 1300-1550, but the most important is from *Mödruvallabók* AM132 fol.

⁵⁶ Hilde A. Bliksrud, «Sagaen om Floafolket,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 267-300. 'is preserved in two versions with different length, but from the longest version there is only fragments of it.' It have earlier been translated to Norwegian by Albert Joleik in 1925.

⁵⁷ Arnhild Mindrebø, «Sagaen om Hord og Holmverjene,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 197-237.

⁵⁸ Arnhild Mindrebø, «Sagaen om Kjalnesigene,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 301-322.

⁵⁹ Bergsveinn Birgirsson and Bernt Ø. Thorvaldsen, «Sagaen om Vatnsdølene,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 4*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 1-62. The manuscript *Vatnshyrna* was lost in a fire in 1782, as a result this translation is based on copies of that manuscript. It has been translated to Norwegian several times, both to Bokmål and Nynorsk.

⁶⁰ Arnhild Mindrebø, «Sagaen om øyrbyggene,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 5*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 117-198. Was preserved in full in the manuscript of *Vatnshyrna* from the 1300 that was lost in a fire in 1728. It has been translated to Norwegian several times.

Soga om Bård Snæfellsås is about this man called Bård Snæfellsås and his life. He is supposedly to be born in Dovre. But he dreams of his life in Iceland and after this dream has appeared he is starting to have some disagreements with the giants of Dovre. This leads him to move to Iceland. The way he has been raised, with the giants, gives him some mystical qualities that the Icelanders notice when he moves to Iceland. He does not settle in a place close to other people but rather in the mountains alone, and this place the people come to see as a magical place.⁶¹

Soga om Droplaugs-sønene is about the two brothers Grim and Helge. When their mother is accused of being unfaithful, Grim and Helge are becoming unfriendly with the farmer Helge Ásbjörnson and they disagree on a lot of things. This results in disputes and Grim needs to revenge his brother after he is killed by Helge.⁶²

Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson is also one of the longer sagas and very popular and well known. The beginning of the saga gives the reader the background story of the well-known Grim who is a shapeshifter and berserker. The focus changes to his son Egil Skallagrimsson. His family does not agree with the king of Norway, Harald Hårfagre and it becomes a conflict. This leads them to move to Iceland. Which at that time functions as a sanctuary for all the people who don't agree with the king or who wants to escape the new religion can move to. Egil lives the rest of his life in Iceland.⁶³

Soga om fosterbrørne is a saga about Torgeir and Tormod who become like brothers to each other. They travel around on adventures together, fight and kill. Later in life they go on with their adventures without each other. They both work for Olav the holy (King in Norway). Torgeir is killed in Iceland and Tormod travels to Greenland to revenge him.⁶⁴

Soga om Grønlandingane is a story where we meet Bjarne in the first chapter. He is traveling to Greenland, but he and his traveling companions sail straight into bad weather that sets them off course. When the bad weather is over, they are lost. No one on the ship has been

⁶¹ Elise Kleivane, «Soga om Bård Snæfellsås,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 'is handed over in four handwritings from the middleages.'

⁶² Jan Ragnar Hagland, «Soga om Droplaugs-sønene,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 4*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 331-353. The translation is based on the *Mödruvallabók* AM 132 fol., and it has been translated to Norwegian earlier by Johan Hovstad in 1931.

⁶³ Erik Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 1*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014) 1-139. The main manuscript is *Mödruvallabók* AM 132 fol., from approx. 1350, and it has been translated several times to Norwegian.

⁶⁴ Jan Ragna Hagland, «Soga om fosterbrørne,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 271-346.

to the Greenland Sea before yet they find their way with good navigational skills. On their journey they also discover new land, and when they reach Greenland, they tell their story. Eirik Raude picks up on the story and travels to this new land. Here he and his crew meet the indigenous people and explore the new land which they name Vinland.⁶⁵

Soga om Gull-Tore is filled with magic and fairytale qualities. In the first half of the story, we follow Tore who is doing a voyage to Norway. He travels further on, on an adventure where he finds a grave mound with treasure and supernatural beings, at one point he meets a ghost who warns him about his death. The second part of the story is more about all the people he is fighting. At the ending of the saga Tore dies in the manner the ghost warned him about.⁶⁶

Soga om Gunnar, Tullingen på Keldugnup has never been translated to Norwegian before and therefore it might be less known amongst those who only read Norwegian. In the saga we meet Gunnar who is traveling around on adventures. Mostly the events are happening in Norway and eastern parts of Iceland. As a child, Gunnar is seen as a stupid boy, but he grows up and shows that he is a man with hero qualities. He meets trolls and the saga is filled with magic. He befriends Håkon jarl before he travels home to Iceland and gets married. This saga can in many ways remind us of a little of the *Soga om Korka-Rev*.⁶⁷

Soga om Korka-Rev has never been translated to Norwegian before. In the saga we meet the main character Rev who is explained as a man who don't have any prospects of being good in anything. But he turns out to be a very skilled boat builder. His development throughout the saga puts him in a category of having Askeladden qualities (which is a Norwegian Folktale character who always disproves the general beliefs of him being a person that is bad at everything).⁶⁸

Soga om Svarvdölane is a saga that can be divided in two, where the first part is about a man called Torstein Torgnysson. He starts out being a type of Askeladden person and

⁶⁵ Erik Simensen, «Soga om Grønlendingane,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 1*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014) 291-302. 'is possibly written at the end of the 12th century or around 1200.[...] the text is handed over in *Flatayjarbók*[...]'

⁶⁶ Børge Nordbø, «Soga om Gull-Tore,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 323-348. 'is preserved in a leather manuscript (AM 560 4to) from the end of the 14th century, [...]'.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Hagland, «Soga om Gunnar, Tullingen på Keldugnup,», 415-436. The manuscripts that are preserved for this saga has been giving translators and researchers some problems in dating it. The AM 496 4to and AM 554i 4to is to be counted as the main manuscripts.

⁶⁸ Jan Ragnar Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 389-414. This saga is preserved in a manuscript Am 471 fol. Dated to the last part of the 1400 and as two fragments in 'leather books (Stock. Perg. No 8 4to and AM 586 4to).

changes to become a mighty Viking. He gets a ship, wins the daughter of a king and half the kingdom. The second half is about a man who lives in Svarvadardal and the family feuds he is involved with.⁶⁹

Soga om Tord den Trugande is the story about Tord Tordsson who must flee from Norway to Iceland after he kills the son of the king. Most of the story takes place in the western part of Iceland where he and his family moved. It is a story filled with magic and heroic adventures. Tord the main character is described as a skilled warrior and skilled in hand crafting.⁷⁰

Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson is a story about Torstein who appears in several stories, therefore, it might be that this character is a man who have lived and some of the stories about him might be true to some extent. In this saga he is traveling to Ireland where he is doing some fighting. The saga also contains a lot of his dreams in it, and his dreams are mostly warnings of death.⁷¹

Soga om Viga-Glum is about a man called Viga who lives around Eyjafjord in northern Iceland. He is a powerful man and has a lot of success in winning fights over others. He wins favor with his grandfather after he kills a berserker, and is given three gifts, a cloak, gold inlaid spear, and a sword. All three are mighty gifts and as long as he keeps them, he will have luck in life. He keeps the old gods until three years before he dies, then he is baptized. When he is dead, he is buried in a church his son builds.⁷²

Soga om Viglund og Kjellrid is a saga where love is an essential theme. Viglund and Kjellrid are supposed to become a couple and they have known each other since childhood. But disputes in their families make this problematic and Kjellrid is promised to someone else. The disagreements between the families escalates even more, but Viglund and Kjellrid finds each other in the end.⁷³

⁶⁹ Lars S. Vikør, «Soga om Svarvdølane,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 4*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 141-188. This saga seems like someone have invented more content to make the two parts fit together. It is the first time this saga has been translated to Norwegian.

⁷⁰ Jan Ragnar Hagland, «Soga om Tord den trugande,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 349-388.

⁷¹ Ivar Berg, «Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 4*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 407-418. The saga is preserved in two manuscripts from the same book, but the book itself is lost, therefore have copies of the original texts been used, AM 142 fol. And JS 435 4to from 1600. There are fragments that are missing, and it haven't been translated to Norwegian before.

⁷² Rune Kyrkjebø, «Soga om Viga-Glum,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 347-392.

⁷³ Borge Nordbø, «Soga om Viglund og Kjellrid,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættir B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 393-423.

Stjerne-Oddes drøm is a short story about Odde from Mule and his dream. The *tått* contains two *kvad* as well.⁷⁴

Tormodståtten is a short story about a man called Tormod Kolbrunarskald. He is skilled in sport and with poems.⁷⁵

Torstein Side-Hallssons drøm Is a short story qualified as a *tått*, where Torstein is dreaming about three women who is warning him about his own death.⁷⁶

Tåtten om Bergbuen is a short story about the farmer Tord and his worker who walk to church but gets stranded in the middle of nowhere by a snowstorm. The main part of the *tått* is made from a *kvad* (poem) with many verses that is being said by a mysterious being.⁷⁷

Tåtten om Jøkel Buesson is a short story about Jøkel. The events of this story happen in Greenland. His adventures are filled with magic and fiction.⁷⁸

Tåtten om Torgrim Halleson is about Torgrim and his travel to Norway. In Norway he gets into a dispute and gets killed.⁷⁹

Tåtten om Torstein Side-Hallsson we meet Torstein again and, in this story, he falls out of favor with the king Magnus the good, but gains favor again.⁸⁰

Tåtten om Torvald den vidfarne is a short story about Torvald who travels to Iceland with a bishop who wants to convert the people of Iceland to Christianity.⁸¹

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⁷⁴ Arnhild Mindrebø, «Stjerne-Oddes drøm,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 451-462.

⁷⁵ Jan Ragnar Hagland, «Tormodståtten,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 438-443.

⁷⁶ Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, «Torstein Side-Hallssons drøm,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d. 4*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 455-457. Exists in the manuscript *Vatnshyrna* dated to the 1300, it hasn't been translated to Norwegian before.

⁷⁷ Arnhild Mindrebø, «Tåtten om Bergbuen,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d. 2*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014) 447-451. 'is preserved in a fragment of a handwritten manuscript *Vatnshyrna* and in two paper manuscripts. [...] it's never been translated to Norwegian before.'

⁷⁸ Arnhild Mindrebø, «Tåtten om Jøkel Buesson,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 437-444.

⁷⁹ Lars S. Vikør, «Tåtten om Torgrim Halleson,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d. 3*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 475-478.

⁸⁰ Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, «Tåtten om Torsteinn Side-Hallssons,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d. 4*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 452-455. 'exists in two versions, one in *Morkinskinna*, the other in *Flateyjarbók*, which is used for this translation. There is not much difference between these two. [...] this version hasn't been translated to Norwegian before.'

⁸¹ Jan Ragnar Hagland, «Tåtten om Torvald den vidfarne,» In *Islendingesagaene Samtlige sagaer og førtini tættar B.d. 5*, ed. Jon Gunnar Jørgensen and Jan Ragnar Hagland, (Reykjavík, Iceland: Saga forlag, 2014), 342-354. This *tått* have been translated out from two sources, *Flateyjarbók* and *Store saga om Olav Trygvason*.

To summarize the chapter, the word *saga* means ‘to say’ or ‘what is being said’ and *tátt* means ‘part of a bigger whole’. The Icelandic sagas and *tættir* are stories about people who live or move to Iceland. But most of the stories have events that are happening in other parts of the world. These stories were originally told orally as the Norse people didn’t write their stories down. And it’s first when Christianity comes to the Nordic countries around year 1000AD that the technology of writing is implemented to the Norse society. Even if we don’t have any of the original documents of the written sagas they are still generally seen as the Epics of the North.

The theory ‘binding devices’ is a theory where it is believed that small sentences have been created to put together several *tættir* without creating a whole new story. Some of the sentences that can be put in that theory could also give the reader a feeling of a ‘poff’ moment, where the character is transported from one place to another in an instance. The sagas also don’t explain everything explicitly, like these ‘poff’ moments, we know there are more to it, that there is more that is happening behind that travel. The sagas are also not always explaining everything down to the smallest detail, but there are some things that are said explicitly but also implicit. Then there are times when the *verisimilitude* effect is being used. Which is a kind of writing technique the writers can use to make unbelievable things to seem more real. That is done by adding or explaining details more.

Traveling across country

When I have gotten my Monday group of thirty guests in and through the visitor's center, I stop with them at the bottom of a small hill and next to a gate. Before I take them with me through the gate and up a little path that leads up to the reconstructed Iron Age farm, I give them a small introduction and tell them about the longhouses, that forms the Iron Age farm in the background. At the end of my small introduction, I tell them that while they are walking up the path, that they should imagine walking back in time. One thousand five hundred years back in time, when there were no buses, cars, or cruise ships.

The Norse people knew of several modes to travel when they were on land. They did walk, but walking is the kind of mode of traveling or moving that might not be something people would think too much about. They also had the means to upgrade from walking to skiing during the wintertime, and the domestication of horses had made it easier to travel without exhausting themselves on longer trips. The sagas mention and explain the modes of traveling in various degrees and sometimes they explain the modes either implicit or explicit. There is no grand explanation on how they are walking, skiing, or riding a horse, but these modes of traveling are a part of the description of the journey the characters are taking. Even if these modes of travel are common and mundane, the sagas are still mentioning them and talking about them. This makes it possible to use the sagas to explore how they are talking about these modes of traveling. And in the parts where there is an absence of information, the objects and findings can fill those holes.

To be able to examine these three modes of traveling I have combined the sagas that I'm using here with some objects. The objects that I'm using with the different modes of travel on land are either a tool to use or something to wear, like a 'wearable tool'. *Hriflingr* is a type of shoe made from leather which would shield them from nature and weather. The skis, which would be a kind of upgrade from the shoes, are a well-integrated technology used during winter. And while they were using horses to travel there was a need for equipment to control the direction, they wanted the horse to move in, or for staying on top of the horse.

There are two different scenes from two different sagas that are touching all the three modes of travel that I'm examining here. The scenes I will use as my base are from *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* chapter seventy-two and *Björn Hitdølakjempes saga* chapter twenty-seven. The scene I have chosen to focus on from *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* chapter seventy-two, is when the main character (Egil) is traveling with the men of the king (the king being Harald Hårfagre according to the saga) in Norway. He has three companions that are

following him, and they have been following him from the start of his journey. It's wintertime and they are traveling with horses and sledges filled with the resources they need for the travel. After a while the company of people traveling together must split up.⁸²

In *Björn Hitdølakjempes saga* I have chosen chapter twenty-seven where the main character (Torstein) is traveling due to an invitation to a yule feast. 'På førjulsvinteren gjorde Torstein seg klar til å dra I julegilde hos Dål̥k,[...] 'In the pre-Yule winter, Torstein made himself ready to go in a yule party at Dål̥k's,[...]'⁸³ He brings with him his wife and twelve men. The weather is bad, and it becomes troublesome to travel.⁸⁴ I have here as in *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* focused on the beginning of the chapter. They are touching all the three modes of traveling that I am examining for this chapter on land.

Walking with *Hriflingr*

Walking is such a common thing to do, yet when I do have guests and tourists who are sitting in wheelchairs or who needs a walking cane and have problems with walking the couple of hundreds of meters up to the longhouses from the visitors' center, I remember that walking might be something that is very much taken for granted by many. Then I think about the Norse people and how they would use walking as a mode for traveling at much longer distances and under different circumstances than we do. The Norse people saw it as something to tell stories about and the saga writers retold it when they wrote down the sagas. Yet, the explanations and descriptions of the storytellers are short and superficial. They are also leaving out information that can be seen as 'common knowledge'. Nevertheless, short sentences can give the reader or listener a lot of information about the period, mode of travel, and of the things that lie behind the words or everything that needs to happen before one can walk, something we will see here in this chapter. Walking on foot can be a challenge depending on the route, length of travel and weather. As a walker you are more exposed to the challenges that you need to prepare for as well as those for which you didn't prepare yourself for.

The saga writers are not emphasizing the use of walking as a mode to travel with elaborating details. They are rather just mentioning it a few times or in a midsentence like the saga writer does in *Björn Hitdølakjempes saga*; '[...] men mennene gikk,[...]' '[...]but the

⁸² Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,» 105-108.

⁸³ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,»249.

⁸⁴ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,» 248-252.

men were walking,[...]’.⁸⁵ This midsentence comes as a contrast to the first clause of the sentence; ‘Torfinna red,[...]’ ‘Torfinna rode,[...]’⁸⁶. This contrast might have been mentioned to show the difference in what kind of status the people had who were traveling together. It is more tiresome to walk all the distances in comparison to riding a horse, which means that to travel with a horse over walking must have been more attractive and maybe even luxurious. Since we also know from this page that it is wintertime they must have dressed for the weather. ‘Været ble verre både når det gjaldt frost og fokk.’ ‘The weather became worse when it came to frost and jib.’⁸⁷ Which would mean that everyone must have used footwear that could protect them from the weather. However, I find it curious that this party of travelers hasn’t prepared more for bad winter weather, which they should know was a possibility.

The *hriflingr* (leather shoes) that were used in the Iron age and Viking age are very different to the shoes we use today. We stroll around in our sneakers, high heels, or mountain shoes. Today we have shoes for every occasion, the Norse people had one type of shoe that we know of. They were effective shoes to wear and when treated properly, they would last longer than what one might think.⁸⁸ *Hriflingr* could be made of different types of skins from animals like cow, horse, pig, and seal, depending on what they had access to.⁸⁹ The type of skin used to make the shoes would also determine how waterproof they are.⁹⁰ This type of shoe has been used up until early 1900 in some places in the north and Nordic countries.⁹¹ There is a page online where the recipe with a step by step guide on how to make these kind of shoes.⁹² But the shoes still have some problems. They are flat underneath and can be slippery on ice or in a wet terrain.

I have tried a pair of *hriflingr* like this myself and through personal experience know that they are quite slippery on ice or wet terrain after falling a couple of times. The pair I tried on were of a general design and they were supposed to be made to look like a pair that have been found in a glacier. The shoes that I have tried on are based on the oldest pair of shoes that is found.⁹³ They were light brown, like a warm brown color. The whole shoe was made

⁸⁵ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,»249.

⁸⁶ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,», 249.

⁸⁷ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,» 249.

⁸⁸ Amy Lightfoot, «Å sko seg,» *Spor nytt fra fortiden*, 23. Vintage, 45 (2008): 20 [http://www.ntnu.no/documents/10476/62052/spor_2008_1.pdf].

⁸⁹ Lightfoot, «Å sko seg,», 20.

⁹⁰ Lightfoot, «Å sko seg,», 20.

⁹¹ Lightfoot, «Å sko seg,», 19.

⁹² Iron age ankle boots. Retrived 20. April from <https://fortidsfamilien.com/2014/02/01/ankelstovler-fra-jernalderen-iron-age-ankle-boots/>

⁹³ Landets eldste skopar, Retrived 28. December from [<https://digitaltmuseum.no/021018443918/landets-eldste-skopar>]

out of one piece of leather with some ‘holes in it’, which made it possible to thread the shoes (the thread was made of the same material as the shoes). This thread was basically the only thing that kept the shoe from falling off my foot, when walking. The thread was made very long and it could be wrapped several times around my leg. Since leather was made out of one piece and held together by one long thread, it was open on the wrist of my foot, not making it waterproof if it would be raining or if there would be deep snow.⁹⁴ Since we are living in a modern time there were some invisible modifications. I was allowed to use a wet sock in them, and to put a gel sole to give some support to my back. These shoes are a part of my costume which I wear while I’m giving guided tours at the Iron Age farm.



Figure one: A pair of Hriflingr in the entrance of a long house in the Iron Age farm in Stavanger. By aythor.

If we look at *Tåtten om Bergbuen* we can really see the struggle of walking in unexpected bad weather conditions.

‘Det hendte en vinter at han ville dratt til gudstjeneste en høytidsdag. Han ba huskaren sin bli med. Det var lang vei, bortimot en dagsreise, så de dro av gårde tidlig og fortsatte til det led på dagen. Da kom det en kraftig snøstorm. Tord

⁹⁴ These shoes are part of my authentic costume that I’m using at work when I’m guiding tour at the Iron Age farm in Stavanger.

sa de var på villspor, og at han ikke ville gå videre i mørket. Han sa dessuten at de bare hadde gått en liten del av veien. «Det er fare for at vi kan gå utfor et stup i mørket.» De søkte ly [...]

‘It happened one winter that he wanted to go to church on a feast day. He asked his servant to join him. It was a long way, nearly a day’s journey, so they set off early and continued until late in the day. Then a heavy snowstorm came. Tord said they were lost, and that he would not go any further in the dark. He also said that they had only gone a short part of the distance. «There is a danger that we can walk off a cliff in the dark. » They sought shelter [...]⁹⁵

In this passage there is no mention of other means to make this travel and it might be that they thought of the distance as long, but short enough that walking would be possible, or they didn’t have other means of transportation. Nature can sometimes be very unforgiving and it’s not always one can be prepared for everything, and one might not always expect the worst. How and what was prepared for would also most probably depend on distances and time of year for the travel. Here in the scene in *Tåtten om Bergbuen* it seems like the two travelers did not expect the bad weather that came. Therefore, it is the fear that is forcing them take the decision of seeking shelter in a location that seems like it’s going to protect them from the bad weather. They do survive the night and the experience of this challenge makes Tord move closer to the church so that he will not have to experience this kind of situation again.⁹⁶ The influence of Christianity in this *tått* is obvious as the moral of the story is that one should live closer to church.

In *Soga om Gull-Tore* chapter three Tore and Kjetilbjørn are undertaking a travel they are warned against doing.⁹⁷ The travel is hard on them, and the storyteller is focusing on explaining the weather and some of the things that helped them up the mountain. ‘Dei tenkte å koma seg bort til haugen langs ei fjellside, men då dei kom opp i lia, kom det så stort eit uvær på dei at dei ikkje kunne stå oppreiste. Dei hadde eit snøre mellom seg, og Tore gjekk føre der han kunne. Og omsider kom begge seg opp. Dei kasta eine enden av snøre ned i lia og feste det kring ein stor stein. Dei var utkøyrde og låg der til dei sovna.’ ‘They thought of getting to the hill along the side of the mountain, but when they came up the hill, such a great storm

⁹⁵ Mindrebø, «Tåtten om Bergbuen,» 447.

⁹⁶ Mindrebø, «Tåtten om Bergbuen,» 451.

⁹⁷ Nordbø, «Soga om Gull-Tore,» 326.

came upon them that they could not stand upright. They had a rope between them, and Tore led in front where he was able to. And at last, they both got up, where they threw one end of the rope down the hill which they fastened around a large rock. They were exhausted and was laying on the ground until they fell asleep.’⁹⁸ There is no question here that this travel became a huge struggle for the two travelers. What we do not get any information on is what time of the year this is. The bad weather here could be heavy rain and strong winds, it doesn’t necessarily have to be any snow. The *hriflingr*, as we have talked about earlier, would protect the people from most of the weather here, but not all. And as it is a storm the wind would be one of the main factors that is making Tore and Kjetilbjørn exhausted, and they had no other choice but to seek some kind of shelter. The storyteller omits how they are able to shield themselves from the storm where they are resting. But it’s safe to assume that they were able to find some kind of place where the storm would not be so hard on them. Sometimes a travel can be fatal to the people if they are not properly prepared for bad weather like in *Tåtten om Torgrim Halleson*. ‘Det hadde skjedd tidlegare om vinteren under imbredagane føre jul, at Torgrim og huslyden hans hadde reist rundt og gjort ymse ærend. Da kom dei opp i ein snøstorm som var så kraftig at sonen hans, som heiter Asbjørn og nettopp var blitt vaksen, sette livet til i stormen. Torgrim sette så mykje inn på å hjelpe følgesmennene sine at han vart funnen dødssjuk og medvitslaus ute i marka.’ ‘It had happened earlier in the winter during the winter days before yule, that Torgrim and his household had traveled around and done various errands. They came up in a blizzard that was so powerful that his son, whose name is Asbjørn and who had just become a man, lost his life in the storm. Torgrim put so much effort into helping his companions that he was found deathly ill and unconscious in the field.’⁹⁹

Walking doesn’t have to be a big struggle either. In *Soga om Gunnar, Tullingen på Keldugnap* chapter two the travel done by Torgeir and his brothers is not a struggle. The storyteller has focused more on describing the path they are taking, rather than explaining the weather or challenges of the journey. ‘Morgonen etter var Torgeir svært tidleg på farten, tala til brørne og sa at dei skulle stå opp. Dei gjorde som han bad om, gjekk så ut og vest om garden alle saman og vidare ned langs ei elv og så gjennom eit bratt fjellskar til dei kom til ein trong stig. Der gjekk Torgeir opp med brørne etter seg, og dei kom då opp ei stor berghøle.’ ‘The following morning, Torgeir was early up, and spoke to his brothers and told them to get up. They did as he asked, then went out and west around the farm all together and further down along a river and then through a steep mountain range until they came to a narrow path.

⁹⁸ Nordbø, «Soga om Gull-Tore,» 326.

⁹⁹ Vikør, «Tåtten om Torgrim Halleson,» 475.

Where Torgeir went up, with his brothers following him, and they then came up to a large rock cave.¹⁰⁰ It seems like the focus of the storyteller turns to describing the route, directions, and nature where the travel is not too hard on the travelers. And when the travel is hard the weather is described. We can see the same in *Tåtten om Jøkel Buesson* chapter three. ‘De drar av sted. Gnipa går foran og Jøkel etter. Hun gikk temmelig fort. De går innover langs fjorden til den tar slutt. Det er da langt på natt. Da kommer de til store hamrer og bratte fjell. Hun går opp der det er en smal sti, og de kommer til en stor heller.’ ‘They leave. Gnipa walks ahead and Jøkel follows. She walked quite hard. They walk inward along the fjord until it ends. It is then late at night. Then they come to big *hammer* and steep mountains. She goes up where there is a narrow path, and they come to a large *heller*.’¹⁰¹ The writer is focusing on describing the speed and the directions Gnipa is walking in and how the path is, rather than the weather conditions and if the travelers are struggling or not with the travel. It is a big contrast compared to *Tåtten om Torgim Halleson* and *Soga om Gull-Tore*.

Skis, an upgrade in traveling

The shoes are not sufficient all the time. During winter season when there is snow the snow itself could slow down the walker. The underside of the feet is not a big area and with the weight of the person and all that the person is carrying, the weight would be focused to a smaller area and then easily pierce through the snow, as the snow itself doesn’t have a high density. If the shoes would be bigger the weight would be spread out and distributed over a bigger area so that the chance of not going through the snow would increase. There is no evidence found of the Norse people having or using snowshoes. We know they had contact with the Samí people who do have two different types of shoes, summer shoes and winter shoes, but there are no records of the Norse people and Samí using the same type of shoes.

The Norse people used their *hriflingr* all year around to protect their feet. But since we have seasons throughout the year, weather conditions and nature change and gives different challenges. So, they knew of a way to travel during wintertime that would not slow them down and even at some times this ‘upgrade’ could make the travel go even smoother and faster. The upgrade on the shoes they were using during wintertime would only work when there is snow, and it would be a kind of a ‘wearable tool’. By ‘wearable tool’ I’m talking about skis. When the snow is knee-deep, skis would be a good upgrade for traveling in the snow. As I mentioned above the snow has a certain density and the weight of a human would

¹⁰⁰ Hagland, «Soga om Gunnar, Tullingen på Keldugnup,» 418.

¹⁰¹ Mindrebø, «Tåtten om Jøkel Buesson,» 441.

most of the time be too heavy to stay on top of the snow, but by using skis the weight would be distributed over a bigger area. And therefore, the weight would not make the traveler pierce through the snow, but rather glide over it.

To prepare for the travel is important and, in the sagas, we can see traces of this preparation for travels and snowy weather a few times. The Norse people didn't have weather channels like we do today, yet they did have a means to know what to expect in their travels. They could, much like the indigenous people of Scandinavia, the Sámi, read nature.¹⁰² By using their senses like smell and sight, nature can reveal some of the weather that is to come. And through the oral tradition of story telling the Norse people passed their knowledge and experience to the younger ones or others who would travel in areas they would know.

In *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* chapter seventy-two some of the travelers have been preparing and packed for a change in the weather that might come. It is a big group that is traveling together but when the weather changes to bad, the big group must split up. 'Då dei drog austover til Eid, snødde det slik ei natt at dei knapt såg vegen føre seg.' 'When they traveled east to Eid, one night it was snowing so heavily they could barely see the road in front of them.'¹⁰³ One of the groups, containing the men of the king, used skis to get to their destination. They were prepared for the possibility of snowy weather. 'Om kongsmennene er det å fortelja at så snart dei og Egil var ute av syne for kvarandre spente dei på seg skiene sine,...]' 'About the kings-men, its told that as soon as the men and Egil were out of sight of each other they put on their skis,...]'¹⁰⁴ As the storyteller in the saga conveys it, the travelers had packed the skis with them as they were originally traveling by horse and sledges. 'Dei hadde hestar og sledar liksom kongsmennene.' 'They had horses and sledges like the men of the king.'¹⁰⁵ The skis then had been packed as a precaution to the weather and the route they were taking. Thus, by getting off the horses and putting on the skis, the skis changed purpose from being something that they brought with them, to something they were actively using to travel with. It would also mean that the king's men would have a good knowledge on what kind of weather would be normal for the area at that time of the year and how the conditions

¹⁰² Jan Åge Riseth, Hans Tømmervik, Elina Helander-Renvall, Niklas Labba, Cecilia Johansson, Eirik Malnes, Jarle W. Bjerke, Christer Jonsson, Veijo Pohjola, Lars-Erik Sarri, Audhild Schanche, Terry V. Callaghan, «Sámi traditional ecological knowledge as a guide to science: snow, ice and reindeer pasture facing climate change.» *Polar Record* Vol. 47, (2011), / <https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.uis.no/core/journals/polar-record/article/sami-traditional-ecological-knowledge-as-a-guide-to-science-snow-ice-and-reindeer-pasture-facing-climate-change/31A73E313888867958D93979B769EE3> /.

¹⁰³ Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,» 105.

¹⁰⁴ Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,» 105.

¹⁰⁵ Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,» 105.

would be to travel in, with the terrain and the route they were taking. It is easy to assume that the kings would know the areas in the kingdom as they would often travel the lands with the king to win fights and wars.¹⁰⁶ Sometimes their duties might include doing errands for their chieftain or king as well. That would be the purpose of being part of the kings' court, to serve him.

We do not get any description on how the skis of the king's men look like, but we can imagine that they might have looked something like the *Finsland-skia*. The *Finsland-skia* are displayed at the Ski Museum in Holmekollen. The fragment in the exhibitions is a part of a ski from 998-1165 (there has been a radiological dating in 1998). It's hand made of oak and 65.0 cm long, 11.0 cm wide and 1.5 cm thick. It is brown. There is a hole in it which is there on purpose for the potential user to be able to tie the front ski to the back ski, so the skis come in two pieces.¹⁰⁷ The dating of this ski that has been done gives us a plausible reason to believe that skis are something the Norse people have been using during wintertime. Since the skis would be made of tree, it's not difficult for them to acquire the material needed to make easy skis if needed. It is easy to imagine that it would be very practical to pack a pair of skis that can be reduced to smaller pieces while traveling in the countryside where snowfall is likely. If they planned to travel on foot or by other means, like horse, skis would not take too much space or be too heavy to carry when they could be more than just a little useful. The skis are then an item and a tool that is most likely packed when they can be useful for a travel across the country. And can be seen as an upgrade while traveling and weather changes.

There is a saying in Norway that all Norwegians are born with skis on their feet. This saying is rooted in a cultural heritage that even predates the Iron Age. In the county of Nordland there have been found petroglyphs of a man on skis, and it's dated to the younger stone age. On the page, kulturminnesok.no, the petroglyphs are described with some measurements, where some of them are measured to 0,3 meter long.¹⁰⁸ Which makes it plausible that the Nordic countries with their environment and landscape have been using skis for a long time as means to travel in snow. Further on in the summer of 2014, there were found a ski in a glacier in the former county *Oppland*¹⁰⁹, the ski itself had been preserved very

¹⁰⁶ Winroth, *The age of the Vikings*, 134.

¹⁰⁷ «Del av en ski.» Retrieved 16th December from [<https://digitaltmuseum.no/021027105507/del-av-en-ski>]

¹⁰⁸ «Rødøy 1 (valen) / Rødøy I, Bergkunst,» Retrieved 20. december from [<https://www.kulturminnesok.no/kart/?q=&am-county=&lokenk=location&am-lok=&am-lokdating=&am-lokconservation=&am-enk=&am-enkdating=&am-enkconservation=&bm-county=&bm-municipality=&cp=1&bounds=65.82166122175619,12.571969628334045,65.82033410982208,12.57411539554596&zoom=18&id=63126>]

¹⁰⁹ Norway changed the names on some of the county's and did a merge on some of them in 2018. Which lead to some different names on counties today.

well in the ice, so even the bindings were still there. This find led to a reconstruction of the skis and there have been done an experiment on the replicas, where they have been tested and used in a movie to convey the old cultural heritage of skiing.¹¹⁰ The reconstruction and reenactment with the ski in the movie was used to convey a more correctly vision of the technique of skiing with the reconstructed skis.¹¹¹ The movie where these skis were used is called Birkebeineren and came out in 2016.



Figure two: A ski hanging over a door as decoration at the Iron Age farm in Stavanger. By author.

At the Iron Age farm, we have this ski hanging over the door into the all-room which is blending in so much that almost no one notice its hanging there. Even I do sometimes forget that it's there. And as I'm no great skier myself, it's not something I often do think about to talk about with the guests that is coming to hear about the Norse people.

We have seen that when traveling it is possible to start out the travel on foot or by horse and then change to skis as weather conditions changes. But sometimes packing skis is not prioritized or there are routes to take that would normally not require skis or skis would be useless because of the terrain. 'Torgeir såg kor Butraldi og følgjet hans för og var klar over at dei ville møte på ei svært hard snøfönn i brekka og få vanskar med å ta seg fram. Difor snudde han over åa og för opp langs andre sida.' 'Torgeir saw where Butraldi and his men were going and was aware that they would encounter a very hard snowdrift in the ravine and have difficulty making their way. Therefore, he turned across the river and went up along the

¹¹⁰ «1300-year old ski is being reconstructed, » Retrieved 20. December from [<https://www.medieval.eu/1300-year-old-ski-reconstructed/>]

¹¹¹ Skiing in the Viking Age, Retrived 26. December from [<https://www.medieval.eu/skiing-in-the-viking-age/>]

other side.’¹¹² Even if it’s snowing, there are times when skis would only make the travel harder or dangerous. To walk up a hard snowdrift with skis would only cause problems as the traveler would most likely slide downhill again.

Sometimes the saga writers don’t tell us what kind of means the travelers are using in their voyage. But they explain nature and weather conditions which can lead the reader to assume that the travelers could use or should use skis as a means for moving. Like in the *Sagaen om Kjalnesigene* ‘På begynnelsen av vinteren, da snøen la seg på fjellene, dro Bue opp i bygda.’ ‘At the beginning of winter, when the snow settled in the mountains, Bue went up to the village.’¹¹³ Or in *Gisle Surssons saga* were the guests that are traveling should bring skis to travel to the party that they were invited to, since the timing of the year and the weather could be snowy as it turned out to be. ‘Om kvelden kom gjestene til gards. Været tetnet, og utpå kvelden begynte det å snø så alle stier ble skjult.’ ‘In the evening when the guests came to the farm. The weather thickened and during the evening it started to snow so all the pathways were hidden.’¹¹⁴ In *Sagaen om Hord og Holmverjene* we only get to know that they are traveling during winter and that one of the travelers dies during the travel. ‘De dro i gjestebud om vinteren, og da de var nede på Bø, døde forstermoren til Signey brått. ‘They went as guests during winter, and when they arrived at Bø, the foster mother of Signy suddenly died.’¹¹⁵ The travelers here should have prepared for the possibility to travel in snowy weather. Instead, nature and weather claim a life because they are not prepared for it.

In *Sagaen om Vatnsdølene* chapter thirty-four the travelers are really challenged by a heavy snowstorm; the storyteller is explicitly explaining that the storm is so harsh that no living being should be out in the storm. ‘Det er fortalt at den morgenen de skulle møtes til holmgang, ble det slik snøstorm og frost at ingen skapning kunne være ute.’ ‘It is said that in the morning they were supposed to meet for *holmgang*, there was such a snowstorm and frost that no creature should be outside.’¹¹⁶ Despite of the danger of traveling in this snowstorm the two brothers still traveled in the storm and reached Fakse-Brand. ‘De gjorde det, drog dit og kom om kvelden til Fakse-Brand.’ ‘That they did, they went and arrived at Fakse-Brand at night.’¹¹⁷ There is no mention of how they are traveling to the house of their friend Fakse-Brand but after they reach their friend, they borrow a horse. Since they are traveling in a

¹¹² Hagland, «Soga om forsterbrørne,» 284.

¹¹³ Mindrebø, «Sagaen om Kjalnesigene,» 313.

¹¹⁴ Jørgensen, «Gisle Surssons saga,» 17.

¹¹⁵ Mindrebø, «Sagaen om Hord og Holmvernene,» 202.

¹¹⁶ Birgirsson and Thorvaldsen, «Sagaen om Vatnsdølene,» 41.

¹¹⁷ Birgirsson and Thorvaldsen, «Sagaen om Vatnsdølene,» 42.

snowstorm there is a possibility for them to have used skis to ease their travel. But later, when they have reached their friend and they are borrowing the horse with a sledge, it is explained that their friend is walking on the side of the horse to steer it. ‘Morgenen etter var det same snøfokket, om ikke verre. Brødrene ville gå, enda været ikke ga seg. Brand hadde kledd en slede med skinn. Så spente han Fakse for og sa at de to nok ville finne veien. «Torstein og Tore skal sitte i sleden mens jeg og Fakse-Brand går forran.»’ ‘The next morning it was the same snowstorm, if not worse. The brothers wanted to go even if the weather didn’t lighten up. Brand had covered a sledge with leather. And then he harnessed Fakse to the sledge and said that the two would probably find their way. «Torstein and Tore will sit in the sledge while me and Fakse-Brand will walk in front of them.»’¹¹⁸ Therefore, it seems like they didn’t travel with skis after all, and they might be having a harder travel because of that. And then when they change to travel by horse and sledge the travel would be a lot easier for the two who are sitting in the sledge under the covers. Now as they have changed to travel with horse so are we.

The horse as a means to travel.

Both sagas, *Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga* and *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* are mentioning the use of horses as a means to travel. And traveling by horse would be the third option of traveling on land and on the physical plane. Traveling by using horses would make the traveling easier for the travelers. The horse is an animal that can carry much more than what a human being can, and due to the way, the body of a horse is built. It can also travel longer distances than a human before it gets tired. But as the horse has a bigger body than the human, it also needs more food to survive. Which can make it quite expensive to own one, and even more so if one owns more than one horse. Thus, having a horse depends on status, wealth, and access to resources. Some of the sagas are mentioning the use of horses as a means to travel which can give us an insider on how these types of travels are taking place. *Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga* and *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* is a good starting point for us to dive into this type of traveling.

In *Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga*, Torstein is traveling with a company of twelve (unknown) men, and his wife Torfinna.¹¹⁹ The storyteller is explicit writing that Torfinna is riding on horseback and that all the men are walking. ‘Torfinna red, men mennene gikk,[...]’

¹¹⁸ Birgirsson and Thorvaldsen, «Sagaen om Vatnsdölene,» 42.

¹¹⁹ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,» 249.

‘Torfinna rode, but the men were walking,[...]’¹²⁰ It is interesting that not all the travelers are riding a horse. It would be more comfortable for all of them to be riding compared to some of them exhausting themselves by walking over long distances. But there could be a simple explanation to why not all fourteen are riding but only one. A company of fourteen is a large group of people traveling together which requires a larger amount of resources. Since Torstein is the main character in this scene (in this part of the saga), we can assume that he is the leader of the group that is traveling together. Since it is Torstein who is the leader of the group it would be his friendships and relationships the group would rely on, if they would need new or more resources along the way. They could also rely on the relationships and friendships of his wife as she is his partner and would also have connections from both before and after their marriage (I will come back to this).

At the beginning of every journey the people that decide to travel together must prepare for the journey they are taking. If it is a route they have done before, or know, they would know how long the travel would be, and then they would know if they would need horses to get there or if they can get there by walking. However, it’s not everyone who has access to a horse or horses. They are costly and they require a lot of food and equipment. At the opening of chapter twenty-seven when Torstein is introduced, the storyteller explains that he is of a good heritage and that he is a man with a lot of riches. ‘Han var rik på gods, av god slekt [...]’ ‘He was from a good lineage, wealthy and had lots of possessions[...]’¹²¹ When we are thinking about these two factors (good heritage and a rich man) it would be easy to think that he would have enough resources to equip all his traveling companions with horses. However, if we also assume that the twelve men that are following him, are men who don’t have much and are living off, being loyal to the richer people who are heading out on a *viking*, then it would be very costly to equip all of them with horses and other necessary equipment for the travel.¹²² Torsteins’ followers might have seen him as a kind of chieftain, since he is rich and from a good heritage. Anders Winroth argues that warriors would follow kings and chieftains who gave good gifts and had honor.¹²³ That could be the reason to Torstein having twelve men following him for this particular journey.

The travel Torstein and his companions are doing is happening on Iceland.¹²⁴ Since the Norse people settled on the island and stayed there, they were able to bring their culture of

¹²⁰ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,» 249.

¹²¹ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga, », 248.

¹²² Winroth, *The age of the Vikings*, 164.

¹²³ Winroth, *The age of the Vikings*, 134.

¹²⁴ Sandsmark, «Björn Hitdølakjempes Saga,» 248.

agriculture from Norway. Yet they still had to import certain resources to build up the foundation to support their lifestyle. Part of the cultural heritage they would bring is the idea of shared commons. Areas or resources that would be shared with everyone and not owned by someone. For this to work those who took advantage of this could not mine and harvest without thinking about preserving the resources as well. This idea of shared commons made it into the sagas. And Reinard Hennig even argues that the sagas are being used to promote sustainability of the commons.¹²⁵ Since there would be restrictions on how much people could harvest or take from commons there still would be a need for importing some resources. This idea of shared commons is still practiced in Norway, and the Iron Age farm is surrounded by an area that is a common. There is a herd of sheep grazing the area the whole year to the amusement of all the tourists. Sometimes some of the tourists from the same cruise ship as the Monday group I have, manage to make their own way up to the Iron Age farm. And when they notice that the museum is only open for booked groups some of the days, but that they can still go around and have a look because of the area around the farm is a common they get overly happy.

Horses were not native to Iceland. Which would mean that horses were imported to the island with the first settlers in late 800AD.¹²⁶ The Icelandic horse is called the horse of the Gods and there are several reasons to why the Icelandic horse got this nick name. The breed is the purest breeds as Iceland don't allows importing of horses today.¹²⁷ Therefore, will this breed be one of the closest breeds to the horse that existed in the west coast of Norway and in the British isle in the Viking Age. The horses in the Iron Age and Viking Age had a high value and were high in the hierarchy in society, they were even over the thralls and compared to ships.¹²⁸ How the Norse people kept the horses is unclear. There are only fragments from textual sources that can give us a vague picture. The Norse people kept the horses half wild, and the horses had to manage themselves during wintertime and in meager years.¹²⁹ Kristin Armstrong Oma concludes in her book that because of the little changes in geography, and the needs of the horses and riders the horses developed after Darwin's evolutionary principles.¹³⁰ Which makes for the sturdy Icelandic horse we have today. Because the horses had to take

¹²⁵ Hennig, *Sagas for Sustainability?*, 38.

¹²⁶ «Islandshesten kraft, vilje og utholdenhet,» Retrived 4th may from [<https://nihf.no/om-nihf/om-islandshesten/>].

¹²⁷ «Islandshestens historie, » Retrived 4th may from [<https://www.agria.no/hest/artikkel/om-hest/fakta-om-islandshesten/>].

¹²⁸ Oma, *Hesten*, 124.

¹²⁹ Oma, *Hesten*, 55.

¹³⁰ Oma, *Hesten*, 55.

care of themselves, they would roam around on their own and keep to the outskirts of farming areas and probably more in areas that were seen as commons. They would then use common grazing areas to feed themselves (much like the sheep in the Iron Age farm).

To be able to ride a horse there is a need for some type of equipment that will make sure that the rider stays on top of the horse and something that gives the rider the ability to steer the horse in the direction the rider wants to go. Depending on the financial statue of the owner, this equipment could be just standard and easy, or it could be covered in decorations and be made of material of a higher quality or value. The Norse people had the means to create what they needed to ride, and they also had the means to decorate them at times. Sometimes these decorations came from stolen goods as well. At Soma in Jæren in the west coast of Norway, there have been found a beautiful piece of setting for a bridle. It's not perfectly preserved, but there are pieces of it that are well preserved. It's made of bronze, and it's gilded, there are about 19 pieces in different shapes and sizes. Some of the pieces are in a better condition than others and it's clear that some of the pieces are missing gems or stones.¹³¹ This makes this particular piece of finding an exception of the norm of what have been used at the time. It is suitable to bring it in to this conversation as we are also looking at different people having different number of resources or riches. In the same area there has also been found a piece of equipment that is not gilded, a bit made of iron.¹³² Iron was a metal that was less costly at that time, and we find more objects made of this metal during the Iron age (hence the name of the period). The bit that was found is not fully preserved but it's still possible to see what it is and what it has been used for. The piece is put in the mouth of the horse and reins will make the person sitting on the horse being able to steer and choose the direction the horse is going by pulling the reins.

¹³¹ «Beslag C1950.b to t,» Hentet 10.03.23 fra [<https://digitaltmuseum.no/0210212332550/beslag>].

¹³² «Bissel C1949,» Hentet 10.03.23 fra <https://digitaltmuseum.no/0210211933881/bissel>.



Figure 3: The gilded setting for a bridle found at Soma Jæren, In the exhibition *Utferd* at the Archeological Museum in Stavanger. By author.

The two pieces that I have been talking about here have been made of iron and bronze and one of them has been gilded with gold. One would seem very costly, the other more of an average priced piece of equipment. At the Kaupang site, in the graves there, there have been found horse equipment made of lead.¹³³ Unn Pedersen argues that ‘Lead can be interpreted as an affordable raw material, based on the large amount of lead at Kaupang, and well in correspondence with interpretations of lead ornaments from Western Europe.’¹³⁴ In her paper *Lead working in the Viking-Age Norway*.

Riding the horses would be the most common way of using the horse. The riding technique that was used in the Iron Age and Viking Age differs a little from how good riding techniques are today. The Norse people who are riding would keep the reins loose, hanging in a curve, and they would lean backwards, have the legs in front of the body and let the toes point downwards.¹³⁵ Good riding techniques today depends a little on the reason the rider is riding. If it is for sports, a show or just a ride in the forest. The technique that is used determines what kind of saddle is used and how it is formed.

Riding a horse is quite often mentioned as a mode for traveling in the sagas, but the used techniques are not mentioned, that knowledge has come from reconstructing findings. In

¹³³ Unn Pedersen, «Leadworking in Viking-Age Norway, » In *Viking Worlds, Things, Spaces and Movement*, ed. Marianne Hem Eriksen, Unn Pedersen, Bernt Rundberget, Irmelin Axelsen and Heidi Lund Berg, (Oxford, United Kingdom: OXBOW BOOKS, 2014), 189.

¹³⁴ Pedersen, «Leadworking in Viking-Age Norway, » 187.

¹³⁵ Oma, *Hesten*, 52.

Njålssoga chapter seventy-three there is a simple sentence of Gunnar riding a horse. ‘Gunnar rei då heim.’ ‘Gunnar then rode home.’¹³⁶ Finnboge and Torkjell rides to Gnup in the saga about Finnboge the strong ‘En dag gjør Finnboge og Torkjell seg klar til å ri til Gnup [...]’ ‘One day Finnboge and Torkjell are making themselves ready to ride to Gnup [...]’¹³⁷ Tore and Ketilbjørn are riding as well, to get to Grostad ‘Etter det rei dei frå Grostad.’ ‘They are riding to Grostad after that.’¹³⁸ There were several types of saddles that have been found that they would use for different occasions one type is more for parades where the rider will have more support to sit still, there is one that gives the rider more mobility on the horse back, and there was a special type developed to carry ‘luggage’ and it’s called Ring-saddle.¹³⁹ In *Gisle Surssons Saga* chapter twelve Vestein is borrowing a horse from Torvald but he has his own equipment ‘[...]Torvald lot ham få låne hasten sin. Vestein hadde sitt eget ridetøy og red med ringlede bissel.’ ‘[...]Torvald let him borrow his horse. Vestein had his own riding gear and rode with a bissel with bells on.’¹⁴⁰ So there is no small variety in the equipment’s they could use.

But, riding the horses is not the only way to travel with a horse in the Iron age and Viking age. Egil and his companions in *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* are initially traveling with the king and his men, therefore, it seems like most of them are traveling with horses.¹⁴¹ Not only do they have horses, but they also have sledges that the horses are pulling. ‘Dei hadde hestar og sledar liksom kongsmennene.’ ‘They had horses and sledges like the kings men.’¹⁴² There have been several findings of sledges and in the Oseberg ship the women who were buried there had gotten three sledges with them.¹⁴³ As the sledges are built without wheels, they are used during wintertime. But the horses were not only used to pulling during the wintertime. There are also several findings of carriages, some only used for ‘display’ or parading while others were built to handle everyday work and heavy work.¹⁴⁴ In *Njålssoga* chapter ninety-eight Rodney Hoskuld is borrowing a horse and something to drive in, to a sheep herder after he tells her that her son has died ‘«så ta hesten min og noko å køyra med.»’

¹³⁶ Hagland, «Njålssoga,» 85.

¹³⁷ Mindrebø, «Finnboge den sterkes saga,» Ch. 30 p. 247.

¹³⁸ Nordbø, «Soga om Gull-Tore,» Ch. 11 p. 335.

¹³⁹ Oma, *Hesten*, 43-51.

¹⁴⁰ Jørgensen, «Gisle Surssons saga,» 12.

¹⁴¹ Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,» 104-105.

¹⁴² Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,» 105.

¹⁴³ «Sledane» Retrived 5th May from [<https://www.vikingtidsmuseet.no/samlingene/oseberg/sledene/>]

¹⁴⁴ Oma, *Hesten*, 53-54.

‘«then take my horse and something to drive in.»’¹⁴⁵ It is clear that it is some kind of carriage she tells him to take.

The king, Harald Hårfagre, in *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* would have more riches and resources than Torstein would have, simply just because he is a king. When a person has a title as a king, they would usually have more territory than a chieftain. At the same time the king is spending more of his riches to accommodate the people traveling with him, in his company or for him. Because a king or a chieftain has to be generous and give mighty gifts to his warriors and his kings’ men so they will stay loyal to him.¹⁴⁶ However, the group Egil is traveling with in this chapter is the kings’ men and not the king himself (they split up in the previous chapter).¹⁴⁷ But they are still traveling under his name and would benefit from the advantages that comes with that. Horses and humans can carry a certain number of objects depending on strength and dexterity, and to complete a longer journey it’s sometimes necessary to replenish resources needed for the journey. But by using sledges they could travel longer before the need to replenishing would be necessary.

I have several times mentioned now, replenishing resources, or relying on friendships and other equal things. And it is a normal custom to host people in the Norse culture, which we can see in several sagas. Some of those that are being hosted are either invited or they came across the land of a farm owner and were seeking ‘shelter’ or to replenish their stocks of resources. This shelter doesn’t need to be because there is bad weather or complications, it might be that they just needed a place to sleep or rest before they kept going. Both in the Iron age and in the Viking age the halls would be a place of power.¹⁴⁸ The symbolism of the hall did change from symbolizing power in the Iron age to represent the power in the Viking Age.¹⁴⁹ So by hosting travelers and guest the owners of the farms could ‘show off’ their power and halls and create a good reputation for themselves. By having a reputation of being an honorable person one would also make sure that others would respect you. Thus, this way of hosting strangers and friends in this culture would been seen as a ‘must do’ if they would want to live up to the expectation of being honorable people. This cultural aspect of hosting makes it easier for the Norse people to travel in the north with the harsh conditions with weather and sometimes long travels with scarce resources. Even in *Hávamál* from the older

¹⁴⁵ Hagland, «Njálssoga,» 119.

¹⁴⁶ Winroth, *The age of the Vikings*, 134.

¹⁴⁷ Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,»104.

¹⁴⁸ Lydia Carstens, «Powerful space. The Iron-Age hall and its development during the Viking Age,» In *Viking Worlds, Things, Spaces and Movement*, ed. Marianne Hem Eriksen, Unn Pedersen, Bernt Rundberget, Irmelin Axelsen and Heidi Lund Berg, (Oxford, United Kingdom: OXBOW BOOKS, 2014), 16.

¹⁴⁹ Carstens, «Powerful space, » 20.

Edda it is explained how important honor is, not just for the present time but also for the future. ‘Døyr fe døyr frendar døyr sjølv det same. Men ordet om deg aldri døyr vinn du eit gjetord gjævt.’ ‘Cattle die friends die die you will to. But if your reputation lives, you will win a mighty word’¹⁵⁰ The importance of a good reputation is something that will outlive the people and the mighty words will not die.

It becomes really clear how hosting traveling people is the norm when the group in the *Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson* is splitting up due to the weather conditions. This group is splitting up because of the heavy snow that is hindering them. The kings’ men are sending Egil and his men in a direction where they know there is a farm, and they are relying on the reputation of being an honorable host is true of the farmer. ‘Då dei drog austover til Eid, snødde det slik ei natt at dei knapt såg vegen føre seg. Det gjekk seint med dei dagen etter, for hestane sokk djupt ned i snøen så snart dei kom utanfor vegen[...] «Her delar vegane seg. Lenger framme, bak åsen, bur ein bonde som heiter Arnald, ein venn av oss. Vi lagsmenn vil dra dit og overnatte. Men de andre skal dra opp åsen[...]’ ‘When they went east to Eid, there was heavy snow at night, and they barely found the road in front of them. The day after it went slow, because the horses sank deep in the snow as soon as they stepped outside of the road[...] «Here the road are splitting. Further ahead, behind the hill lives a farmer that is called Arnald, a friend of ours. We kings men will go there for the night. While the others should go up the hill[...]’¹⁵¹ Sometimes it’s not only the humans who needs to rest because of the harsh weather. ‘Hesten has var svært sliten fordi han hadde hatt ei vanskelig reise og hardt vêr.’ ‘His horse was very tired because he had had a hard travel and harsh weather.’¹⁵² Odd who is the one who is traveling here, stops to seek shelter so he doesn’t push himself or the horse to hard. If he had pushed the horse and himself more it could have led to serious consequences for them both.

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The three modes of traveling on land come with different challenges and requirements. When the Norse people are out walking, they do wear shoes, but the shoes they are using are very different to the shoes we use today. We have shoes for almost every occasion, while the

¹⁵⁰ Mortensson-Egnund, «Håvamål,» 38.

¹⁵¹ Simensen, «Soga om Egil Skalla-Grimsson,» 105.

¹⁵² Kleivane, «Soga om Bård Snæfellsås,» 251.

Norse people have one type of shoe that we know of. There was no revolutionary development in the shoes in the Viking Age. So, the shoes they used would be made of skin, and the quality would depend on what resources they had access to. But putting on shoes and then starting walking is not always enough. The hikes the Norse people did, would sometime result in dangerous adventures. To prepare for a hike is always smart, that being said, it seems like the Norse people, just like modern people, didn't always prepare good enough for the travels by foot. The sagas do talk about those trips where walking and being caught by weather which is harsh and could claim life or force the people to seek shelter. Nevertheless, walking as a mode for traveling is not always a struggle. When the people prepare for the possible weather changes and when they know the area they are walking in, they could be just fine.

During the seasonal change there are other requirements needed to travel across the country. Shoes are not always adequate during wintertime, and since there is no proof of the Norse people using snowshoes, they do need an upgrade like skis. Skis are a cultural heritage that stems from all the way back to the Stone age. And the saying 'All Norwegians are born with skis on their feet' confirms the close relationship the Norse people could have had to skiing. But since skis and using skis as a mode for traveling is an old cultural heritage it becomes common knowledge that it is possible to ski, and maybe even most Norse people also knew how to ski. Which then makes it plausible that the saga writers did omit the descriptions of this in the Icelandic Sagas. The sagas are talking more about stories where weather and nature is described in a way where it seems that skis are the mode that should be used.

The horse could be used as a means to travel with. When using horses, it becomes possible to travel longer and faster, but having a horse can be very costly as they require a bit more than just throwing on some shoes or skis. Nevertheless, it's quite common to travel by horse in the Iron Age and Viking Age. Since the horse were not native to Iceland the first settlers had to import horses with them from where they migrated. With the strict importing rules in Iceland later in time, did the Icelandic horse become the purest breed there is, and it becomes very close to the breed of horse they would have in the Viking Age. The Norse people would keep their horses half wild, and only catch in and tame the horses they needed. This makes the commons important for the Norse people and the wild horses. They had to take care of themselves and through that they became strong and sturdy. Riding horses would be more common than driving them. Riding the horse requires less material to create equipment. But in general, there would be a need for more than just one thing to put on the

horse to be able to ride or drive it. And through the findings we have of horse gear we know that they would decorate if they could. So, keeping horses becomes a costly thing. And in the Sagas, we can see that not all have the resources to use horses to travel with.

Both shoes and skis would be more common things to have, and easy to access due to the material that they were made of. Horses would in general be more for the people who had more. And it seems like chieftains and kings would equip their followers with horses if they could.

Traveling at Sea

The groups of tourists that come to the Iron Age farm every Monday are arriving over the north sea from England. The cruise ship has motors and can take thousands of people on the voyage. None of the tourists has any kind of ownership to the building of the ship, and most of them would most likely not know how its built either. And if the captain for some reason would be incapacitated the chance of any of the tourist knowing how to steer the ship is zero. All that they would care about is the experience of ‘sailing’ while they are sitting down having their breakfast of eggs and bacon and getting excited for reaching the new place and going sightseeing. It becomes such a contrast to the voyages in the Iron Age and the Viking Age.

The Norse people also traveled at sea, and they were mighty seafarers; the knowledge they had about boats and ships is amazing. In this chapter I have chosen three scenes from three of the sagas as a basis to show how the Norse people did travel with ships at sea, then I have also brought in other scenes, from different sagas as well. The two main scenes that I have chosen are *Soga om Grønlandingane* chapter one and *Soga om Korka-Rev* chapter four. In the first part of this chapter, I have used ships, boats, and tools as my objects. I’m using them side by side with my textual sources to strengthen my arguments and to give a broader view of the amazing technology they mastered, created, and used. I will start by looking into the building of ships to get a deeper understanding of the appreciation that they might have had for the ships and boats. To fully understand the complexity of building a boat or a ship I am also bringing in sail work (and the preparation of a ship or a boat prior to starting the voyage). That will include thinking about provisions. I will use chapter four in *Soga om Korka-Rev* as my base in written primary source and then I will rely on objects and research done on object that have been found. Thereafter I will continue with how the Norse people are navigating their ships. Where I will use *Soga om Grønlandingane* chapter one as the basis and then other sagas to strengthen my arguments.¹⁵³

The objects that I am using in this chapter are tools used for creating or building ships and boats. The ships or boats themselves, I have also given space to focus on the production of sails. The reason for including to focus on the sails is due to the technological advancement that came with the production of them. And because it made it possible for the Norse people to expand their horizon even further than before. The sails also give us an insight to the

¹⁵³ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane, » 291-302.

contributions in production done by women.

In the second part of this chapter, I'm going to talk about navigation where there will be no concrete object as the Norse people did not use any maps to navigate (as we know of). I would rather talk about some kind of mental map that they could create for themselves in their mind with the information they could gather before and during the voyage.

The building of the ship

The work around building and creating a ship was time consuming and expensive for the Norse people. One might not realize how much time, resources and work that actually goes into building a ship or a boat. And it doesn't help when TV shows like *The Vikings* makes it look like a whole fleet can be made in just a few weeks and by one man alone.¹⁵⁴ There has been conducted experimental archeology on reconstructing a longship on 30 m which they concluded that it would take approximately 40,000 hour of work, this would include production of iron, ropes, and sail.¹⁵⁵ I, myself, did not realize the massiveness of the work that goes into creating a longship or a cargo ship before I tried to hand spin some wool that goes into creating the sails that are used in these ships. In chapter four in *Soga om Korka-Rev* we get a small hint at how time consuming and how much work and resources goes into the repairing of a sunken boat.¹⁵⁶

To summarize the scene in the saga, the main character Rev (as he is referred to in the saga) is being asked by Gest to try building a boat for hunting seals with, to prove that he is good at something. 'No veit eg kva idrotten din er. Du er ein kunstnar med hendene når du vil. Eg har tenkt på det når du har drive med reiskap til å gjera reimar med, då har du korkje telget skeivt eller skakt og slett ikkje ujamt. Og det du har drive med, har vore svært gjort. [...] Det vil eg prøva ut. Eg vil at du skal gjera ein båt til selfangst for meg.' 'Now I know what your sport is. When you want to you are an artist with your hands. I've thought about it when you've been doing ropes for making straps with, then you haven't done any of the work crooked or uneven. And what you have been doing has been of very good quality. [...] I want to test your skills. I want you to make a boat for hunting seals to me.'¹⁵⁷ Rev has been described as a person that have a lot of growing potential when it comes to skills. So, he accepts the challenge but does have some conditions. He doesn't want anyone to know what

¹⁵⁴ The Vikings season 1 episode 1 second half.

¹⁵⁵ Bill, «Viking Ships and the Sea, » 170.

¹⁵⁶ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» 393-394.

¹⁵⁷ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» 394.

he is doing unless he succeeds, and he wants all the tools for doing this work and the tools need to be of good quality. The passage that follows the demands are quite detailed and gives the reader a good idea of what kind of tools are needed without mentioning them all. ‘Gest fekk då sett opp eit stort båtskur og drog mykje trevyrke dit. Det var ein knarre som hadde forlist I fjæra til Gest. Han hadde kjøpt opp skipsveden. Alt dette trevyrket fekk no Gest ført opp til båtskuret åt Rev og likeins all båtsaumen. Gest hadde óg usmidd jarn, og Rev gav utrykk for at dét ville han ha, og sa han ville slå båtsaumen sjølv. Verktøy av alle slag fekk Gest bore dit, likeins esse og kol.’ ‘Gest then set up a large boat shed and hauled a lot of woodwork there. There was a boat that was wrecked on the shore of Gest. He had bought up the ships wood. All this woodwork was now brought up to the boat shed by Gest to Rev, and likewise all the boat seams. Gest also had raw iron, and Rev expressed that he wanted that, and said he also wanted to sew the boat seams himself. Tools of all kinds was brought there, likewise axe and col.’¹⁵⁸ The storyteller saw it as important to emphasize how much time Rev was using on this project. He explains that Rev wakes up early and returns to bed late every day for five months before he asks Gest to come and look at his work. ‘Han stod tidleg opp og kom seint heim. Dette stod på i tre månadar.[...] Så gjekk den endå to månader.’ ‘He woke up early and returned home late. This he did for three months.[...] Then it went two more months.’¹⁵⁹ If we assume a 12-hour workday, as Jan Bill suggests in his chapter *Viking Ships and the Sea* and take an averaged of thirty days in a month that would result in 1800 working hour in rebuilding a wrecked ship.¹⁶⁰

We can divide the ship into three different ‘materials’, wood, iron, and textile. All three materials require different techniques and skills. So, out from the saga we know that Rev had been working with the wood and the metal work for the boat, the only thing that is not mentioned is the creation or repairing of sails.¹⁶¹ Textile work is done by woman and therefore it might be that it has not been mentioned in this scene as its main focus is on what Rev can master of handcrafting and that they might not have used sails for a boat to hunt seals with.¹⁶² However, the ship turns out to be a cargo ship worthy to sail the seas when its finished. ‘Men då dei kom dit, stod det eit godt sjøført frakteskip der.’ ‘But when they got there, there was a good sea worthy cargo ship.’¹⁶³ Cargo ships do have sails as they are

¹⁵⁸ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» 394.

¹⁵⁹ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» 394-395.

¹⁶⁰ Jan Bill, «Viking Ships and the Sea, » In *The Viking World*, Ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price, (London: Routledge, 2008), 170.

¹⁶¹ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev, » 394.

¹⁶² Cartwright, «Making the cloth that binds us, » 162.

¹⁶³ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» 395.

specialized to be sailed and not rowed (I will come back to the production of sails).¹⁶⁴ Which then makes it reasonable to think that textile production has not been mentioned here as Rev is a man and the focus for on him to prove what he is able to do. And prove that he masters the art of ship building including forging, which he does according to the storyteller. Then the approx. 1800 hours of work would only be the woodwork and forging that exclude the textile production and sail works in this case.

The Cargo ship Rev had made is most likely built with a clinker building technique which is the technique that replaced the plank sewing method around the first centuries AD.¹⁶⁵ The events in the ending of this saga is believed to have happened around 1047-1066 AD which would mean that the development of the clinker building technique would not be something new to the Norse people.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Rev is doing this for the first time and the storyteller has emphasizes that Rev is not particularly smart or skilled as I mentioned before. But others have explained this particularly saga as a typical ‘Askeladden/Ashladd’ story. Meaning that the main character is supposed to have a huge growth potential and hero qualities.

The storyteller conveys to us that Rev is requesting tools to work with both woodwork and the metal that is needed to repair the boat. The only tools that are mentioned explicitly are the forge and coal that is being brought to him, the rest of the tools are expresses as ‘Verty av alle slag’ ‘tools of all kinds’¹⁶⁷ It might be that the storyteller didn’t see it as important to mention all the tools by name as most of the tools that would be used, for both smithing and carpentry work, are common tools. We know that these tools might have been iron anvil, long-beaked pliers, small hammer, bow drill, wire iron or soldering iron, small chisel and sharpener (found in the older burials).¹⁶⁸ Or hammer, chisels, pliers of various types and sizes, anvils, files and special tools for drawing wire, forging rivets and also equipment for melting and casting metal(found in the younger burials) when working on the metal.¹⁶⁹ And knives, scrapers, gouging irons, planner blades, celts, axes, boat line (*båstrek*), drills, awls, sawblades, and hammers to do carpentering.¹⁷⁰ As Rev has requested all the tools needed and that they have to be of good quality we can assume that Gest would equip Rev with all that he asked for of the things he had access to. Gest has a goal of finding and proving that Rev is

¹⁶⁴ Bill, «Viking Ships and the Sea, » 176.

¹⁶⁵ Bill, «Viking Ships and the Sea, » 171.

¹⁶⁶ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» 389.

¹⁶⁷ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» 394.

¹⁶⁸ Bergljot Solberg, *Jernalderen i Norge*, (Oslo: Cappelens Forlag. 2003), 158.

¹⁶⁹ Solberg, *Jernalderen i Norge*, 238.

¹⁷⁰ Solberg, *Jernalderen i Norge*, 238.

good at something. Therefore, it would not be logical for him to sabotage the result by not giving Rev what he requested. The *båstrek* is the only specialized tool that the Norse people would use for their ship building, the rest of the tools would be normal carpentering tools or forging tools in general.¹⁷¹ In the Osebergship finding there were a *båstrek* that was whole, and the dimension is 9,6 x 7,5 cm. There is no picture of it online but from the description it might be made of iron (since it's been described as rusted).¹⁷² None of the sources that I have looked into have given me any description on how the Norse people would use this specialized tool. But when I looked at a more modern *båstrek* in the museum collection of Nordfjord Folkemuseum it is a tool that is used to carve lines and profiles on the hull of the ship.¹⁷³

The ships of the Norse people didn't only develop from plank sewing to clinker building on the hull like I mentioned further up. The ships also developed from ships that was only to be rowed, to ships that could be sailed. When exactly the first sail was made (in the Norse society) is not clear, but the structure of the society had changed so it became possible for them to create the sails around 700AD. (Which corresponds with the raid on Lindisfarne and the growth in frequency of 'Viking raids' mentioned in different societies around in Europe and on the British Islands.) That is when the general understanding of the Viking age starts. But I do believe that the production of sails and perfecting the technology would take some time for them. So, it's safe to assume perfection of production of sails would be around 700 AD and trial and error before that. The producers of the sails have long lived in the shadow of the stereotypical 'Viking man'.

The women were an essential asset to society and important to the way of life in the Norse peoples' society. It is generally accepted that women have a specific set of work tasks that is separate from what the men are doing. And women were in charge of for example production of textiles in the Iron age and the Viking age. Ben Cartwright argues that spinning, and such would be like second nature for the women and that they would start their training at the age of six.¹⁷⁴ He further on says: 'A variety of evidence suggests an association between women, spinning and weaving with the production of fate.' Which he builds on from the research of Magnusson and Pálsson and their work in 1960 in the book *Njál's Saga*. The

¹⁷¹ Solberg, *Jernalderen i Norge*, 206.

¹⁷² «Båstrek, » Retrieved 4th Jan. From [<https://digitaltmuseum.no/021029834780/batastrek>].

¹⁷³ «Høvel, » Retrieved 4th Jan. From [<https://digitaltmuseum.no/021026960354/hovel>].

¹⁷⁴ Ben Cartwright, «Making the cloth that binds us. The role of textile production in producing Viking-Age identities., » In *Viking Worlds, Things, Spaces and Movement*, ed. Marianne Hem Eriksen, Unn Pedersen, Bernt Rundberget, Irmelin Axelsen and Heidi Lund Berg, (Oxford, United Kingdom: OXBOW BOOKS, 2014), 162.

Norse people had access to different types of resources that they could make textiles of. But their sails would be made of wool most of the time.¹⁷⁵ And the continued development of techniques for producing textiles lead to the creation of the sails the Norse people are using to expand their horizon even more than before. To make a sail out of wool is a massive work and there have been projects where reconstruction of Viking ship sails has been done. One of these projects have tried to reconstruct a sail to go with the reconstructed Oseberg ship.¹⁷⁶ To make the woolen sail dense enough they had to spin and weave the raw wool and use a mixture of fat and tar. The sail that was made ended up being 82m² big and weighed 110 kilos. If they would have used the *Oppstad* loom it would have taken five years of just the weaving.¹⁷⁷ Then we need to think of all the work that happens before the weaving can happen, spinning, cleaning, and sorting of the wool quality. With that in mind we are starting to get some idea of how much work there is in just making one sail.



Figure 4: A *Oppstad* loom that could be used to weave textile and sails, on display at the Iron Age farm in Stavanger. By author.

¹⁷⁵ Christer Westerdhal, «Sails and the Cognitive Roles of Viking age Ships, » In *Maritime Societies of the Viking and Medieval World*, Ed. James H. Barret and Sarah Jane Gibbon (London: Routledge, 2016), 21.

¹⁷⁶ «Fra sau til seil. En rapport om rekonstruksjonen av seilet til Saga Oseberg» Retrieved 12th January from [<https://osebergvikingarv.no/osebergskipet/fra-sau-til-seil/>].

¹⁷⁷ «Fra sau til Seil».

It was important that the ships and boats were built with skill and precision. And we can see in the sagas that this is something that is worth mentioning. ‘Jarlen ga Finnboe et svært vakkert skip med fullt utstyr.’ ‘The Earl gave Finnboe a very beautiful ship that was fully equipped.’¹⁷⁸ There is a tendency to calling the ships that are impressive for dragons. ‘Då fekk dei sjå at det kom nokre skip sigande fram mot dei. Det var ein drake som fór først, eit svært staseleg skip.’ ‘Then they could see that there came some ship towards them. It was a dragon that came first, a very impressive ship.’¹⁷⁹ Or like in *Finnboe den sterkes saga* ‘Raud hadde et stort flott drakeskip.’ ‘Raud had a big great dragonship.’¹⁸⁰ These dragon ships would be something other people would watch when they came into port or to a village or farm that was close by the beach, like in the *Soga om forsterbrørne*. ‘Han hadde eit staseleg skip og eit djervt og væl væpna følge. Så stor ein ofse stod det av Torgrim at folk knapt torde tala til han. Fangstreiskap hadde grønlendingane alltid ombord på skipa sine. No som skipet til Torgrim seig til lands, gjekk folk ned til stranda for å sjå på stasen og våpenbunaden.’ ‘He had a stately ship and a bold, well-armed crew. There was such a big fierceness over Torgrim that people barely dared to speak to him. The Greenlanders always had equipment for hunting in their ships. And now that the ship of Torgrim came to land, all the people gathered to watch the beauty and the armory.’¹⁸¹ A dragon ship must have been more costly than a normal ship and equipped with more than the usual of weapons and other tools. Then if a whole fleet of them are coming in to land it’s signaling even more greatness. ‘Og han hadde ikkje gått lenge før han fekk sjå tretten drakar styra mot land.’ ‘And he hadn’t walked far before he saw thirteen dragon ships steering towards shore.’¹⁸² If we are imagining the sight of these thirteen big, beautiful ships coming toward us and knowing how much work, resources and ‘money’ that goes into owning them. I think the Norse people would feel very humbled by it.

The sizes of the boats and ships can vary, and some of them are so big that they can hold thirty people with all their luggage for moving. ‘Kvar av dei styrte sitt skip, og kvar hadde med om lag tretti menneske.’ ‘Both of them sailed a ship, and both of them had with them about thirty people.’¹⁸³ Sometimes they would also make smaller boats that are not as grand as the big dragons. ‘De lagde seg en skinnbåt med treverk på innsiden.’ ‘They made skin boats with woodwork on the inside.’¹⁸⁴ The Norse people made a variety of ships

¹⁷⁸ Mindrebø, «Finnboe den sterkes saga,» Ch. 21 p. 241.

¹⁷⁹ Hagland, «Tormodståten,» Ch. 3 p. 441.

¹⁸⁰ Mindrebø, «Finnboe den sterkes saga,» Ch. 35 p. 253.

¹⁸¹ Hagland, «Soga om forsterbrørne,» Ch. 23 p. 318.

¹⁸² Hagland, «Soga om Gunnar, Tullingen på Keldugnup,» Ch. 14 p. 434.

¹⁸³ Kleivane, «Soga om Bård Snæfellsås,» Ch. 3 p. 241.

¹⁸⁴ Bliksrud, «Sagaen om Floafoelket,» Ch. 23 p. 287.

depending on what they needed them for and what they had access to. Some of the ships were so big they had space for animals, and not just chickens but horses. Having space for horses in their ships could be very useful for them when they were out raiding or if they had to move somewhere over the ocean.¹⁸⁵

The building of ships and boats happened on land, inside a boat house. When they are done, they need to move the finished product into the sea or launch them. The idea of launching the ship seems important to the Norse people due to all the findings. In Norway there have been found a lot of remains of these ship houses or *naust* as they are called in Norwegian, and inside them again there have been big quantities of crushed pottery shards indicating some kind of ceremony around the launching.¹⁸⁶ When a ship is launched today the ceremony often includes the breaking of a bottle. And as there have been found so many pottery shards it's likely that the Norse people also had a similar ceremony. Despite all the findings of pottery shards in boathouses the saga writer does not say too much about the crossing from land to sea. The beach that separates the vast ocean and land are silently a 'in between' that gets little focus next to the great ships of the Norse people. In *Soga om Gunnar, Tullingen på Keldugnup* there is a small sentence describing the movement of the ship from land to sea. 'Bård følgde dei til stranda, og så vart skipa skuva på sjøen.' 'Bård went with them to the beach, and then the ship was pushed into the sea.'¹⁸⁷ The beach itself function as a kind of in-between land and sea, and it has some meaning for the afterlife as well, which I will come back to in a later chapter. The ship as an object is moving over a kind of threshold between land and sea when they are launching it. If we look at the *Soga om Korka-Rev* chapter fifteen we can see that the saga writer has dedicated only half a sentence to the launching of the ship. 'Rev hogg no hjula unna skipet og tok dinest eit lite spyd og kvesste det veldig.' 'Rev chopped the wheels under the ship and then took a spear and started to sharpen it.'¹⁸⁸ It might be that at this instance the saga writer thought it would be more important to elaborate on the situation of the people in the scene as it is an escape, than the launching of the ship. Now that the ship has been imaginary made and launched it is time to start sailing and navigating the ship over the ocean.

¹⁸⁵ Jarman, *Elvekonger*, 84.

¹⁸⁶ Weserdahl, «Boats Apart,» 24.

¹⁸⁷ Hagland, «Soga om Gunnar, Tullingen på Keldugnup,» Ch. 15 p. 435.

¹⁸⁸ Hagland, «Soga om Korka-Rev,» Ch. 15 p. 406.

Navigating a Ship

To talk about the navigation of ships I have chosen to take a deeper look into the first chapter of *Soga om Grønlandingane*.¹⁸⁹ That is because, out of the Icelandic saga collection that I'm using, this is the saga where we get the most information about how to navigate a ship in my opinion. If we were to get in a ship or a boat today, we would have equipment like radars, maps, instruments to measure the weather, a motor and other fancy modern technology to navigate. The Norse people relied on a different kind of technology and knowledge. Nature, memory, and storytelling were crucial for the Norse people when it comes to travels at sea and in uncharted territory. The combination of these three factors made it possible for them to expand their horizon even further and to travel without physical maps. Good knowledge about nature, weather and the skies also made it possible for them to find their way when they had gotten lost. With storytelling and their memory, they can create a mental map for themselves and navigate through that. Therefore, I'm not only going to talk about some of the possible techniques they used but also the use of the ship they are using to navigate and their relationship and knowledge of nature.

To summarize chapter one in *Soga om Grønlandingane*, we meet a man named Bjarne and he will be the one who is the 'leader' for the travel in this scene. He has a crew and a ship, and he wants to travel to Greenland. None of the people in the company have been in the Greenland Sea before and Bjarne believes this can be a problem. They travel anyway and at a point they get lost, but with good navigational knowledge and skill they manage to get to their destination in Greenland.¹⁹⁰

The storyteller explains that they set out to sea when they had prepared and were ready to go, and do not use any time on explaining all the preparation that is needed before heading out to sea. 'Likevel la dei no ut på havet då dei var reiseklare, og dei seglde i tre dagar, til dei ikkje såg land lengre.' 'Nevertheless, they set out to sea when they were ready to travel, and they sailed for three days, until they no longer saw land.'¹⁹¹ But it is obvious that they must have had to pack and prepare for spending an amount of time where it's not possible to get a hold of a lot of certain resources. Some of the resources they can't survive without, like food, hydrating beverages, clothing, and shelter. They would also most likely need some kind of tools and weaponry for the voyage and the arrival at the other end of the travel. Also, there is a great deal of preparation on the ship to be done before one can set sail or even launch it

¹⁸⁹ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 291-293.

¹⁹⁰ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

¹⁹¹ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

from land to sea. It is possible that this information has been omitted because to all the Norse people, and that the people the saga writers, were writing for, it is seen as common knowledge. Just as much as some things is for us today when we are packing and heading out for a travel. We would only mention those things that are out of the ordinary to pack or the things that we forget. As a teenager I learnt to always check if I had remembered the three P's '*penger, pass og P-piller*' money, passport, and birth control pills. Today the absolute essentials are passport, money, and phone, and thinking everything else can be bought. But in the Iron Age and Viking Age, they probably had to be extra careful to make sure they didn't forget the essentials.

Another detail that has been omitted is what kind of ship the main character is in possession of, there are some differences between sailing in a cargo ship or a long ship. '[...]kom Bjarne med skipet sitt til Øyrar.' '[...]Bjarne came with his ship to Øyrar.'¹⁹² Let's start with looking at the ship he and his crew are using. In the beginning of the chapter, it says 'Han vann mykje både av gods og ære og var annakvar vinter utanlands og annakvar vinter heime hos far sin.' 'He won a lot of both goods and honor, and he spent second winter abroad and every second winter at home with his father.'¹⁹³ There are two things that we need to pay close attention to here. The first one being 'won', this indicates that he and his crew might have done fighting to get all the goods and the honor which would mean it would be beneficial for them to have a long ship that was used for fighting and war. But the second part we need to pay attention to is '[...]mykje både av gods[...]' '[...]a lot of both goods[...]'¹⁹⁴, it would seem more beneficial for them to have a cargo ship which can store up to 20-24 ton of merchandise plus an additional crew of five to six people.¹⁹⁵ However, we see that from the second clause of the sentence that all the honor and merchandise is won over several years. And in the next sentence we also find out that he does not own his own ships before some time has passed. This means that he could have had access to a different ship for every season depending on what his intentions were, trading or raiding. But it gets very clear that it is the same ship he has been out traveling on, and just arrived with at the farm of his father, that he will use to follow him with. '[...]og han ville ikkje losse skipet sitt.' '[...]and he didn't want to unload his ship.'¹⁹⁶ Further down at the page its mentioned that they are setting sail a couple of times. '[...]dei heiste segl[...]' Han bad dei heise segl,[...]' '[...]they hoisted the

¹⁹² Simensen, «Soga om Grønlendingane,» 292.

¹⁹³ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlendingane, » 291.

¹⁹⁴ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlendingane, » 291.

¹⁹⁵ Solberg, *Jernalderen i Norge*, 244.

¹⁹⁶ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlendingane,» 292.

sail[...] He told them to hoist sail,[...]¹⁹⁷ But that would most likely have been possible to sail both cargo ships and longships. Therefore, we can't know for sure what kind of ship the storyteller is talking about this time. But there are other times when the saga writer states very clearly what kind of ship they are using 'Kvar av dei hadde eit knarreskip [...]' 'both of them had a cargo ship [...]'¹⁹⁸

Another thing that the saga is stating very clearly is that the ship is already in the water with cargo and most of the necessary equipment's they needed to do the voyage to Greenland '[...]og han ville ikkje losse skipet sitt.' '[...] and he would not unload his ship.'¹⁹⁹ There is a small hint that they had to do some small preparations before heading back to sea again. 'Likevel la dei no ut på havet då dei var reiseklare, [...]' 'Nevertheless, they headed back out to sea when they were ready to travel, [...]'²⁰⁰ They most likely had to replenish food and beverages for the travel. Since they came directly from a voyage they would have consumed and drunk what they had. If there was any left that would most likely go bad or not last for the whole travel, they had ahead of them.

They now start their sailing, and they do this for three days until they can't see land anymore and then the weather is changing. With the weather change, they now get lost due to the northern wind and the fog. 'Dei fekk nordavind og tåke og visste ikkje kvar dei fór.' 'They got a northern wind and fog, and they didn't know where they went.'²⁰¹ This problem, they had for several days, but when the weather clears up again, they use the sun to navigate in the directions they think they should go. 'Såleis gjekk det i mange døgn. Deretter såg dei sola att og kunne då skilje himmelretningane,[...]' 'It went on like that for many days. When they saw the sun again and was able to distinguish the celestial directions,[...]'²⁰²

What we can read further on in the *Soga om Grønlandingane*, is a very interesting way of navigating from one place to another place, without knowing where they are. They are positioning the sail or the ship to land to have a heading at a specific direction. 'Dei forlét då landet på babord side og lét hjørnet av seglet vende mot land. [...] Dei snudde framstammen frå land og la til havs[...]' 'They then left the land on the port side and let the corner of the sail face the land. [...]They turned the stem from land and set out to sea[...]'²⁰³ The idea that

¹⁹⁷ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

¹⁹⁸ Hagland, «Soga om Droplaugs-sønene,» 332.

¹⁹⁹ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

²⁰⁰ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

²⁰¹ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

²⁰² Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

²⁰³ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

they position their ship so precise would mean that they, or at least the leader, would have a mental map on where they might be and in what kind of direction they must go to get to where they are supposed to arrive. They know that the weather condition has taken them off course by x much, and they know this as they have the knowledge of how many days, they have had the 'bad' weather. They also know in what direction the wind has been blowing. 'Dei fekk nordavind og tåke [...]' 'They got a northly wind and fog[...]'²⁰⁴ As they are at sea and not on land, they must pay close attention to all the details surrounding them, so they don't get even more lost.

So, by connecting all the elements they have gathered, they expand their horizon of knowledge, and they create a mental map of their whereabouts. This mental map that they have of their surroundings at that moment must also contain detailed explanations (from other people) about how the land they are traveling to, should look like. The one that does the telling of the land need to be very good at describing and painting a picture of the nature and terrain in order for the travelers to benefit from it. To know which details that is needed one needs to be a good seafarer.²⁰⁵ It is also important that the storyteller has a good knowledge and experience of traveling to be able to give the information that another traveler will need.²⁰⁶ However, this is one of the few Icelandic sagas where the route (at sea) is explained with more details than other sagas. The intention of the travelers was not to discover new land but to travel the best and fastest route to Greenland, and had they not had the (un)fortunate bad weather the saga might just have said something like; They went to Greenland and the travel went well. Like so many other sagas do. Earlier in this paper the concept of 'binding devises' or 'poof' moments has been discussed, and it could have been applied here if the travelers hadn't had the detour and the standardized short sentence could have appeared.

But at the same time the Norse people had a deep-rooted cultural heritage in oral story telling. So that it might be that they could omit details on routes when it is a known route to a commonly known place. When Bjarne is traveling with his companions to Greenland, no one of them has ever been to the Greenland Sea and they do get lost on their way. Therefore, it might be that the storyteller saw it as important to preserve the details of the voyage so other could benefit from the discovery of new land.²⁰⁷ Later on in the saga we see that there are another group that wants to take the same route, but with the intention of exploring the new

²⁰⁴ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane, » 292.

²⁰⁵ Sigurðsson, «*The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, » 283.

²⁰⁶ Sigurðsson, «*The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, » 13.

²⁰⁷ Sigurðsson, «*The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition*, » 283-284.

land that had been discovered.²⁰⁸ There is a clear shift in the focus of details. Nature and landscapes become central in the storytelling rather than how the people are positioning the ship and how they are navigating. ‘Der la dei til land, kasta anker, skaut lettbåten ut og gjekk i land, men såg ikkje gras. Det var store isbrear overalt oppe i landet, men frå sjøen til isbreane var det som éi steinflate, og dei syntes landet var ufruktbart.[...] Deretter la dei ut på sjøen og fann eit anna land[...] Det landet var flatt og skogkledt, og vidt omkring der dei gjekk var det kvite sandstrender og langgrunt’ ‘There they set ashore, dropped anchor, launched the light boat, and went ashore, but saw no grass. There were large glaciers everywhere up in the country, but from the sea to the glaciers it was like one flat rock, and they thought the land was barren.[...] Then they set out to sea and found another land[...] That country was flat and had forests, and far and wide where they walked there were white sandy beaches and the sea was shallow.’²⁰⁹ So by shifting the focus we now get a feeling that the second group already have a mental map of what directions they should travel in to find the new places.

What we still can’t see much of in the saga is the use of their senses. We do get a hint that they use the sun to ‘distinguish the directions of the sky’ and that they know the difference of the winds and in what directions they are coming from.²¹⁰ ‘[...] med sterk sidevind fra sør, som drev dem nordover.’ ‘[...]with a strong sidewind from the south, which drove then north.’²¹¹ ‘Dei dreiv sørvest til havs.’ ‘They drifted southwest to sea.’²¹² ‘Dei vert tatt av eit så hard nordavêr at det bar sør i havet med dei.’ ‘They were taken by such a rough northern weather that they drifted south in the sea.’²¹³ However, it should be safe to assume that the Norse people used their senses when sailing the seas, much like the Polynesian people did and other societies did. We know that it’s not only the celestial bodies that guides them but also currents, waves, colors, and temperature of the sea.²¹⁴ To read nature is a skill that is no longer a common knowledge. Today we have become too dependent on our gadgets to figure out how the weather is going to be like. The intuitive feeling and knowledge on reading nature or relying on the human senses to navigate of finding the way is no longer something the general population learn in the same way as the Norse people did.

²⁰⁸ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 293.

²⁰⁹ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 293.

²¹⁰ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 292.

²¹¹ Pollestad, «Grettes Saga,» Ch. 8 p. 57.

²¹² Nordbø, «Soga om Viglund og Kjellrid,» 403.

²¹³ Hagland, «Njålssoga,» Ch. 83 p. 95.

²¹⁴ Solberg, *Jernalderen i Norge*, 245.

The ship that is being used in the *Soga om Grønlendingane* does have a sail. There are several times that its being mentioned that the sail is hoisted so, it's no secret that they are not only riding the waves and currents of the sea, but also using tools to use the wind as a motor for their ship, depending on the directions of the wind and how strong it is. Like *Finnboge den sterkes saga* chapter ten. 'De dro nå opp ankeret og seilte ut på havet. Men da de har seilt noen dager løyver vinden, og de minster retningen og vet ikke hvorhen de seiler. Det går mot høst, og bølgene blir større. Og en dag driver de fra havet og inn mot land. Det var sent på dagen. De så ikke noe annet enn fjell og store brotsjøer som slo mot klippene, og fordi det var sterk pålandsvind, ble skipet kastet mot klippene og slått til pinneved. Alle mennene omkommer, bortsett fra Finnboge, som kommer alene i land med våpnene sine og en skinnsekk.' 'They pulled up the anchor and set sail to sea. But when they had sailed for a few days, the wind stilled, and they lost their direction and did not know where they were sailing. Autumn was approaching, and the waves are getting bigger. And one day they drifted from the sea towards land. It was late in the day. They saw nothing but cliffs and large waves breaks against the rocks, and because there was a strong onshore wind, the ship was thrown against the rocks and smashed to pieces. All the men perish, except for Finnboge, who came ashore alone with his weapons and a leather sack.'²¹⁵ It's clear that this travel is having a variety in how strong the wind is during their voyage. When sailing, the people in the ship are dependent on the wind being present to carry the ship with it. And sometimes the people would set out to sea with good aspects of having the wind and then when they are out at sea, they lose the wind. 'Nå kom det vind, og de seilte ut fjorden. Jostein og mennene hans slo seg ned foran masten på skipet. Men da de ikke lenger så land, forsvant all vind, og de drev omkring til det ble dårlig med både mat og drikke.' 'The wind came, and they sailed out the fjord. Jostein and his men sat down in front of the mast at the ship. But when they could not see land anymore, the wind disappeared, and they drifted until there was little food and drinks left.'²¹⁶ In this particularly story the writer has focused on the superstition around believing in a higher power 'being in charge' of the outcome of the travel. But the reality of sailing at sea is that the wind is unpredictable and not possible to control by humans.

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²¹⁵ Mindrebø, «Finnboge den sterkes saga,» 230.

²¹⁶ Blikrud, «Sagaen om Floafoaket,» 285.

Before the Norse people could set sail and travel in the ocean, they had to build their ships and boats. The knowledge of building these vessels was not something new in the Viking Age, they already knew how to build ships and boats and techniques in carpentry and smithing is well known technologies. But it's the revolutionary work in textiles that's making it possible for them to cross the ocean to England, Iceland, Greenland and finally Vinland. The Viking ships are legendary, and the sagas did talk about the ships in the stories. They often describe them with simple but powerful words like, stately and dragon. The construction of the ships and boats happened inside boathouses or *naust*. They would be placed close to the water line or at the beaches. This makes the launching easier for them. The beaches also become like a in between the land and the sea, and the ships and boats cross them with a ceremony. This is not mentioned in the sagas, but from the findings inside the boat houses it's a possibility that is most likely.

When the ships and boats are firmly in the sea it's time to navigate them. The Norse people did not use maps but there is a kind of mental map created out of all the information they are gathering both before the voyage and during the voyage. When routes have been established, there are no great details on how the Norse people are navigating or what is happening while they are sailing. But there seems like a developing progress into omitting that kind of information within the sagas. When the routes are established, it would become common knowledge and therefore, there would be no need for explaining the route in detail in all the stories. But when a land or island is discovered and it's the first time there is a story that talks about the discovery the sagas tell the specifics. The focus, when new areas are discovered, is on the celestial bodies, how they ended up there (due to bad weather) and how they are positioning the ship. When the story is about people who are establishing a route to the new land it seems like the sagas focus turns to the details of the nature and landscape.

If there are more details in the saga about the voyage over the sea, it mostly describes the bad voyages. What went wrong, the bad weather or other complications. When the voyage is going well there are more of the sentences that could almost be set in the category of 'poff' moments or binding devices.

An Imagined Travel

Once a year, me and the other guides get to do a unique guided tour at the Iron Age farm. It's during wintertime and after night fall. It's the one time in the year when we get to do the same thing that the storytellers of the Viking Age did, and the saga writers retold and wrote down. Tell stories about the dead. There are several grave mounds around the farm, some were even found inside the houses. Each of the reconstructed houses has their ghost stories, both from earlier employees and some from guests, claiming they see man in the corner with burn marks, a lady of the house 'possessing' a guide to do her daily tasks in the house, or a man always blowing out candles or turning off the light. We turned these stories into a guided tour where guests could come and hear more about a mythical world and incredible stories filled with magic and superstition.

Which leads us to the third kind of traveling. In the sagas we can read about people dreaming and dying. These parts of the sagas are a little different than the rest of the sagas. They explain an imagined travel that is happening. The Norse people believed in a different cosmology and many today might see it as strange. In this chapter we are going to look at some parts of the cosmology of the Norse people. The cosmology of the Norse world contains several worlds, and it all is connected by the world tree *Yggdrasil*. Most of these worlds would be a part of the afterlife and or religious strongholds for the divine beings. The Norse people believed that it was possible to travel to some of these worlds. Most of them would be inaccessible for them without dying. The sagas don't say much about these travels, they talk a little about the people who are still alive and how they are acting after someone have died. What the sagas talk more about is the 'possibility' of not doing the imagined travel to the afterlife by telling stories about ghosts. These stories can be very lengthy as they are often connected to stories about people who is on an adventure or out to prove their worth. The sagas also dedicated some space for stories and explanations of people's dreams. When they dream, they move into a kind of dreamed space. In these dreamed spaces they are often met by other people, spirits from the afterlife, spiritual beings and sometimes they are visited by the old and or new gods.

Since this chapter is talking about something that is abstract and imagined there is an absence of objects to be found that connects directly to moving or doing imagined travels. However, the *Yggdrasil* is an imagined tree of the cosmos, so it will function as an object for us here in this chapter. The word *Yggdrasil* can be divided into two *Ygg*, and *drasil* in old

norse. *Ygg* is one of the many names on Odin and *drasil* is a word for horse.²¹⁷ That means that *Yggdrasil* can be translated to Odins horse. So, *Yggdrasil* is a tree of the specie ash, which is always green and from it, drips dew that is nourishing to the world.²¹⁸ ‘Ask veit eg stande heiter Yggdrasil,[...]’ ‘Ash, I know where stand; called Yggdrasil, [...]’²¹⁹ This tree would grow in *Asgard* where the gods would live. The gods created a wall surrounding what would be *Middgard* (where humans live) to separate the Ice giants of *Jotunheimen* from the humans. Another name for the ‘world’ surrounding *Middgard* would be *Utgard*. For a Norwegian speaker the words *Utgard* and *Middgard* makes sense in connection of talking about different places. The word *gard* with stone or similar words would be understood as a fence. Then with the name *Utgard* its fast understood as outside the fence or farm and *Middgard* would be inside or in the middle of the fence or farm. In *Utgard* there would be several different places or worlds like *Jernskogen*, the ice kingdom, and Hel the kingdom of death or the fire kingdom that would be a kind of underground kingdom. All of this would be surrounded by the sea where the world serpent would live, *Middgardsormen*. He would be so big that he could encircle the whole world with his body.²²⁰ *Yggdrasil* would have three big roots, *Urd*, *Verdande* and *Skuld*.²²¹ Under each of these roots would, Hel the goddess of death, the frost giants, and *Mannheims menn* live.²²² This gives a feeling of a kind of three-dimensional understanding of the cosmology. There is a up and down or an over and under feeling. This could remind us of a little of the theory of V. Ja. Petrucin's which John Lindow talks about in his paper *Mythology and Mythography*.²²³ I will not go further in on this subject.

In *volsupå* its described that the celestial bodies don't know in which hall they belonged to. ²²⁴‘[...] Sol ikkje visste kvar salar ho åtte, Måne ei visste kvar makt han åtte, stjerner ei visste kvar stader dei åtte.’ ‘[...] Sun did not know what halls she belonged to, Moon didn't know what power he had, stars didn't know where they belonged.’²²⁵ (The *Volsupå* is the prophecy of the *Volva*. The *volva* is a type of woman who is a seer and who is good with magic or *seidr* and are ‘working’ with some of the religious parts.) In the tree there

²¹⁷ Oma, *Hesten*, 107.

²¹⁸ Ivar Mortensson-Egnund, «Volsupå,» in *Edda*, (Denmark: Det Norske Samlaget, 2018) verse 19 p. 23.

²¹⁹ Mortensson-Egnund, «Volsupå,» 19 p. 23.

²²⁰ Ström, *Nordisk Hedendom*, 67-68.

²²¹ Mortensson-Egnund, «Volsupå,» verse 20 p. 23.

²²² Ivar Mortensson-Egnund, «Grimnesmål,» in *Edda*, (Denmark: Det Norske Samlaget, 2018) verse 31 p. 61.

²²³ John Lindow, «Mythology and Mythography, » In *Old Norse-Icelandic literature - A Critical Guide*, ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 51.

²²⁴ Mortensson-Egnund, «Volsupå,» verse 5 p. 21.

²²⁵ Mortensson-Egnund, «Volsupå,» verse 5 p. 21.

lived several animals, Ratatosk the squirrel, Nidhog the serpent, Dâin, Dvalin, Dunøyr and Duratro the deer, Heidrun the goat, and an eagle with a hawk that sits between his brows.²²⁶ These animals go hand in hand with *Yggdrasil* and they had important roles in the tree and were in many ways a part of it. Animals have been important in many aspects of life for the Norse people not just within *Yggdrasil*. *Dyrefylgja* has a big place as an imagined travel and in the dreamed spaces. Which I will come back to in the second half of this chapter.

Going beyond, or staying

When someone dies there is a general understanding of the body still be staying here and many understand or believe that a part of the self continues on to somewhere else where the living can't reach. This understanding is something we can see traces of in the sagas. There are described some burials where we get an implicit understanding that there is a part of the deceased that 'travels' to somewhere else. And there are stories about ghosts where it can be seen as the part of the deceased that is not able or is not doing this travel but stays where it is. Having rituals and traditions around a burial is common around the world. Some send their loved ones off to the afterlife with gifts or with things they believe they would need there. How the Norse people would treat their fallen is an interesting topic. We do have findings of graves where we do get an indication to different rituals that have been done. But written sources of burials and funerals and the traditions and rituals around them are harder to find. The sagas do not give elaborate details around the rituals around funerals but rather drawing the attention of the reader to the stories about ghosts. These stories are full of details, more than others. It's clear that the saga writers have actively used the *verisimilitude* effect in these stories to make them more believable. I will start with the burials and then I will continue with the stories about ghosts.

The sagas don't say much about the traditions and rituals around funerals. But there are some hints and clues to some of the traditions the Norse people would have done when they are saying 'goodbye' to someone that have passed away. In *Soga om Svarvdölane* there is a description of Torstein who is asking to borrow a hall so they can do some of the (I believe is the) customs to do when their friend and brother has died. 'Eg bed om at De låner meg og mennene mine halla Dykkar. Eg vil drikke erveøl etter bror min og haugleggje han her med Dykkar løyve. [...] eg meiner at halla mi ikkje kan brukast på ein betre måte enn du og mennene dine vil gjere.' 'I ask if you would lend me and my men your hall. I want to drink

²²⁶ Mortensson-Egnund, «Grimnesmål,» 57-64.

heirloom beer to honor my brother and lay him in a mound here with your permission. [...] I think my hall cannot be used in a better way than you and your men want to do.’²²⁷ To gather and drink to the one who have fallen is rituals. While they drink and maybe tell stories of the one who had died, they might imagine that a piece of the person who have died is leaving the ‘world’ of the living and are traveling to one of the halls for the dead. This place is a place which the living can’t reach. Depending on the reputation and the honor of the person, the final resting place of the body is matched. Ingemund in *Sagaen om Vatnsdølene* gets a burial, worthy of his status ‘Ingemund ble lagt i båten som hørte til skipet Stigande og gravlagt på ærefult vis, slik skikken var med stormenn den gang.’ ‘Ingemund was laid in the boat that belonged to the ship Stigande and buried in an honorable manner, as was the custom with great men at the time.’²²⁸ He even gets a boat burial. Boat burials is something that the sagas don’t talk much about, yet there are over 270 boat burials in Norway that has been found and excavated.²²⁹ It is interesting that the idea of a boat or a ferry taking the dead from the living world to the next is a generally imagined picture people have. Most of the burial mounds from the Viking Age and Iron Age also do kind of look like a boat that’s upside down. Maybe they are mimicking boats. At the Iron Age farm there are many graves from the Viking Age, but not all of them have been excavated. And there is a rumor that there is something behind one of the houses that might be a burial mound that looks like it could be a boat grave. No one has checked it or taken any samples so it’s no more than a rumor and speculation. But it is an intriguing thought, and it would be very exciting.

Have the person who died had a good reputation and respect from others they would get respect from the living even after they have died. In *Gisle Sursson Saga* chapter fourteen there is a hint to a small thing the people would do with the dead if they had respect for them. ‘Da de hadde stelt Vestein etter skikken, gikk Torgrim fram til Gisle: «Det er vanlig», sa han, «å binde helsko på folk, så de har godt fottøy på veien til Valhall, og det vil jeg gjøre for Vestein.»’ ‘When they had prepared Vestein as the traditions was, Torgrim went to Gisle: «It is custom», he said, «to bind *helsko* on people, for them to have good shoes on their way to Valhall, and I want to do that for Vestein.»’²³⁰ This could indicate that there are some who is imagining that they could walk some of the distance in this other plane. A few pages later in this saga the writer is writing about another burial of an honorable person. ‘«Vi vil tilby å

²²⁷ Vikør, «Soga om Svarvdølane,» 148-149.

²²⁸ Birgirsson and Thorvaldsen, «Sagaen om Vatnsdølene,»29.

²²⁹ Unni Grøtberg, *Skipsgraver, Båtgraver og Ryttergraver Noen aspekter ved symbolbruk i vikingtidens gravskikk*, (Master Thesis University of Oslo, 2007), 35.

²³⁰ Jørgensen, «Gisle Surssons saga,» 14.

hauglegge Torgrim for dere, og det skylder vi ham at det blir gjort på ærefult vis.» [...] De bygde opp haugen etter gammel skikk.’ ‘: «We want to offer to put Torgrim in a mound for you, we owe him an honorable burial. » [...] They built the mound after the old traditions.’²³¹ It’s interesting that there is a sense of old traditions around burials. The people who were writing the sagas has already converted to Christianity therefore it’s possible that it is an editing they did while they were writing down the sagas. To adjust the story to the reader in the Middle Ages so they would not be confused with what kind of traditions were used. Or they might have done an edit like this to emphasize that the people the story is about lived in a time when they were still headmen. It’s not only men that can get an honorable burial. ‘Deretter ble det holdt gravøl for henne, og hun ble begravd slik skikken var i gammel tid for mektige kvinner.’ ‘A funeral was then held for her, and she was buried with the traditions of ancient times for powerful women.’²³² As I mentioned further up, women have also been important to society, and therefore it would not be logical if they would be treated very differently than men if they themselves had lived an honorable life. If the people who would bury the deceased do not see them as honorable or think bad of them, they could bury them at places that would be seen as an appropriate fit for the ‘bad’ people. ‘Likene ble ført ned til en ur i fjæra.’ ‘The bodies were brought to a *ur* at the shore.’²³³ The translator of this version put a foot note on this sentence and are referring to the *Gulatingssloven*²³⁴ that says that criminals should be buried at the shore, where the sea and green turf meets. The beach or where the ocean meets land becomes a place that is in between and to bury someone there would maybe make sure that they would not go to any of the halls of the pagan Gods. And since the ocean washes away everything that is on the beach it also makes sure that the dead don’t ‘linger’ as a ghost.

The burial places was important to people, some places had a higher value than others. And the area of good grave mounds became a place where people settled to either get power or to show power.²³⁵ Then in some of the sagas we can see that there is an interest in planning where one wants to be buried. Like in the *Sagaen om Vatnsdølene* we can see the want to be buried in a specific place to be remembered by specific people; ‘Før han døde, ba Ingolv om å bli gravlagt i et annet holt enn der frendene hans lå, og sa at vatnsdalsjentene lettere ville

²³¹ Jørgensen, «Gisle Surssons saga,» 19.

²³² Mindrebø, «Stjerne-Oddes drøm,» Ch. 6 p. 455.

²³³ Pollestad, «Grettes Saga, » 81.

²³⁴ This is some of the oldest written laws that have been found in Norway.

²³⁵ Lydia Carstens, «Powerful space. The Iron-Age hall and its development during the Viking Age, » In *Viking Worlds, Things, Spaces and Movement*, ed. Marianne Hem Eriksen, Unn Pedersen, Bernt Rundberget, Irmelin Axelsen and Heidi Lund Berg, (Oxford, United Kingdom: OXBOW BOOKS, 2014), 16.

huske ham hvis han lå nær ved veien.’ ‘Before he died, Ingolv asked to be buried in a different hollow than where his kinsmen lay, saying that the vatnsdal girls would remember him more easily if he lay near the road.’²³⁶ Or in the *Soga om Grønlandingane* where Torvald tells his traveling companions that he wants to be buried at that specific place, and that should be named Krossanes. ‘Der skal de gravleggje meg og setje opp krossar ved hovudet og ved føtene og deretter kalle det Krossanes.’ ‘There you shall bury me and put crosses with my head and feet and then call it Krossanes.’²³⁷ Torvalds’ burial at Krossanes is most likely a Christian burial due to all the crosses he wants around him. Torolv goes so far that he sets of an area where he wants all his family would want to come there when they die. ‘Det fjellet kalte han Helgafell og trodde at han og alle slektingene hans på neset ville komme dit når de døde.’ ‘He called the mountain Helgafell, and believed that he and all of his relatives would come there when they died.’²³⁸

When it comes to the world of the afterlife of the Norse people, Valhall is the world that is the most common to think about and pop culture often portrays Valhall as the place to reach when one dies. However, Valhall is the hall of Odin and only those who are worthy of his hall are selected to enter there. ‘valkyrjene kan velja kven som fell.’ ‘The Valkyries can choose who falls.’²³⁹ The Valkyries are commonly known as an ‘elite’ group of female warriors who, as we can see here also joins in on the decisions of who gets to enter Valhall.²⁴⁰ Valhall is not the only place to go to when one dies. According to the mythology, at the battlefield all those who did not get picked by the Valkyries to go to Valhall went to Sessrumne, the hall of Frøya.²⁴¹ Hel is the goddess of death in the religion of the Nordic people, and she has her own ‘place’ within *Yggdrasil*. Torstein in the *Soga om Svarvdølane* says ‘[...] og til hausten skal eg ganten ha komme til Hel eller ha felt Ljot.’ ‘[...] and by autumn I shall have reached Hel or felled Ljot.’²⁴² This place, Hel’s hall is the realm of death. *Asgard* would most likely be a place where there would be similarities to *Middgard*, there could be a hall for each of the gods, as there is a farm for each family in *Middgard*.

Not all will reach the halls of the gods. But then where would they go then? The body stays where it is, decaying in a burial mound or cremated (depending on tradition). But there is a part of the self that they maybe would imagine passing on to a next the plane, like the hall

²³⁶ Birgirsson and Thorvaldsen, «Sagaen om Vatnsdølene,» 51.

²³⁷ Simensen, «Soga om Grønlandingane,» 296.

²³⁸ Mindrebø, «Sagaen om øyrbyggerne,» 120.

²³⁹ Hagland, «Njålssoga,» Ch. 157 p. 217.

²⁴⁰ Jarman, *Elvekonger* 151.

²⁴¹ Jarman, *Elvekonger* 152.

²⁴² Vikør, «Soga om Svarvdølane,» 144.

of Odin or Hel. I'm saying 'a next place' as the Norse people would imagine multiple places within the *Yggdrasil*. In *Tåtten om Bergbuen* we meet two people who are walking to church, but they walk straight into a snowstorm. Their fear of dying makes them seek shelter instead of keeping on walking. They seek shelter inside a *heller*. So, to explain what a *heller* is, it is a part of the mountain that is hanging over the mountain wall. The sun is still reaching into it. The opposite would be a cave or a grotto. Many times, a *heller* is also a home for some of the beings or humans in the sagas. The two traveling companions are not going all the way in to the *heller*, but before they enter, the farmer, Tord, draws a Christian cross on the 'doorsteps' and when they enter, they stop '[...] og satte seg på to steiner ved inngangen, for de ville ikke gå lengre inn.' '[...] and sat down on two rocks just inside the entrance, because they didn't dare to venture further inn'.²⁴³ You get a sense that they are having a feeling of an invisible line that they should not cross. And by drawing the Christian cross at the doorstep they create a space for them between the raging snowstorm outside and the unknown further into the *heller*. They do figure out that there is someone or something inside, and it scares them. So, at this point they are stuck where they are in between the snowstorm that can kill them and the unknown. While they are taking refuge in this 'in between' they hear a voice. This voice is mysterious, but we do get a hint that the owner of the voice is, in a way, stuck in between worlds. 'Mellom alle verdener uavbrutt jeg farer.' 'Between all the worlds Unceasingly I travel.'²⁴⁴ This story is clearly influenced by Christianity, but at the same time it has parts of the old ways in it as well. It seems like the moral of the story is that one should live closer to church to stay clear of all the mystical being that belongs to the old belief.

At the Archeological Museum in Stavanger there is a stone in exhibition that is called the Eik stone with an inscription on that says, 'Sakse made, giving thanks to God, this bridge for the soul of his mother, Turid.'²⁴⁵ Sakse has clearly converted to Christianity and are worried for his mother. So out from the inscription he has built a bridge as charity and dedicated the good work to his mother so she, who was pagan, could go to heaven. It seems like there is a fear of not going to the correct place after death. But the sagas are filled with stories where it seems like there are people who are not going to the next place but linger. And the mysterious voice in *Tåtten om Bergbuen* clearly states that it is between worlds and are always traveling between them. The sentence gives a feeling of a spirit not having a

²⁴³ Mindrebø, «Tåtten om Bergbuen,» 447.

²⁴⁴ Mindrebø, «Tåtten om Bergbuen,» 450.

²⁴⁵ From the description next to the stone.

resting place. Which brings us to all the ghost stories that the saga writers felt the necessity to preserve as written text.



Figure 5: Eik-Steinen. A stone with inscriptions on found next to the Sokna river. It is now in display at the Arkeological Museum in Stavanger. Photo by Ingrid Johanne Helland.

The sagas are full of stories about ghosts. And these stories are filled with details and the *verisimilitude* effect. Since these stories are about an imagined travel, they are more detailed than other parts of the sagas. The reason for this density of details has to have a connection with these ghosts not being able to make an imaginary travel but also that the ghosts themselves are a thing where physical evidence don't exist. Then using details would make the reader and listener take part in the story and maybe forget what is logical and not. Details make for a compelling story and helps capture the one that is receiving it. In *Grettes Saga* chapter thirty-five, where the main character, Grette, is traveling to Torhallstad to test his strength against a being that is not alive, there are a lot of describing details. 'Det er da mye bedre å sloss med levende mennesker enn med den slags gjengangere.' 'It is much better to fight the living people than such ghosts.'²⁴⁶ In the chapter we get details on the personality of the ghost, Glåm. '[...] jeg vet at du vil miste hesten din, for ingen som kommer hit, klarer å berge den hesten han rir på. [...] Glåm har for vane å ri på hustakene hver eneste natt, eller bryte opp dørene,' '[...] I know that you will lose your horse, because no one that comes here,

²⁴⁶ Pollestad, «Grettes Saga, » 106.

is able to save the horse they are riding. [...] Glåm has a habit of riding on the roof tops every night or breaking up the doors,²⁴⁷ How Glåm looks and that he has a physical body. '[...]for han ser ikke ut som et menneske.' '[...] because he doesn't look like a human.'²⁴⁸ 'Han grep sverdet, hugg hodet av Glåm og la det ved baken hans.' 'He grabbed the sword, chopped off the head of Glåm and lay it down by his bum.'²⁴⁹ There are also details on the fighting. 'I same øyeblikk sprang Grette inn under armene hans, tok et fast tak rundt livet på ham og klemte til så hardt han orket i den tro at Glåm ville falle bakover.' 'At the same moment Grette leaped in under his arms and grabbed around his waist and squeezed as hard he could in the hopes that Glåm would fall backwards.'²⁵⁰ the house, and environment around the people. '[...]en kraftig benkestokk, [...] dørkarmen var brutt løs [...] kappen ble revet i filler[...]' 'a strong bench log, [...] the door frame was broken [...] the cape was torn [...]'²⁵¹ It seems like the writer and the storytellers are using more space in description every time they are conveying a story where the ghosts are.

We can see that in *Sagaen om Floafoelket* chapter thirteen there is even two ghosts. In the first half of the chapter Bjørns' father has died and are terrorizing the people at the farm. 'Folk var også redd for han.' 'People were afraid of him as well.'²⁵² Torgils who is visiting the farm fights the ghosts just like Grette fights Glåm, and here to the descriptions are vivid. 'De tok ryggtag, for Torgils hadde sluppet øksa. Kampen mellom dem ble både hard og fæl, så jorden under føttene deres ble helt opptråkket. Og til sist gikk det slik, fordi Torgils var eslet til å leve lengre, at dødnigen falt bakover og Torgils over ham. Der hvilte ha litt og fikk tak i øksa si. Torgils hogg av ham hodet [...]' 'They took wrestled, because Torgils had dropped the axe. The fight between them became hard and violent, much so that the ground under them became trampled. And at the end it went like that, Torgils was meant to live longer, so the ghost fell back and Torgils over him. He rested there a little and grabbed the axe. Torgils chopped off his head [...]'²⁵³ The rich details are catching the reader's attention and for a moment it might seem like the ghost could be real with a physical body to fight and kill. And when the ghost is defeated the saga writer wastes no time to bring the reader back to reality but throws them into a new and compelling story of a ghost.

²⁴⁷ Pollestad, «Grettes Saga,» 106.

²⁴⁸ Pollestad, «Grettes Saga,» 107.

²⁴⁹ Pollestad, «Grettes Saga,» 108.

²⁵⁰ Pollestad, «Grettes Saga,» 107.

²⁵¹ Pollestad, «Grettes Saga,» 107.

²⁵² Bliksrud, «Sagaen om Floafoelket,» 276.

²⁵³ Bliksrud, «Sagaen om Floafoelket,» 276.

‘En natt banket det på døra. [...] Audun sa han trengte hjelp[...] moren hans var død, og at det hadde vært noe merkelig ved dødsfallet, [...] Audun fortalte hva han ville gjøre med kista, - «nå skal vi dra av sted med den, få den ned i jorden og legge mest mulig tyngde på den.» [...] tok det til å brake veldig i kista; deretter løsnet håndtakene, og ut kom Gyda. [...] Så kastet de henne på bålet og sto ved side av mens hun brant opp.’

‘One night there was a knock on the door. [...] Audun said he needed help [...] his mother was dead, and there had been something strange with her death, [...] Audun told what he wanted to do with the coffin, - «we are going to put the coffin in the ground and put as much weight as possible on it. » [...] there came a lot of loud noises from the coffin; then the handles broke off and out came Gyda. [...] Then they threw her on to a pyre and stood and watched while she burned.’²⁵⁴

It seems like these ghost stories are a part of the sagas as both entertaining and maybe as warnings. The idea of a ghost is not something that is in direct conflict with the church. But There is no room for the ghosts to stay so they need to be killed and fought. Then it might be that the storytellers told the stories to have exciting stories of heroes winning fights over beings who are not human anymore. And that the writers in the Middle Ages wrote the stories to have stories with a Christian morale in it or to ‘promote’ Christianity over paganism or to make sure that everyone is buried in the correct place or the correct way. If we are thinking about *Tåtten om Bergbuen* and the mysterious voice that said, ‘Mellom alle verdener uavbrutt jeg farer.’ ‘Between all the worlds Unceasingly I travel.’ were not buried in the correct way so it makes it become stuck between the worlds?²⁵⁵

A dreamed space

In the sagas there is yet another way of an imagined travel, dreaming. The Norse people told stories with their dreams in them, and the saga writers saw them as important enough to preserve in written text. The people who would dream would dream of a space where they could communicate with other beings and interact with them. For them to get into

²⁵⁴ Blikrud, «Sagaen om Floa-folket,» 277.

²⁵⁵ Mindrebø, «Tåtten om Bergbuen,» 450.

this dreamed space they had to be sleeping or be in some kind of trance. While they are in this dreamed space, they themselves could be traveling or other beings were traveling to them. It's not like body, mind and soul that is traveling but just a part of them, called *Fylgja*. It is argued and generally accepted that *Fylgja* can be divided into two different types, *kvinnefylgja* and *dyrefylgja*. These two types of *fylgja* have different places where they are rooted. The *kvinnefylgja* is believed to have been a previous relative that is coming to the dreamer to give support or warnings.²⁵⁶ The *dyrefylgja* is a bit different. It's believed that it is the dreamers alter ego or a manifestation of the persons 'physical active self'.²⁵⁷ According to Folke Ström the *dyrefylgja* is a more primitive soul belief, whereas *kvinnefylgja* is more connected to the family worship.²⁵⁸ Ström is arguing that both the *dyrefylgja* and *kvinnefylgja* is an alter ego and or a manifestation of the persons 'physical active self', but Else Mundal does not agree with this.²⁵⁹ She argues that there is a distinct difference between the two types, that the *dyrefylgja* is a reflex's on what the human is doing and that the *kvinnefylgja* has free will to do what she wants and therefore, cannot be an alter ego or apart of the dreamers self.²⁶⁰

In the sagas dreams occur quite often and writings about dreams, what they mean and who appears in them happen more often in the sagas than what I, myself initially thought. The belief in the *fylgja* might have been left alone and included in the sagas because it is a belief the Christians could accept as its not in any conflict with the Christian religion and scripture.²⁶¹ The *Fylgja* can in many ways be compared with the soul. The soul as a wide term has been interpreted as air or breathing in many cultures around the world. Therefore, the saga writers might have welcomed the dreams happily as entertainment since it is something from the Norse belief system that don't need any 'correction' from Christianity.

Most of the scenes that have a dream or several dreams in them are quite detailed and very direct in their descriptions. The same pattern occurs in these scenes as we have seen in other parts of the sagas, where stories have included ghosts or magic. The pattern of the scenes containing dreams, are mostly dreaming, explaining the dream then someone is interpreting the dream and then what is dreamed about happens in the saga. When reading the research previously done on this belief on the *fylgja*, its mostly done in a comparison with

²⁵⁶ Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*, 84.

²⁵⁷ Eldar Heide, «Gammalnordisk sjelsførestellingar i samband med angrep,» In *Krig och fred i vendel- och vikingtida traditioner*, ed. H. Rydving and S. Olsson, (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2016), 127

²⁵⁸ Folke Ström, *Diser, Nornor, Valkyrjor Fruktbarhetskult och sakralt kungadöme i Norden*, (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1954), 98.

²⁵⁹ Else Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva i norrøn Litteratur*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlagets trykningssentral, 1974), 40.

²⁶⁰ Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*, 40.

²⁶¹ Heide, «Gammalnordisk sjelsførestellingar i samband med angrep,» 137.

war, fighting or religious intentions.²⁶² However, it looks like there haven't been, or there has been very sparsely done research on the actual movement in what is happening with the *fylgja*. Eldar Heide, for example, claims that it's the thoughts of an attacker that is being pushed in front of the aggressor and that the attacked is experiencing this as a dream some time before the attack happens.²⁶³ His focus is on the soul being used as a kind of force that can harm the victim or warn the victim before the actions take place. In *Soga om Tord den Trugande* chapter three we can see different *dyrefylgja* entering the dreamed space of Tord with different intentions. Some are there to attack and some are there to protect. It does become very violent in this dreamed space.

‘Eg drøymde at eg var kommen til Hvitå i Borgarfjorden og var i samtale med nokre utanlandske menn, mellom anna om ei handle, og medan det skjedde, kom det ein del vargar inn i bua, slett ikkje få, og det baud meg sterkt imot. Så gjekk dei på meg og ville drepa meg og reiv av meg kleda. Men eg svinga sverdet og hogg ein varg i to over midja og hovudet av ein annan. Så sprang vargane på meg frå alle kantar, men eg tyktest å verja meg. Eg vart svært trøyt, og eg syntest ikkje å vita korleis det skulle gå med meg. I same stund sprang ein bjørnunge fram, føre meg og ville verja meg, og i det same vakna eg.’

‘I dreamed that I had come to Hvitå in the Borgarfjorden and was in conversation with some foreign men, about business, and while that was happening, a pack of wolves came into the shed, and there were not few of them, and they attacked hard. Then they wanted to kill me, and they tore off my clothes. But I swung my sword and cut one of the wolves in half across the waist and cut the head of another. Then the wolves charged at me from all sides, but I tried to defend myself and I became very tired, and I didn't seem to know how things were going to go with me. At the same moment a bear cub appeared and ran forward, in front of me and protected me, and at that moment I woke up.’²⁶⁴

²⁶² Heide, «Gammalnordisk sjelsførestellingar i samband med angrep,» 125-143.

Ström, *Nordisk Hedendom*.

Folke Ström, *Diser, Nornor, Valkyrjor Fruktbarhetskult och sakralt kungadöme i Norden*, (Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1954).

Gro Steinsland, *Norrøn Religion Myter, riter, samfunn*, (Oslo: PAX Forlag, 2005).

Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*.

²⁶³ Heide, «Gammalnordisk sjelsførestellingar i samband med angrep,» 132.

²⁶⁴ Hagland, «Soga om Tord den Trugande,» 357.

Heide's research is building on the research of Folke Ström and Else Mundal which is an interesting place to start, however I find this argument not inclusive enough. If the Norse people believed that they could push their own soul in front of themselves and that it could manifest itself in the dreams of others, then they very much believed that it was possible to push their soul through space and time. Which then makes room for an idea about the dreams becoming a dreamed space for them to communicate with other beings.

Let's take a look at the *tått*; *Torstein Side-Hallssons drøm*. The title of this *tått* does not say anything about it being a *tått* or a saga, but the length of it is revealing what category to class it in. The title is also misleading us as the word *drøm* is the singular for the word dream, and in this *tått* there are three dreams. Here we meet the main character Torstein, who dies in the end. (This is not the only story he is mentioned in. We also find Torstein in the *Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson* and *Tåtten om Torstein Side-Hallsson*.²⁶⁵) Most of the events are happening 'inside' the dreams or as I will argue, in the dreamed space. Already in the second sentence we are inside his first dream. Here he is dreaming of three women coming towards him with a warning that his thrall is about to betray him. 'Tre kvinner kom i mot ham[...]' 'Three women came towards him[...]'²⁶⁶ The text is not saying anything about how the three ladies are moving towards Torstein, the word that is used is 'coming'. As a reader we do get the sense that they are appearing the horizon of what he can see in his dream and the distance between them are getting smaller and smaller. Since the story starts in medias res, we only know that the ladies are already on the way towards him and are maybe close. We do not know of how or what happens when they are crossing the 'threshold' of the dream or the dreamed space. The same thing we can see in the *Tåtten om Torvald den vidfarne*. Here it is Kodran who is dreaming about a soothsayer that is coming to him to have a conversation with him. 'Natta etter kom spåmannen til Kodran i søvne med sørgmodig åsyn, skjelvande som i redsle og sa til Kodran[...]' 'The night after came a soothsayer to Kodran in his sleep with a miserable look, shaking as in fear and said to Kodran[...]'²⁶⁷ The crossing of the threshold is again omitted, and the focus is more on the conversation between the two within the dreamed space. The dream serves as a meeting place for the living human beings and the spiritual being that lives inside a rock. The *tått* is not clear on what kind of being it is that he is talking with in his dream other than that the being has the knowledge and the ability to see the future

²⁶⁵ Jørgensen, «Tåtten Torstein Side-Hallssons,» 452-455; Berg, «Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson,» 407-418.

²⁶⁶ Jørgensen, «Torstein Side-Hallssons drøm,», 455.

²⁶⁷ Hagland, «Tåtten om Torvald den vidfarne,» 346.

and givewarnings and good advice. We can again see that a *fylgja* is entering the dreamed space of Torgils in *Sagaen om Floafolket*. Torgils' friend Audun comes to him in his dream to convey a warning to Torgils. 'Natten etter drømte Torgils at Audun, vennen hans, kom til ham og sa[...]' 'The night after Torgils dreamed that his friend Audun came to him and said[...]'²⁶⁸ Here to we know the word 'come' but not anything about the manner of what kind of mode the movement is happening in or how he is entering into the dream. Both this being and Audun does not go under the category of *kvinnefylgja* according to Mundal but would rather be an exception.²⁶⁹ I will come back to the *kvinnefylgja* further down.

I mentioned earlier that for the dreamed space to appear the dreamer must be sleeping or be in some kind of trance. In *Sagaen om Floafolket* we do get an example of a trance kind of state happening and that the actors within the dreamed space are aware of it. 'Du sover, men allikevel er det som om du er våken.' 'You are sleeping, but it is as if you are awake.'²⁷⁰ Eldar Heide argues that the possibility to set oneself in a kind of trance to actively use the soul to move through dreams would be possible for some.²⁷¹ He and Folke Ström are only talking about the possibility to 'push' one's soul through and into others' dreamed space. I do not agree with them. In the *Saga om Floafolket* chapter four it is not an aggressor who is pushing to get into the dreamed space, but rather the dreamer who is pulling the other part in to his own dreamed space. Audun the friend of Torgils comes into his dream the same night Torgils accept a challenge. There is no textual evidence that Audun is at the gathering that is taking place that day, and it is not likely that the news of the accepted challenge could have traveled so far in just a few hours. Therefore, I believe that it is Torgils who is pulling Audun into his dreams due to him being worried about the challenge or him thinking very hard on the challenge. I see a difference between when a soul is being pushed into another's dream and when a soul is being pulled into the dream space.

It is more common in the sagas to write about the 'invading' *fylgja*. Like in chapter sixty-two in *Njálssoga* we can see that Gunnar, the main character in this part, is being violently invaded by the *dyrefylgja* of some attackers. 'Men då han kom eit stykke frå elva, vart han svært søvnig og bad dei andre om å stoppa og la hestane beita der. Han sovna tungt og let ille i søvne.' 'But when he got some distance from the river, he became very sleepy and asked the others to stop and let the horses graze there. He fell heavily asleep and felt bad in

²⁶⁸ Blikrud, «Sagaen om Floafolket,» 279.

²⁶⁹ Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*, 101-105.

²⁷⁰ Blikrud, «Sagaen om Floafolket,» 279.

²⁷¹ Heide, «Gammalnordisk sjelsforestillinger i samband med angrep,» 133.

his sleep.’²⁷² But it doesn’t seem like his companions are aware of him not having an unpleasant dream. ‘Kolskegg sa «Drøymer Gunnar no? » Hjort sa: «Eg skal vekkje han. » «Ikkje gjer dét», sa Kolskegg, «la han nyta draumen sin.»’ ‘Kolskegg said: «Is Grunnar dreaming now? » Hjort said: «I will wake him up. » «Don’t do that», said Kolskegg, «let him enjoy his dream. »’²⁷³ What we are being told after when he wakes is that he was dreaming about wolves attacking him and his companions. Since this dream is coming to him with force it’s clear that the aggressors are pushing their *dyrefylgja* in front of themselves and the *dyrefylgja* is invading Gunnars dreamed space. His sudden need for sleeping makes him a fragile target in the waking world where he could not have anticipated an attack if someone stumbled upon him out in the wild or on the road.

The *dyrefylgja* can be manifested as different animals. Animals in fairytales are often symbols of the persons self. And that might also be the case in the dreams of the Norse people. In *Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson* chapter four the dreaming of Torhall starts. And the first dream of Torhall we meet animals like a big white bear and a fox.²⁷⁴ These animals are human spirits in animal shapes.²⁷⁵ The white bear and the fox are very specific animals when thinking about symbolism in fairytales. The foxes are often associated with being very clever and some kind of a trickster, while bears are big strong animals. Mundal argues that the animal is depicting the person it represents in the dream.²⁷⁶

The invading *fylgja* as we can see, is often manifested as an animal. Mundal have made an overview of all the different animals that appears, how many times, and in which sagas they appear in.²⁷⁷ It seems like that *dyrefylgja* almost always comes from someone who wants to hurt the dreamer, but there are exceptions from this and that we can see in Torgils dream in *Sagaen om Floafolket* chapter twenty-four. In his dreamed space here, he is met by a white swan, which is interpret as his future wife. ‘Jeg så en svane gå bortover gulvet [...] Du skal bli gift, [...]’ ‘I saw a swan walking over the floor [...] You are getting married, [...]’²⁷⁸ There is a similar kind of invasion to a dreamed space. We can see it in the *Soga om Gull-Tore*. The main character Tore is being visited in his dream of Agnar who is dead. ‘Dei var utkøyrdde og låg der til dei sovna. Då drøymde Tore at det kom ein mann til han. Han hadde på

²⁷² Hagland, «Njålssoga,» 73.

²⁷³ Hagland, «Njålssoga,» 73.

²⁷⁴ Berg, «Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson,» 415.

²⁷⁵ Eldar Heide, «Gammalnordisk sjelsførestellingar i samband med angrep,» In *Krig och fred i vendel- och vikingtida traditioner*, ed. H. Rydving and S. Olsson, (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2016), 127.

²⁷⁶ Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*, 43.

²⁷⁷ Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*, 30.

²⁷⁸ Blikrud, «Sagaen om Floafolket,» 288.

seg ein raud kjortel og hjelm på hovudet, og i hendene hadde han eit drege sverd.’ ‘They were exhausted and lied down until they fell asleep. Then Tore dreamed that a man came to him. He had a red shirt on and a helmet on his head and in his hand, he had a drawn sword.’²⁷⁹ As Tore is described as exhausted from the travel it would be possible to enter his dreamed space easily, there would most likely not be any resistance from Tore. This invasion is more aggressive than the swan entering Torgils dream in *Sagaen om Floafolket*.

The invading *fylgja* above have either been of the type animals or other animal like creatures. The female who are showing themselves in dreams are a bit different than the invading ones. According to Else Mundal the *kvinnefylgja* is a former relative that is entering the dreamed space of family members to warn about potential threats.²⁸⁰ In *Torstein Side-Hallssons drøm* Torstein is dreaming of three ladies. ‘Tre kvinner kom imot ham og sa [...]’ Three women came towards him and said [...]’²⁸¹ These three ladies are conveying a warning and it comes in the form of a *kvad*. The warning about the treacherous thrall Gille. Since they are women, it is easy to connect it to being ancestors of Torstein that are following him and his family, to give counsel and warnings. Especially if we also look at the conversation, he is having with them before the last verse is said to him. ‘Hvor skal vi gå når du er borte, Torstein?’ ‘Where do you want us to go when you are gone, Torstein?’²⁸²

The *kvinnefylgja* can also be seen as death omens, since they often come to warn the dreamer, or since the dreamer often dies after they have had a dream with a female visiting them and then leaving them. The three ladies in Torsteins’ dream are making it clear that he is going to die. ‘Øksa, blank og blodig banesåret helten gir. [...] Da møter den fryktløse mannen miskunnløst sin skjebne, [...]’ ‘The shiny axe, and bloody the deadly wound the hero gives. [...]Then meets the fearless man mercilessly his fate[...].’²⁸³ There is a short mention of a dream in the thirty sixth chapter in the *Sagaen om Vatnsdølene*. Torstein the man who is dreaming of a woman who is talking to him and warning him to not travel. ‘Og før Torstein skulle ri hjemmefra den tredje natta, drømte han at den kvinnen som hadde fulgt frendene, kom til ham og bad ham ikke å dra av sted.’ ‘And before Torstein were going to ride from home the third night, he dreamed that the woman who had followed the family came to him and asked him not to leave.’²⁸⁴ She is chastising him, touching his eyes and tells him that if he

²⁷⁹ Nordbø, «Soga om Gull-Tore,» 326.

²⁸⁰ Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*, 96.

²⁸¹ Jørgensen, «Torstein Side-Hallssons drøm,» 455.

²⁸² Jørgensen, «Torstein Side-Hallssons drøm,» 456.

²⁸³ Jørgensen, «Torstein Side-Hallssons drøm,» 455-456.

²⁸⁴ Birgirsson and Thorvaldsen, «Sagaen om Vatnsdølene,» 44.

travels it will go badly. In the saga this woman is described as ‘kvinnen som hadde fulgt frendene,[...]’ ‘the woman who had followed the kinsmen,[...]’.²⁸⁵ which would mean that she is a spirit withing the family that is following the descendants in their dreams as a guardian spirit. The *kvinnefylgja* as a death omen we can also see in *Soga om Viga-Glum* chapter nine. ‘Draumen var stor og underleg. Eg vil tyde han på den måten at Vigfus, morfaren min er død. Kvinna, som raga høgare enn fjella, kan vere fylgja hans. [...] No vil fylgja hans søkje ei bustad her som eg er.’ ‘The dream was large and strange. I am interpreting it as if Vigfun, my grandfather on my mother’s side is dead. The woman, who were taller than mountains, might be his fylgja. [...] and now she wants to set a new home by my side.’²⁸⁶ As long as the *kvinnefylgja* is with the person, the person will stay alive or have luck.²⁸⁷ The *kvinnefylgja* or females could also be associated with *diser* and *diser* have a connection to the divine, claims Mundal.²⁸⁸

It’s not only the *fylgja* of humans in the shape of themselves, humans as animals or other human beings that can enter a dreamed space to communicate with the dreamer. The gods could also enter the dreamed spaces of the Norse people to converse with them. Both the old and the new. In chapter twenty in the *Sagaen om Floafolket* Torgils dreams of Thor, the Norse god. ‘En annen gang viste Tor seg for Torgils i drømme [...]’ ‘Another time Thor showed himself in Torgils’ dreams[...].’²⁸⁹ Thor shows himself again in the dream in chapter twenty one. ‘Torgils ventet nå på vind og drømte at en mann kom til ham, stor og rødskjegget, [...]’ ‘Torgils was now waiting for wind and was dreaming that a man came towards him, big and red bearded [...]’²⁹⁰ Torgils is about to take a voyage from Iceland to Greenland, and while he was waiting for the wind, he is invaded in his dreamed space by the god Thor. In Torgils dream space he, Thor, is warning and threatening Torgils. ‘Du tenker deg på ferd, og den vil blir strevsom. [...] Det vil gå dere ille, [...] med mindre du vender tilbake til troen på meg; da vil jeg igjen hjelpe deg.’ ‘You are planning to do a travel, and it will be hard. [...] it will go badly, [...] unless you return your faith to me; I will again help you then.’²⁹¹ It’s clear that Thor has an agenda for entering Torgils dreams, he wants him to forsake the new god and return to the old ones. Further on in the scene Torgils is showing his loyalty to the new god by

²⁸⁵ Birgirsson and Thorvaldsen, «Sagaen om Vatnsdølene,» 44.

²⁸⁶ Kyrkjebø, «Soga om Viga-Glum,» 360.

²⁸⁷ Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*, 96.

²⁸⁸ Mundal, *Fylgjamotiva*, 101.

²⁸⁹ Bliksrud, «Sagaen om Floafolket,» 284.

²⁹⁰ Bliksrud, «Sagaen om Floafolket,» 285.

²⁹¹ Bliksrud, «Sagaen om Floafolket,» 285.

rejecting Thor several times. Later in chapter twenty-three we can see that the new god might be manifesting him in the dream of Torøy, Torgils wife, as paradise. ‘hun sa hun så vakre bygder og lyse mennesker,’ ‘she said she saw beautiful villages and fair people,’²⁹² Which Torgils interpret as a message from god that she has passed his trials. Thor is not the only Norse god who have visited dreamed spaces of the Norse people in the Sagas. The god Frøy visits Glum in his dream. ‘Før Glum reid heimanfrå, då drøymde han at det var kome mange menn dit til Tverå for å møte Frøy, og han tykte han såg ei mengd av menn på øyra nede ved elva, medan Frøy sat på trona si.’ ‘Before Glum rode from home, he dreamed that many men had come to Tverå to meet Frøy, and he thought he saw many of the men on øyra down by the river, while Frøy sat on his throne.’²⁹³ We looked at Tores dream further up (when I was talking about invading fylgja). And Ulv explains Agnar as a creature with qualities that are more than human. ‘Det var ein berserk som heitte Agnar. Han var son av Regemond den vonde. Han fell laga denne haugen og gjekk i haugen med heile skipsutrustninga si og mykje anna gods. Han forsvarte sidan haugen med trolldom, slik at ingen kunne koma nær han, og mange av dei som har kome dit for å opna haugen er daude, eller så har dei råka ut for andre ulukker, og me veit ikkje om han var daud eller levande då han vart til troll.’ ‘There was a berserk called Agnar. He was the son of Regemond the bad. He built this mound and went into the mound with all his ship’s equipment and a lot of other goods. He then defended the mound with sorcery, so that no one could get close to him, and many of those who have come there to open the mound are dead, or have met with other misfortunes, and we do not know whether he was dead or alive when he turned into a troll.’²⁹⁴ There are many factors that are pointing to Agnar being dead as well as a troll despite that Ulv is saying that they don’t know if he died or not. The fact that he himself built a mound and went into it says that he planned for this mound to be his final resting place. There are also other more mysterious creatures who can visit the dreams, like the soothsayer in *Tåtten om Torvald den vidfarne* that I mentioned above or Agnar in *Soga om Gull-Tore* who might be a dead troll (both of these scenes is mentioned above).

All these scenes have layers of details, and it becomes clear that the *verisimilitude* effect has been used to describe and make them more believable for the reader or listener. But that is not the only technique that has been used in these stories. The way some of them are structured helps them flow or not flow and created this imagined travel. Several of the sagas

²⁹² Blikrud, «Sagaen om Floa-folket,» 287.

²⁹³ Kyrkjebø, «Soga om Viga-Glum,» 387.

²⁹⁴ Nordbø, «Soga om Gull-Tore,» 326.

and *tættir* have more than one scene with dreams in them. *Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson* has a large number of dreams in it, there are twelve dreams in chapter four alone, and about three dreams in chapter five. The twelve dreams in chapter four are written very closely and there is not much between them. The structure becomes almost like a list of repeating the same structure but with different content in each dream. It can be cut down to a short explanation of the dream, the interpretation of it, and a small comment.²⁹⁵ Most of the dreams is also interpreted as bad omens or bad reflections of the one that is dreaming. The author has not used much time on making this chapter flow in terms of making it an attention drawing story, the whole chapter is very repetitive and very much like a list. And at the end we get one of these ‘poff’ moments that I have discussed earlier in this paper. The number twelve has been a magical number in fairytales for a long time and the fact that the dreams here are represented as twelve different dreams could have something to do with the art of writing. Repetition makes it easier to remember the content of a story, and when the amount of repetition has a meaningful number there will be ‘hooks’ for the listeners or readers to remember the story by. It could also make the reader or listener connect the story to other stories. However, the repetition in this particular part comes in close proximity to each other which doesn’t necessarily make the trick of repetition useful for remembrance.

As the saga is written by a most likely Christian writer in a time when Christianity was the main religion it could be that the author wanted to make an association between the twelve dreams to the twelve apostles in the bible. It is plausible that the saga writers have been influenced by Christianity when they have been writing. To be completely objective is difficult and Clover argues that the family sagas might have been influenced by other cultures in the writing.²⁹⁶ In chapter five there are three dreams, and this time the author has made more space between the dreams which makes the text seem more like a story and not a list of dreams.²⁹⁷ The number three can also be connected to Christianity and the trinity. There are more details on what is happening between the three dreams here, and it’s written in a more ‘present time’, it’s not a retelling within the story.

There is one dream where there are no other beings that is entering the dreamed space.

²⁹⁵ Berg, «Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson,» 413-414.

²⁹⁶ Carol J. Clover, «Icelandic Family Sagas (Íslendigasögur), » In *Old Norse-Icelandic literature - A Critical Guide*, ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 251.

²⁹⁷ Berg, «Soga om Torstein Side-Hallsson,» 415-416.

‘Så var det ei natt Bård låg i senga si, at han drøymte at han syntest det voks opp eit stort tre i grua til Dovre, fosterfar hans. Det var svært rikt på greiner. Det voks så raskt at det kraup opp i helletaket og deretter ut igjennom gluggen i helleren. I det neste var det så stort at det såg ut som om knoppene til treet rakk ut over heile Noreg, og på ein av kvistane var det dessutan den vakraste av blomar, enda dei alle var fulle av blomar. Ein an kvistane var gullfarga.’

‘Then, one night Bård was in his bed, and he was dreaming about a tree growing from the firepit of Dovre, his foster father. The tree had many branches. It grew so fast, so it reached the roof and then out from the windows. The it was so big so that it looked like buds stretched over all of Norway, and on one of the branches there were the most beautiful flower, even if the whole tree was full of flowers. One of the branches were golden.’²⁹⁸

Bård is interpreting the dream to show the prediction of a king, that is going to rule the whole of Norway. And that the golden branch is showing that the king would be born after the man who is coming to Dovre and to be raised by him. The saga talks about how people later in time have interpreted the beautiful flower to be Olav Haraldsson. But this tree Bård is dreaming of seems a lot like *Yggdrasil*, the world tree in Norse mythology. A tree that grows tall, with beautiful flowers and stretches all over Norway. Dovre is supposed to be a giant and according to the Norse creation of the world *Ginnugagap*, the world is created out from the giant Yme.²⁹⁹ And this tree is growing out from the firepit of Dovre, much like the *Yggdrasil* is growing out from *Asgard*, the ‘realm’ of the gods. I found it fitting to start and end this chapter with the *Yggdrasil* or a dreamed tree as it shows both the cosmology of the Norse people and how present nature and both old and new religion is present in the sagas.

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There are many who believe in an afterlife. The sagas do not talk too much about what happens after a person is dead, what happens to them, but there are some stories that do say a little about the people who are still alive. There are not many details around the funerals, but

²⁹⁸ Kleivane, «Soga om Bård Snæfellsås,» 240.

²⁹⁹ Mortensson-Egnund, «Volsupå,» Ch. 3 p. 20

some. The halls become a place for the people to gather and honor the dead, by drinking beer. Sometimes the sagas say something about the actual burial. Depending on the person, what religion, and what status they had, they would get the burial that would fit them. Some would be buried in boats, and some would be buried in a different matter. There are many findings that do show us some of the burial traditions. Boat burials we have found many of, and we are still discovering more. It's interesting how the sagas don't say much about it, but only give hints. The honor and reputation of the person had an influence on where the person would be buried. If the honor was high, they would be buried in a good place and buried by the traditions of the time. Where they of low honor and bad reputation they could be buried on the beach.

The stories the sagas seem like they are focusing more on are the stories of the ghosts. Or the stories of heroes who are out on an adventure and are testing their strength against ghosts who are terrorizing other people. As the sagas are talking about these stories, they are creating a room for talking about not doing the imagined travel to the afterlife and the many halls of the gods. These stories are full of details and the writers or storytellers have used techniques to catch the receiver of the story. The *verisimilitude* effect plays a big role in these stories.

The *verisimilitude* effect is not only used in the stories about the ghost but also in the stories about the dreams of the Norse people. But here there is not only the verisimilitude effect that is used, numbers like twelve and three in repetitions. Both these numbers are commonly understood as magical numbers but can also be representing the twelve apostles or the trinity in Christianity. Within the dreamed spaces its argued that the *fylgja* can enter, and that they can only be females or animals, but there are other beings as well who can enter, like gods, men, mystical beings, and ghosts. These beings can be pushed into someone's dreamed space and be forced on the dreamer. But the dreamer can also pull others into their dreams. Which makes earlier theories not inclusive enough.

A new Beginning...

At the end of the tour, Iron Age for a day, I watched the group of tourists walking down the hill again. Some of them stop at the shop or the facilities, and then all of them get on the bus. The bus just came back to pick them up and take them back to the cruise ship that will take them to the next city. After the bus leaves, a new bus will roll into the parking and a new group of tourists will arrive, some might have come to Stavanger by plane, train, or another ship. They come from all over the world. The time used on traveling has reduced drastically from the Iron Age and the Viking Age. There are also endless of options of modes to travel with now compared to back then, and in the future, there might even be more options and less time spent on the actual traveling.

This paper has been looking at the different modes of traveling in the Iron Age and Viking Age, done by the Norse people living in the Nordic countries. The questions that have been the foundation for this research is How did the Norse people get from point A to point B and what happened on these travels? What kind of objects did they use or bring? What can the Sagas tell us about the different travels they were doing, or what don't they tell us? To frame the paper, the period was set to the late Iron Age and Viking Age. This was done to ensure a deeper understanding of a material culture and heritage of the Norse people.

The Icelandic Sagas has been the main textual source and a new translated collection has been used in this paper. The collection contains several sagas and *tættir* that have never been translated to Norwegian before and some of those translations opened for examining sagas and *tættir* that are less known and not used as much in earlier research as other well-known sagas (The sagas are the longer stories and the *tættir* is the shorter ones. The word saga comes from the word Sogur which means 'what is said' or 'what is being told'.³⁰⁰). The sagas are now written text, but they have been oral stories first which has offered some interesting challenges through time for scholars. And for this paper there have been some terms and theories developed by other scholars which has been relevant to discuss.

The *verisimilitude* effect has been crucial to be aware of while examining the sagas and *tættir*. Because the sagas and *tættir* were written 2-3 hundred years later than the stories were supposed to have happened, and the writers might have edited some aspects to make the written text more believable. There are layers of details in the parts of the stories where events seem more fictional than factual. Some of the details might also come from the original

³⁰⁰ Jørgensen and Hagland, *Islendingesagaene B.d I*, XXXII.

storytellers as well. Flying dragons and magical places needs more details to catch the receiver of the story.

Another term that has been interesting is the ‘binding devices’ which Carol Clover argues might have a revival in her paper *Icelandic Family Sagas (Íslendigasögur)*. As a theory I found it convincing to an extent that some of the smaller *tætter* might have been put together by smaller sentences to create a bigger Saga without inventing a whole new story. Like in this sentence from *Finnboge den sterkes Saga* ‘Finnboge reiser rett hjem til Norge.’ ‘Finnboge travels straight home to Norway.’³⁰¹ But as an attentive reader I found these sentences more like a ‘poff’ moment, where the character is just suddenly transported from a place to another with no details. And knowing there is so much more to it. There is a travel that is done in one of the modes discussed here in the paper, that takes x amount of time to do, and there are things that is happening during the travel. There might be conversations, problems, no problems, weather changes or other events.

The different modes have been examined in this order on land, walking, skiing, traveling by horse, at sea by sailing a ship and then imagined travels in imagined spaces with burials, ghosts, and stories about dreams and dreamed spaces.

In the Iron Age and the Viking Age walking have been a common mode of traveling. It requires some knowledge about producing shoes and how to maintain them. Different access to different skins made the difference in what quality the shoes had. No matter how good the quality the shoes had, they would pose some problems still on wet and slippery terrain, and they would not be completely water and snow proof. There were no revolutionary changes in the shoes, *hirflingr*, so the technique on how to make shoes remained somewhat equal up until the early 1900.³⁰²

Unpredictable weather could give the travelers big problems. When people are walking, they are more exposed to harsh weather, and even if they would be properly dressed, the weather could be so hard that they would see no other option than seeking shelter and stop the travel until the weather would calm down. Sometimes the sagas talk about fatale outcomes from walking in conditions where the people are exposed to very harsh weather. When the weather is not too bad the saga writers turn their focus to describing the routes, directions, and the nature. During these stories the people who are walking seem like they are having a pleasant travel, with no big challenges.

³⁰¹ Mindrebø, «Finnboge den sterkes saga,» 240.

³⁰² Lightfoot, «Å sko seg,», 19.

There could be times during wintertime when shoes would not be sufficient enough for traveling. The Norse people had the means to upgrade to skis. This is the next step for them it would seem as we don't have any record of the Norse people using snowshoes. The material culture of having skis is something that was well integrated in society. Old petroglyphs and findings of skis suggest that skiing is predating the Iron Age and is a knowledge that stems from the Stone age. Both from the findings and the sagas it seems like it's normal to have skis that can easily be packed, divided in two pieces, and fastened to the feet. The skis would be made from wood so the material for creating them would be easily accessed. The skis are often packed as a precaution for snowy weather. When the people who are traveling, are familiar with the roads, it would be no problem in packing and preparing for the trip. Even if skis and skiing appear like a common knowledge, the Icelandic sagas don't explicitly mention skis often. There are several times when the sagas describe moments where it looks like the logical mode for traveling would be skis. When the weather is described to be harder than light snow, the people are described to start struggling while walking. Through reenactment and reconstruction of Viking age skis that have then been used in movies it was possible to get a more correct picture of how well the Norse people could ski and we also got more knowledge on the sport and mode for traveling during the Iron age and Viking age.

Horses as a domesticated animals were used as a means of travel for those who could afford it. Horses were not native to Iceland and had to be imported from the west coast of Norway and the islands of Brittan. The horses had to be very self-sufficient and that made for a strong, sturdy, and smart species. Because of the isolation in Iceland and strict importing laws the horse breed in Iceland have remained close to how the breed would have been in the Viking Age. To have a horse or many horses would require for the owner to have lots of resources or 'money'. There is a lot of equipment needed to be able to ride or drive the horse. And the Norse people were, just as much as we are, interested in having nice things, therefore they would use time and resources to decorate the equipment if they could.

But as not everyone can own equally much, there are some who can't afford to own horses and additional equipment. These people would on some occasions find a chieftain or a king to serve. Chieftains and kings were expected to be generous with gifts and equip their followers to keep their loyalty. When people are traveling by horse they could travel faster and or longer. But they still might need to rest for their own sake, or the horses needed to rest or feed. They also might need to replenish their food supply. Then they would rely on the social norm of hosting. They could stop at the farms of friends or strangers and expect to be allowed to rest for the night and share a meal with the people of the farm which was common

courtesy at the time. The halls of the Iron Age and Viking Age were important symbols of power, and to show of this they could host travelers or friends.

Very often when people are thinking about the Viking Age many are thinking about the Vikings sailing their ships around to raid and trade. But there is so much more to the voyages at sea with the Norse people. Before the Norse people could set sail and travel far and wide and explore the world, they had to build their ships. As Norway is a country with a long coastline it's just natural that the Norse people had a relationship to the ocean early on. They had developed building techniques of building boats, and around 700AD they managed to make sails with the textile industry of the woman. There is no small number of findings of tools and objects found in connection to the boats and ships. But to gain a deeper understanding of the work that lies behind a ship, scholars have now started to reconstruct some of the findings. Amongst the projects of reconstructions is the reconstruction of Skuldelev 2 with both the ship and the sail, we have gained an understanding of how much time, resources and what tools that is needed for building a ship worthy to sail the seas.

The *Soga om Korka-Rev* is one of the Icelandic sagas who actually talk a little about the process and the time that is required for fixing or building a ship. Even if the sagas only talk about the carpentering and forging that goes into the repairing of a ship, it does mentions sails. As the sagas is specifically telling the story about Rev it's clear that production around sails is omitted since it's work done by women and not men. The loom has been one of the essential tools for women to use in the production of the sails. Without the sails the Norse people would most likely not have reached as far as they did and that makes the women an essential part of the society of the Norse people. It was important for the Norse people that their ships and boats were made with precision and pride. So that those who would watch them sail away or in towards land could see their might. For those who would watch them sail out to sea or out the fjords, or perhaps more importantly experiencing them growing from the horizon as they sailed towards land as mighty ships that was richly made. When the sagas are talking about good ships or mighty men at sea, they would describe the ships as beautiful or stately.

The fascinating thing is that the sagas talk about the ships and boats, but not so much the boat houses or *naust* as it's called in Norwegian. The findings, however, speak of many sites where there would be boat houses and within them there are a vast amount of findings of pottery shards which would indicate a kind of launching ceremony before crossing the beach to reach the sea.

The Norse people did not use maps when they were out at sea. But they did have techniques and methods for navigating and finding the way at sea. Most of the Icelandic sagas do not mention how the Norse people would navigate the seas. But the *Soga om Grønlandingane* do give some hints and small accounts of how they would do it. When there are more details on the voyages at sea it is in connection to when something is going wrong or badly, and they are getting lost or something unforeseen happens. And that is what is happening in *Soga om Grønlandingane* in the first chapter. Bad weather makes them lose their way, and they discover new land. Since it is a new land, the focus is on how they are positioning the ship and what kinds of natural cues they are using. The Captain uses skills in reading nature through his senses and knowledge gained from a story that has been told about how Greenland should look like he can create himself a mental map over what directions he needs to steer them.

When someone wants to travel to Vinland after the discovery, but a route is not yet established we still get details but there is a shift in the focus. Now there are more details on nature and landscape. This is done to start creating a story seafarers can tell others who want to do the same voyage. Storytelling becomes one of the essential factors to use when the Norse people want to 'teach' how to get to a place. Once a route is established, they stop describing details in the Sagas because it is counted as a common knowledge.

Through storytelling the Norse people created imagined spaces where they could do imagined travels. Through the cosmological world view they would have imagined spaces only the dead could reach. The Icelandic Sagas do not tell stories of what happens beyond the grave, but they do talk a little about people who die and how people still alive are honoring them. Some of the traditions around burials and funerals come through in the sagas, but there are no deep description of the rituals and traditions, or how they bury them. There are some few mentions of mounds and boat graves. But in 2007 the number of found boat graves were up at 270 boat burials in Norway. Which would mean that they did have traditions, customs, and rituals around the funerals. But the saga writers might have omitted some of the information as it might be common knowledge. What the sagas seem to convey are the wishes of burial place or where people felt the dead should be buried out from what kind of person they had been while they were alive.

The Saga writers did not spare on the details when it comes to the ghost stories. The *verisimilitude* effect has been actively used. The scenes are described much more than other parts of the sagas. The saga writers might have used these stories as more entertainment or as warnings to all who wanted to live a good Christian life in the Middle Ages. The people who

is alive in the ghost stories are often portrayed as heroes who are trying their strength and worth against beings who are no longer of the living world.

The sagas dedicated quite some space for stories about dreams as well. When the Norse people are telling what they are dreaming about they create a dream space. Within these dreamed spaces there are others who enter. These others are called *fylgja*, either *kvinnefylgja* or *dyrefylgja*. These two are different types of ‘souls’ or selves. But they are not the only beings who can enter the dreamed space, there are instances where men, gods, ghosts, and other mysterious beings appears.

The dreamed space can only be when a person is sleeping or in a state of trance. Within these spaces the *fylgja* can either push to get in someone’s dreamed space or the dreamer can pull others’ *fylgja* into the dreamed space. Those who push can be quite invasive as it forces the receiver to sleep. Those who invade forcefully are often manifested as *dyrefylgja*, but there are also times where gods and other beings ‘force’ their way into someone’s dreamed space. The *kvinnefylgja* often comes with warnings or they could be seen as omens of death. They are ancestors who bring luck to the dreamer as long as she stays with the dreamer.

The stories of dreams are also filled with details like the stories about the ghosts. A lot of the stories about the dreamed spaces have more than the *verisimilitude* effect as a technique to make the stories flow. They are clearly structured with dreaming, explaining the dream, interpreting the dream, and what is dreamed happens in the ‘real world’. Then there is also the repetition of dreaming happening in some of the stories. Twelve and three are numbers commonly known as magical numbers in fairytales, but in the sagas, they could also be representing the twelve apostles or the trinity in Christianity.

A conclusion

The Norse people had several ways of traveling. They used the different modes out of what they had access to, and where they were going or traveling. Each of the modes they used is an advancement from the previous one. The advancements and developments have most likely developed out of a need for improved advancement. The Icelandic Sagas do convey some information on how the Norse people would travel, what they would bring and what happened during the travels and sometimes they would omit the information. When they do talk about the travels in details they keep to a specific focus area, which are influenced on the situation around the travels like; weather, complications, if there is previous information or

not that could benefit the choices, or if the story is influenced by religion or writing techniques.

The Norse people also created imaginary travels through their rich traditions of storytelling. Since the written Icelandic Sagas are filled with these travels as well as the stories about the physical voyages, the possibility of them being an important part of culture, entertainment, and a form of teaching others is high. The combination of stories and knowledge on reading nature, natural cues, and attentive use of the senses, made it possible for the Norse people to travel long distances without the use of maps.

At times the Icelandic sagas don't have any information, but all the findings can tell us a whole story. Objects can be researched just like the textual sources, and they can be reconstructed, used for reenactment, or used in experimental archeology. Combining all these forms of sources shows an even bigger picture of a time, a society, and a people of the past. It also helps to make a strange past to become more of a present past that people can relate more to, and it could also be a technique to bring in a bigger audience.

Some final reflections

One of the fundamental terms that has been helpful to think about during this research is the past. There is still a gap between the common knowledge of scholars and the public and to catching up with the new research. I do see many of the visitors and tourists at the Iron Age farm still looking for the Viking with long hair, greasy beard and a helmet with horns who only wants to fight, raid and rape. And some of these visitors are both locals and from other countries. The past is still a strange past for many and there is a need for new research reaching an audience that is much wider than just academia. Scholars are doing a great work in research and improving theories and findings, but I believe there still could be more improvement in research and in reaching a wider public audience. As historians we are not only researcher, but we are also storytellers. And there are many ways of telling a story. The combination of guiding and reenactment in a reconstructed farm as the Iron Age farm has shown me that there are many ways of actively telling the stories of the past to people. And I strongly believe that we can reach new understandings and a wider audience if the research that is being done is approachable for all.

This research has challenged me to think and reflect about the past and my work at the Iron Age farm, in a whole new different way. The more than thousand years that is separating us from the people living in the Iron Age and Viking Age is now, not too much of time after

all. I see more continuity in culture, technology, and traditions than what I did before I started this research. And working so closely on the Icelandic Sagas has made me more aware of the possibilities in how to tell stories, or guide tours. The way the Norse people learned from each other through storytelling, and how they used memory, and their senses is something, I want to keep researching through reenactment and testing out handcrafting techniques from the Iron and Viking Age, which my work at the Iron Age farm allows me to do. I do already see that there are many of the tourists who are interested in learning more about the period when they get to see, touch, and try things instead of just listening. After every tour that I have on Mondays, when the group are finishing their last activity, they walk down the small hill to find their bus again. And while they are walking, I can hear how they are buzzing of excitement over the activities they have just done. All of them are leaving with a smile and are eager to tell all their friends and family the story about their experience and all the new things they have learnt. They return to the cruise ship with the bus, and I drive home. A different mode of traveling compared to the Norse people, yet not so different as I was thinking a year ago when I started this project.

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