BALLADS ON THE FAROE ISLANDS

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THE FAROE ISLANDS are a small archipelago country in the North Atlantic Ocean with a truly unique story-telling heritage; this introduction and volume of translations explores how this community preserved and transmitted some of the most exciting and enduring stories from Germanic legend. To say "preserved and transmitted" in the past tense is perhaps not completely correct, because the Faroese ballad tradition is still living. The ballads are a key element of the vibrant Faroese folk tradition and the ballads presented in this volume, although they have their roots in the Middle Ages, are still sung and danced in the Faroe Islands to this day.[1] The goal of this volume is simple: to introduce the Faroese ballads preserving material from the Völsung legend to a wider audience and to make them accessible to students, scholars, and those generally interested. Ballads on the Faroe Islands have been collected, written in manuscripts, recorded, and published in print. This introductory essay gives an overview of how this happened, how ballads are present in contemporary Faroese culture, and the characteristics of the Faroese ballad tradition.

The Norse settled on the Faroe Islands permanently in the ninth century, bringing with them their language, culture, and storytelling traditions, which from the Middle Ages were transmitted in the Faroe Islands in ballad form.[2] Faroese ballads are dance narratives, often very lengthy and accompanied by a distinctive ring dance.[3] The Faroese language is descended from Old West Norse, but unlike the Old Norse culture in Iceland, the Faroe Islands did not have a written literary culture in the Middle Ages and early modern period.[4] Danish was the official language of the islands and written Faro-

1 For oral poetry to the present on the Faroe Islands, see Marnersdóttir, "From Oral Poetry to Rap."

2 For an excellent overview of Faroese social and cultural history, especially in connection with its literature, see Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*. Otherwise, for an accessible overview in English of Faroese history, see Wylie, *The Faroe Islands*.

3 See Árnadóttir, "Chain Dancing"; Isaksen, "Kvadene," 42–44; Opielka, "Færøerne og den færøske dans"; Jacobsen, *Tekster til den færøske folkevise-dans*, 7–10.

4 From the time of settlement to the late twelfth century, the Faroe Islands were a separate legal entity. They were subject to the Norwegian crown by the 1180s and entered the Kalmar Union in the late fourteenth century as a Norwegian territory. At

ese was not countenanced; nevertheless, the native population developed a rich oral tradition consisting of ballads and folk tales, which helped to preserve the Faroese language in the face of Danish domination. Faroese finally became an official language of the Faroe Islands in 1948 in the Home Rule Act of the Faroe Islands.[5] Prior to this, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a great period of ballad collecting began on the Faroe Islands, and at this time the ballads were recorded in manuscripts.[6]

Before discussing what is characteristic of the Faroese ballads, we might ask what exactly is a ballad? A ballad is "a learned term for anonymous, Western European epic folk-poetry in oral tradition with couplets or quatrains followed by a refrain." The ballads presented in this volume are more specifically heroic ballads: "folk-ballads in ballad stanza form which tell of champions in the past, often in faraway places, and of their excellent (or villainous) deeds."[7]

Situated in the middle of the west Norse area, the Faroe Islands were far from being culturally isolated and were an integral part of the Germanic storytelling tradition in the Middle Ages and beyond, sharing legendary narrative motifs and content with the general heroic Germanic story-telling tradition in an area that extends from the Nordic countries (Iceland, Faroe Islands, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) to the British Isles in the west and south to Germany. This can be referred to collectively as medieval Germanic legend—legend that goes across the borders of a single national literature.[8] This material speaks to the close connections between communities across this large area during the entirety of the pre-modern era. In the Faroe Islands, the heroic material took the form of ballads (long dance narratives), preserved in oral tradition and accompanied by a distinctive ring dance.

This volume focuses on the Faroese ballads that tell the story of the figure known in Old Norse-Icelandic as Sigurðr Fáfnisbani. That this medieval legend was found on the Faroe Islands is no surprise: the legend of Sigurd

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the end of the Kalmar Union in the sixteenth century, Norway (and thus the Faroe Islands) entered a union with Denmark. The Dano-Norwegian union lasted until 1814, when Norway was ceded to Sweden. However, this did not include the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland, which remained part of Denmark. The Faroe Islands are still part of the Kingdom of Denmark.

5 Home Rule Act of the Faroe Islands, section 11.

6 See below for information on early Faroese ballad collecting, pp. XX–XX.

7 Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 11, 21.

8 See Ţăranu, "The Elusive Nature of Germanic Heroic Poetry"; Frank, "Germanic Legend."

the Dragon-Slayer was popular all over the medieval north, in an area that included the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the British Isles and which stretched down to central Europe in what is now Germany. The story includes several other pre-eminent heroic figures of the Middle Ages, such as Helgi Hundingsbani, Gunnar (Old Norse Gunnarr, a historical king of Burgundy), focuses on the youth, marriage, and death of Sjúrður Fávnisbani (Old Norse Sigurðr Fáfnisbani), his lover Brynhild Buðladóttir (Old Norse Brynhildr Buðladóttir), Sjúrður's slaying of the dragon Fávnir/Frænar (Old Norse Fáfnir), and associated legendary events concerning the Nibelung royal house and their treasure.

Characteristics of the Faroese Ballads

In contrast to most other medieval ballad traditions that we know of, Faroese ballads (*kvæði*) are specially marked out by their great length.[9] It is not uncommon for a ballad to have over one hundred stanzas; indeed, the variants of *Brynhildar táttur* often have around 250 stanzas.[10] This means that each ballad can take several hours to a whole evening to perform. Performance is also a key element when considering the Faroese ballad tradition; these ballads were not simply chanted but rather danced; indeed, one verb denoting performance of ballads is *at dansa* (to dance), where it is understood that you would also be singing, while *at kvøða* (to chant, sing) explicitly means to chant or sing the ballads.[11]

Since heroic Faroese ballads can be so long, they often have several sections known as *tættir* (sg. *táttur*), and each section can function as a standalone ballad and be chanted independently. This is the case with the *Sjúrðar kvæði*, which is divided into three *tættir* (*Regin smiður*, *Brynhildar táttur*, and *Høgna táttur*). The origin of this construction would seem to be medi-

9 There are two types of ballads, *kvæði* and *tættir* (also the word used to refer to ballad sections). *Kvæði* are the long heroic ballads, of which the *Sjúrðar kvæði* is an example. *Tættir* are performed in the same way but are shorter and deal with local affairs rather than the epic concerns of the *kvæði*. For more on the difference between *kvæði* and *tættir*, see Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 14–16. For more on *tættir*, see Galvin, "The Many Faces of Satiric Ballads."

10 Stanzas are usually two or four lines, but sometimes more (five, six, seven, nine, or ten). See Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 23, also for rhyme schemes.

11 Cf. Christensen, who writes "The term *kvøða/kvøðing* is used to denote the way the ballad is performed vocally, which is a combination of singing and chanting, as opposed to the Faroese word *syngja*, which refers to singing." Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 6.

eval and is comparable with medieval English ballads being divided into *fyttes*, although Mortan Nolsøe suggests that the origin of the structure in the Faroese ballads likely stems from Norwegian heroic ballads of the late Middle Ages.[12]

Historically on the Faroe Islands singing such ballads, folk songs, and spiritual songs would have been a major source of entertainment:

> Winter days were short and the evening long—and if you needed entertainment, there was nowhere to go! The family and other members of the household gathered in the smoke-room (*roykstova*), i.e. the room where there was a fireplace, but with only a hole in the roof to let in light and let out the smoke. There was lots of work in a Faroese household: fishing tackle and other tools needed repairing; wool had to be carded and spun; there was knitting to be done, etc. etc. There were ample opportunity to tell stories and not least to sing, whether *kvæði*, folk songs or spiritual songs. These *kvøldsetur* ("evening gatherings") were of great importance to the oral transmission of legends and songs.[13]

The Faroese folklorist Mortan Nolsøe points out that chanting ballads at home (without the dance) was vital for the oral transmission and learning of folk ballads,[14] and this was known as *sitandi kvøðing* (seated song). As this quotation also illustrates, ballads were not the only source of songs for Faroe Islanders, nor were they only in Faroese, since songs were also introduced from elsewhere, ballads sung in Danish being particularly popular. Faroese ballads are known in Faroese as *kvæði*, while those ballads referred to as a *vísa* are typically those sung in Danish.

The Dance and Melodies

Faroese folk songs and their melodies have been passed down in oral tradition; these encompass *kvæði*, Danish folk songs (*vísur*), spiritual songs, and Kingo singing.[15] Unlike many European ballad traditions, the ballads are unaccompanied song. There were no instruments on the Faroe Islands until around 1900 and no knowledge of notes.[16] Each village would have had a slightly different melody tradition from the next, although not so different

12 Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 23.

13 Clausen, *Andlig vísuløg í Føroyum*, 55.

14 Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 27.

15 Clausen, *Andlig vísuløg í Føroyum*, 55.

16 Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 43.

that people from different villages could not sing ballads together.[17] Each singer, too, can shape the melody according to the circumstances.[18] There are various melodies recorded for the ballads, these have been transcribed and published by Marianne Clausen.[19] The database of melodies is available online.[20] Unlike the texts of the ballads which have entered print, the melodies of the ballads are still almost always passed on in oral tradition.[21] Although when villages were more isolated they had individual melodies for the ballads, it should be mentioned that with the advent of dancing societies in the Faroe Islands (the first society was established in the 1950s), and easily available recordings of ballads, a lot of the melodies have become more standardized.[22]

One thing that distinguishes the Faroese ballads is that they are chanted to a dance.[23] The dance that accompanies the ballad singing is a chain/ring dance and is inseparable from the lyrics of the ballad in Faroese tradition.[24] This style of dancing is known to date back to the Middle Ages, and the Faroese variant is agreed on by scholars to be medieval in origin, although it is important to point out that both the dance and its cultural significance have changed through time.[25] When the ballads are danced, the leader of the sing-

17 Clausen, *Andlig vísuløg í Føroyum*, 55. Please note that I use singing and chanting interchangeably for the performance of ballad texts.

18 Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 43.

19 Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*.

20 Føroyamálsdeild, Bandasavn.

21 Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 35.

22 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 88. For more on Faroese dancing societies and their cultural importance, see Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 88–101. For standardization of melodies, see Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 66.

23 Mortan Nolsøe comments that they are not always danced, but when they are not, they are still chanted as if they were being danced. Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 17. The metre of the ballad and the dance go hand in hand. See Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'"19–20; Galbraith, "Meter, Prosody and Performance"; Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði." For dancing and other medieval ballad traditions in Scandinavia, see Colbert, *The Birth of the Ballad*, 127–31.

24 This is the normal dance on the Faroes. There were also dancing games (*dansispøl*), which more or less died out around 1900 but have been revived by dancing societies. Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 59. See especially Andrea Opielka for studies of dancing games: Opielka, "Tanzspiele"; Opielka, *Danse- og sanglege på Færøerne*.

25 Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 17; Opielka, "Færøerne og den færøske dans."

ing or chanting is known as the *skipari* (pl. *skiparar*, which literally means "the person in charge").[26] The *skipari* (or *kvøðari*, meaning the ballad chanter or singer) starts each stanza then the rest of the dancers join in, while the refrain, sung after each stanza, is sung in unison. Historically mostly men led ballads, especially longer ballads, although women could lead shorter ballads. Today women lead almost equally to men.[27] The dance steps are simple: the dancers typically join hands in a chain, taking two steps left and one step right, and repeating this throughout the ballad.[28] Since there are so many ballads in the repertoire, the same ballad will rarely be performed more than once in a season in the dancing societies.[29] When ballads were danced at home, this was still the custom, since it was thought the ballad may become hackneyed if everyone knew it, and it was also possible for a particular *skipari* to be strongly associated with a particular ballad, and only he knew it and sang it.[30]

The traditional dancing season is from Christmas to Shrovetide. However, in modern dancing associations, the normal dancing season is from October to Shrovetide.[31] It is not only ballads in Faroese that were chanted to the dance. Danish folk songs and ballads, as well as newer Danish and Faroese ballads, were also used for dances, plus at Shrovetide and weddings spiritual songs were also danced.[32] Faroese and Danish counting rhymes

26 For more on the *skipari*, see Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 75; Opielka, "'At få dansen under foden.'"

27 Marnersdóttir, "Women and Ballads," 29.

28 The dancing is started on the left foot. See Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 20. There is another dance style, known as *trokingarstev* (Clausen gives the example of it being danced in Sumba), where dancers remained stationary, perhaps dancing on the spot, for the verses and only moving as described during the refrain. Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 61; Hammershaimb, *Færøsk anthologi*, vol. 1, pp. xlii–xliii. Hammershaimb also mentions *bandadansur*, where the men and women face each other in two lines, with a band between them, dancing stationary during the verses but during the refrain lifting the band into an arch that the other dancers then dance through. Hammershaimb, *Færøsk anthologi*, vol. 1, p. xliii.

29 Kamban, *Kenn mær einki um*, 13; Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 27; Hammershaimb, *Færøsk anthologi*, vol. 1, p. l.

30 Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 75.

31 Clausen, *Andlig vísuløg í Føroyum*, 51; Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 27; Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 73; Kamban, *Kenn mær einki um*, 13. Shrovetide is the last period for having fun and games before the restrictions of Lent begin.

32 See Clausen, *Hundredesyv-visebogen*; Clausen, *Andlig vísuløg í Føroyum*, 51.

were also performed, such as the Faroese *Mær gav sankta Mortan* (St. Martin gave to me), which lists twenty Christmas presents.[33]

Style

Faroese ballads have similarities with other medieval ballad traditions when it comes to their style. The "leaping and lingering" in the narrative is commonplace; that is, some aspects of the story are brushed over while other elements retain narrative focus for multiple verses. In the Faroese material, this is also marked by the repetition of certain lines in the section, or by employing very similar constructions that might switch out one word or so, for example, these five stanzas from *Regin smiður* about Sjúrður growing up:

(36) So var tað við Sjúrða,
mikil gav hann vekst,
meiri vaks hann í ein mánað,
enn onnur børn í seks.

So was it with Sjúrður,
that he grew such a lot,
he grew more in one month,
than other children in six.

(37) Hann vaks upp hjá síni móður,
tað er einki hól,
meiri vaks hann í ein mánað,
enn onnur børn í tólv.

He grew up with his mother,
it's no exaggeration,
he grew more in one month,
than other children in twelve.

(38) Hann vaks upp hjá síni móður,
hon gav honum gangin hægst,
hann royndi meira í ein mánað
enn onnur børn í seks.

He grew up with his mother,
she gave him the best upbringing,
he achieved more in one month
than other children in six.

(39) Hann vaks upp hjá síni móður,
miklan fekk hann alva,
styrknaði meiri í ein mánað
enn onnur børn í tólv.

He grew up with his mother,
he got such great strength,
he got stronger in one month
than other children in twelve.

(40) Hann vaks upp hjá síni móður,
lukkan honum góð,
hann vann meira í ein mánað
enn onnur børn í tólv.

He grew up with his mother,
his luck was good,
he achieved more in one month
than other children in twelve.

The ballads also employ refrains, and ballads on similar topics may employ the same refrain; for example, the *Sjúrðar kvæði* all have the same, well-known refrain:

33 Clausen, *Andlig vísuløg í Føroyum*, 51. Clausen writes that such counting rhymes were widespread in Europe and are therefore in Faroese oral tradition.

Grani bar gullið av heiði,	Grani carried the gold from the heath,
brá hann sínum brandi av reiði,	he brandished his blade in a fury,
Sjúrður vann av orminum,	Sjúrður defeated the dragon,
Grani bar gullið av heiði.	Grani carried the gold from the heath.

Since the ballads were transmitted in oral tradition, there are many variants of each ballad, which means there are different versions of what is recognisably the same ballad. This variation also occurs in the melodies and refrains, so while the refrain to the *Sjúrðar kvæði* will look the same, it is clear from Clausen's edition of melodies that there is minor variation within the refrain. Indeed, there are many variants of old refrains and some are impossible to make sense of, and some, unlike the obvious connection of the refrain of the *Sjúrðar kvæði* to the stories they tell, bear no relation to the content of the ballad.[34] The refrain is usually repeated between stanzas, however, there is a form called *tvíflættað* in which the lines of the refrain come in between the lines of the stanza.[35] The refrain is not important to the plot of the story, rather it continues the dance and gives the *skipari* breathing room—not only to catch his breath, but also to ready himself mentally for the next verse.[36]

The Medieval Origins of Faroese Ballads

It is scholarly consensus that the Faroese ballads have medieval, oral origins; 191 Faroese ballads have been identified in previous research as being of medieval origin.[37] J. H. Schrøter (1771–1851), a Faroese priest, sent P. E. Müller a list of ballads that were thought to be over one hundred years old, and it was published in Müller's introduction to Lyngbye's *Færøiske Qvæder*.[38] It has been assumed in scholarship that the productive period of Faroese ballads was in the thirteenth or fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, before entering a period of decline. This can be compared to, and is likely influenced by, the traditional view of Icelandic saga production, which supposedly went into decline around 1300 due to the loss of Icelandic independence, thus connecting the value of literary production to political devel-

34 See Dalsgaard, "Remarks on the Refrains"; Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 24.

35 Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 24; Matras, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, 18.

36 Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*, 47.

37 Jonsson, Solheim, and Danielson, *Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*, 318–19.

38 Lyngbye, *Færøiske Qvæder*, 15–20. For more on Schrøter, see Matras, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, 43–46; Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 68–73.

opments. The view of ballads entering a period of decline should thus be met with scepticism, since this view seems to be connected to the Faroe Islands losing independence to Norway and then Norway (and thus the Faroe Islands) uniting with Denmark at the dissolution of the Kalmar Union at the end of the fourteenth century, rather than any evidence from the ballad corpus itself. Indeed, since we have no records of Faroese ballads from the period in question, there is no evidence at all for a period of decline.[39] As discussed below, the tradition continues to the present day. The Faroese ballads of presumed medieval origin should be treated as the product of an oral culture that would not have come into being without oral transmission and, as such, they should be read as oral poems.

The ballad as an oral poem is in line with how a "medieval" ballad is defined in the introduction to *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* (TSB). This points to a lack of transcriptions from the actual Middle Ages and our reliance on typology and post-medieval sources that have been orally transmitted to compile what we consider to be medieval ballads, although there is a clear indication of change through time.[40] Medieval ballads have also been defined from a stylistic point of view by David Colbert, who lists, firstly, "a strophic, monodic melody and its verbal complement, a strophic text," secondly, "a traditional song… transmitted orally and characterized by variation," thirdly, "a folksong…without known author or authorized original version," fourth, "with narrative content related from an objective point of view," and fifth, "characterized by a limited range of stanzaic forms, and by a formulaic diction and narrative technique (the narrative formulas)."[41] These stylistic aspects also cause us to consider the medieval origins of the Faroese ballad texts, even though they were recorded in post-medieval times.[42]

The medieval origins of the *Sjúrðar kvæði* have recently been restated by Eyðun Andreassen, and those conclusions represent the scholarly consensus against an argument put forward by Peter Hvilshøj Andersen-Vinlandicus,

39 See, for example, Conroy, "Sniolvs Kvæði," 33. For a discussion of the "peak and decline" theory of Icelandic literature, see Glauser, "What Is Dated, and Why?"; Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 54–57.

40 Jonsson, Solheim, and Danielson, *Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*, 14; Opielka, "Færøerne og den færøske dans," 2–4.

41 Colbert, *The Birth of the Ballad*, 13–14.

42 Many Scandinavian ballads that are counted as medieval have been recorded in the post-medieval period. For the major national collections, see Grundtvig, *Danmarks gamle folkeviser*; Espeland et al., *Norske mellomalderballadar*, Jonsson et al., *Sveriges medeltida ballader*.

who states that the *Sjúrðar kvæði* are not medieval.[43] Due to their heroic content, longevity and interconnectedness with other material from the Germanic area, the medieval origins of the material they present seem clear, but it is true that the relative age of the medieval ballads is difficult to pin down.

Faroese Ballads in the Early Modern Period Onwards

Faroese ballads have suffered from the same discourse of decline from a late medieval peak that was once popular with reference to Old Icelandic sagas: after the period in which the Faroese ballads were produced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the ballad tradition went into decline in the early modern period before the ballads were collected in the eighteenth century.[44] However, it is likely that in the early modern period creativity in ballad composition (or recomposition) may simply have taken a different shape. The Faroese ballad tradition is complex and long and was a continuing, creative tradition rather than the victim of post-medieval decline.

Although the Faroese ballads were in oral rather than written tradition in the medieval and early modern periods, Danish print books of ballads were certainly in circulation in the early modern period and influenced the native ballad tradition.[45] There are, for example, signs in the corpus that print culture in the form of imported ballads may have impacted the form of the Faroese ballads. The heroic ballads composed in couplet form likely reflect the influence of the ballads contained in Anders Sørensen Vedel's *Hundredvisebogen* (1591) and Peder Syv's republishing of this work in 1695 (to which he had added one hundred more), which were widely performed on the Faroe Islands.[46] Conroy briefly touches on the difficulties in detecting younger ballads in what is generally termed the medieval corpus and notes that attempts to list features that help determine a relative chronology have been unsuccessful.[47] The role of these Danish ballad books in forming the later life of Faroese ballad tradition in the early modern period is, however, little understood, although it is clear that since some Danish ballads acquired

43 Andreassen, "Sjúrðar kvæði"; Andersen-Vindlandicus, "Origin and Age of Sjúrðar kvæði."

44 Conroy, "Sniolvs Kvæði," 33–34.

45 For the interplay between oral tradition and written ballads, see Jonsson, "Oral Literature, Written Literature."

46 Vedel, "It Hundrede vduaalde Danske Viser;" Vedel and Syv, *Et Hundrede udvalde Danske Viser*; Conroy, "Faroese Literature," 548.

47 Conroy, "Sniolvs Kvæði," 34.

Faroese melodies that they were important in the multimodal tradition, as demonstrated by Marianne Clausen; Clausen has also demonstrated that the Danish ballads formed an integral part of ballad life on the Faroes.[48]

The earliest collections of the ballads in the Faroe Islands were undertaken in the time of Peder Syv, since a small number of sample texts were sent to the Danish scholar Ole Worm in 1639 by the priest Hans Rasmusen.[49] Although these were lost in a fire in 1728, a copy taken by Peder Syv shows that they included "Koralds kvæði," "Torsteins kvæði," "Hermundur Illi," "Samsons kvæði," and "Berrings vísa."[50] In the eighteenth century, the popularity of the imported printed ballads may have encouraged original ballad compositions in the Faroes; there are several ballads from the eighteenth century with known poets (the later ballads deemed to be of post–medieval composition are numbered CCF 192–236).[51] These later ballads include, for example, poems that have been performed to the ring dance, those that have been composed based on historical sources, and satirical ballads about various Faroe Islanders, known as *tættir*, while in the early nineteenth century, satirical ballads tended to have political themes.[52]

We usually count many of the heroic Faroese ballads as being medieval, although they did not start to be written down until the eighteenth century by the Faroe Islander Jens Christian Svabo (1746–1824) in 1781 to 1782.[53] Svabo initiated a great period of ballad collecting on the Faroes. Two important figures in the nineteenth century were J. H. Schrøter (1771–1851), who collected on Suðuroy, and V. U. Hammershaimb, who collected primarily in

48 Clausen, *Vísuløg í Føroyum*; Clausen, *Hundredesyv-visebogen*.

49 Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 62; Solberg, "Balladen und Volksliedern im Norden," 113; Hammershaimb, *Færøsk anthologi*, vol. 1, p. li.

50 Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 62. For a transcription, see the appendix titled "The Oldest Preserved Record of Faroese Ballads" in Andersen-Vindlandicus, "Origin and Age of Sjúrðar kvæði," 128–33.

51 These known poets are listed in Chesnutt and Larsen, *History, Manuscripts, Indexes*, 169–70. The abbreviation CCF refers to edition *Føroya kvæði: Corpus Carminum Færoensium*, edited in a number of volumes published from 1941 onwards. If a number follows CCF, it refers to the number of the ballad in the edition. Note that in some publications, FK is used instead of CCF.

52 See Galvin, "The Many Faces of Satiric Ballads in the Faroe Islands"; Conroy, "Faroese Literature," 549.

53 For more on Svabo, see Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 42–49; Matras, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, 28–34; Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, vol. 1, pp. 150–64; Jacobsen, *Úr bókmentasögu okkara*, 10–20; Svabo, *Svabos færøske visehaandskrifter*, vol. 1, pp. v–lxxvii.

1847–1848.[54] Many ballad collections take the name of the island on which the texts were collected.[55] The largest of these collections is *Sandoyarbók* from 1821–1831, by Johannes Clementsen of Sandur, published in two volumes edited by Rikard Long.[56] Later collectors of importance include Jakob Jakobsen (1864–1918), who was collecting around 1900, Jóannes Patursson (1866–1946), who collected in between the wars and who published ballad books in 1922–1945 for the use of dancers, and Mortan Nolsøe (1924–1987), who was central in collecting Faroese ballad audio recordings in the twentieth century (active ca. 1960–1985), collecting approximately 336 ballads—more than any other individual.[57] The earliest ballad collectors wrote the ballads down phonetically since there was no standardized written Faroese language. The ballads were written down by collectors from singers known as informants, which in CCF are two-thirds men and one-third women.[58]

Faroese ballads existed for centuries in oral tradition before being written down. The late recording of Faroese oral literature should likely be seen in connection with the predominance of Danish in the official life of the Faroes. Danish was the language of the church, school, and authorities and until the nineteenth century, and no printed books in Faroese existed. Indeed, the oral ballad tradition was crucial in ensuring Faroese remained as a language in use.[59] It was usual that people were not able to write in Faroese, although, in the twentieth century, the use of Faroese gradually gained acceptance by the Danish authorities. In 1912, a law passed allowing

54 Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*, 19. For a full analysis of Hammershaimb's work, see Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, vol. 1, pp. 284–97.

55 For example, Sandoyarbók, Fugloyarbók, and Koltursbók. See Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 64–66.

56 Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 19; í Króki, *Sandoyarbók*, 1968; í Króki, *Sandoyarbók*, 1982. See also Conroy, "'Sandoyarbók'." The name of Johannes Clementsen is rendered in several different ways. The first name is variously spelled as Jóannes, Jóhannes and Johannes, and the surname is Clementsen or Clemensen, or he is known as í Króki.

57 Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 19; Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 41. For a full analysis of Jakob Jakobsen's work, see Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, vol. 1, pp. 391–412. In 1925, Patursson published what is known as *Gyltabók* ("The Golden Book") due to the colour of its covers. See Patursson, *Föroysk Kvæði*. He also published the five-volume book of ballads, *Kvæðabók I–V*. For a full analysis of Jóannes Patursson's work, see Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, vol. 1, pp. 352–91, esp. 383–84.

58 Marnersdóttir, "Women and Ballads," 35. For a list of informants in CCF, see Larsen, "Index of Informants."

59 Hammershaimb, "Færøisk sproglære," 235.

Faroese as a written language to be taught in schools, and while the Bible in Faroese was first published in 1949, there was a hymnbook authorized in 1956 (published 1960), followed by an authorized version of the Bible in 1961.[60] Written Faroese is young.[61]

The ballads were not published until 1822, when H. C. Lyngbye published *Færøiske Qvæder om Sigurd Fofnersbane og hans Æt*, which was also the first book in Faroese.[62] Although Lyngbye also collected ballads, this book is partly published on the basis of Schrøter's collecting, and the manuscript it is based on was published in a critical edition by Matras in 1951.[63] Next came Hammershaimb's two volume *Færöiske Kvæðer* (1851–1855). The first of these volumes is devoted to a Faroese edition of the ballads about Sjúrður, the same ballads translated in this book.[64] Hammershaimb was in contact with the Dane Svend Grundtvig, who was at the time preparing *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*—the published Danish ballad corpus—and Grundtvig encouraged Hammershaimb to collect more Faroese ballads.[65] Grundtvig then later cooperated with Jørgen Bloch (his brother-in-law) and compiled all the Faroese folk ballads into the large manuscript *Føroya kvæði* (Corpus Carminum Færoensium), which by 1905 ended up as sixteen volumes and two supplements.[66] This collection was printed as six volumes of ballads text from 1941–1972, while volume seven, *History, Manuscripts, Indexes*, was published in 1996 by Chesnutt and Larsen, and volume eight in 2003 by Marianne Clausen, containing the melodies for the whole collection.[67] There are 236 ballads in the six volumes of *Føroya kvæði* and an additional

60 Clausen, *Andlig vísuløg í Føroyum*, 29.

61 For a full analysis of the development of Faroese as a literary language, Faroese literature, and its social and political context, see Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*.

62 Lyngbye, *Færøiske Qvæder*. See Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, vol. 1, pp. 238–39.

63 Matras, *J. H. Schrøters optegnelser*.

64 Hammershaimb, *Sjúrðar Kvæði*; Hammershaimb, *Færöiske kvæder*.

65 Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 19.

66 Note that Bloch finished this by himself as Grundtvig died in 1883. They produced fifteen volumes together between 1872–1876, and then Bloch prepared volume sixteen and the supplements between 1885–1905. Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*, 19. See also Jacobsen, *Úr bókmentasögu okkara*, 50–56. For the importance of Bloch's work, see Kjær, "Jørgen Bloch."

67 Grundtvig and Bloch, *Føroya kvæði*; Chesnutt and Larsen, *History, Manuscripts, Indexes*; Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*.

twenty-six in Clausen's 2003 volume of melodies.[68] However, there are far more ballads present in the Faroese tradition than that, since the tradition also includes ballads in foreign languages, especially Danish.[69] It is also important to note that printed editions of the ballads (especially the early ones) were not widely owned, and therefore, even though printed ballads existed, they were still learnt and transmitted through oral tradition.[70]

Faroese Ballads Today

There is regular discussion about the ballads as cultural heritage on the Faroe Islands today, but all generations have looked back to the good old days. In the afterword to Sandoyarbók (Copenhagen, Dansk Folkemindesamling, DFS 68), written in 1831, one reason Jóannes í Króki gives for collecting is that "the ballads have nearly gone out of use nowadays and the young people prefer new songs. I wanted coming generations of young people to know what their predecessors had in the way of entertainment at their Christmas dancing."[71] However, in 1854, V. U. Hammershaimb wrote that the ballads were still being composed by Faroese farmers, in "clean" language.[72] Although Jóannes did us a great service in collecting the ballads that form the manuscript Sandoyarbók, he need not have worried, since today, the ballad tradition is still living. Brynhild Kamban writes that "kvæði eru sungnar søgur og gott undirhald, og kvøðing og dansur eru framvegis ein livandi partur av føroyskari mentan" (The ballads are sung stories and good entertainment, and chanting ballads and dancing is still a living part of Faroese culture).[73] The importance of the ballad tradition to contemporary Faroese society has been analysed in detail most recently by Annika Christensen. Her thesis argues that "if the ballads are to continue to be a dynamic part of Faroese lived experience, it is crucial that a continuous engagement with

68 Further ballads were collected in the twentieth century (not in CCF but listed as EYL in Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*, 502–97). Versions of ballads have been recorded right into the twenty-first century. A version of *Vermunds kvæði* was recorded in 2001. See Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*, 584.

69 For the Danish ballad tradition on the Faroes, see Clausen, *Hundredesyvvisebogen*; Clausen, *Vísuløg í Føroyum*.

70 Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 45.

71 Chesnutt and Larsen, "Descriptive and Analytical Catalogue," 89.

72 Hammershaimb, "Færøisk sproglære," 235. We should probably understand "clean" as meaning grammatically correct or good.

73 Kamban, *Kenn mær einki um*, 13. Translation the author's.

the ballads has to be supported by different means. This includes funding, research, and allowing the ballads to be repurposed and reimagined in Faroese culture." She also points out that ballads are seen as "an important contributing factor to the ways Faroese people socialise, celebrate and understand themselves."[74]

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, ballad performances take place in dancing halls organized by dancing associations; they are read and performed in schools and also more generally at other celebrations such as Christmas, New Year, Ólavsøka (the Wake of St. Olav, the Faroese national day), weddings, and other occasions.[75] Ballads, including the tradition, the singing, and the dancing, are a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary schools. The dancing associations also organize separate events for children to learn ballads and dance.[76] The first dancing society was formed in the 1950s, and all associations are a member of the central organization Slái Ring (established 1978), which distributes government funding and is a central organizing point.[77] Christensen pinpoints the importance of the dancing societies as "communal structures that facilitate the ballads as intangible heritage to survive, and potentially, to flourish."[78]

In addition to transmission and preservation of the lived ballad tradition in dancing societies and schools, Christensen has also looked at the importance of other cultural safeguards, such as media transmission and political decisions, for both disseminating and transmitting ballad culture. The Faroese government funds dancing societies, and Christensen points out the importance of the Faroese support for the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2018.[79] Previously, Faroese radio (Útvarp Føroya, started broadcasting in 1957) was an essential platform for disseminating ballads, providing an alternative to dancing societies for people to hear and learn ballads.[80] Ballads continue to be part of the programming for Kringvarp Føroya (the current Faroese radio and TV network). There is the weekly programme Dansival, which combines "bal-

74 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 1, 7.

75 Kamban, *Kenn mær einki um*, 13; Nolsøe, "Faroese Balladry," 27; Clausen, "Melodies to Faroese Kvæði," 73–74.

76 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 62–69, 95–96.

77 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 69, 88–89.

78 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 89.

79 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 5, 59–62, 69.

80 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 37–38.

lad performances and discussions with weekly guests who relate specific ballads or performances that carry a special meaning for them."[81] Christensen's conclusions in her study of the importance of ballads to contemporary Faroese culture are that ballads are a dynamic part of heritage and, as such, allowing traditions to include young people and continue to evolve is crucial.[82] In summary, it is important to appreciate that there has been no break in the Faroese ballad tradition and the ballads are not simply a static phenomenon or set of texts for scholars to analyse. Rather, they are, most importantly, a living tradition on the Faroe Islands.

The Legend of Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer

The legend about Sjúrður finds its best-known form in the Icelandic *Vǫlsunga saga*.[83] It concerns the story of Sigmundr (the father of Sigurðr) being killed, Sigurðr growing up, slaying the dragon Fáfnir, his meeting and engagement to Brynhildr, his marriage to Guðrún, Brynhildr's subsequent revenge for this, and his death at the hands of Guðrún's brothers. When she learns of Sigurðr's death, Brynhildr kills herself. Guðrún is married to King Atli, who invites her brothers to his court and kills them. Guðrún kills her two sons with Atli and feeds them to him, and she and one of her brother's sons kill Atli while he is asleep, and she sets his hall on fire. Guðrún marries King Jonakr and has three more sons, and Guðrún and Sigurðr´s daughter, Svanhildr, is raised with them. King Jormunrek wants to marry Svanhildr but ultimately has her trampled to death. Two of Guðrún's sons kill their brother and then Jormunrek in revenge for Svanhildr's death, but they are stoned to death by his retainers.

The Völsung legend was recorded in different media in different areas, such as on picture stones in Sweden, carved stave-church doors in Norway, in poems and sagas in Iceland, epic poems in Germany, and ballads on the Faroe Islands.[84] The different reflexes of the legend are known collectively

81 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 38. For the Dansival website, see Kringvarp Føroya, "Dansival."

82 Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 70–100.

83 Finch, *Vǫlsunga Saga*.

84 A full comparison with the regional versions of the Völsung/Nibelung legend is outside the scope of this study. For these variants of the Völsung legend, except the ballads, see, for example: Margeson, "Vǫlsung Legend in Medieval Art"; Blindheim, *Sigurds Saga i middelalderens billedkunst*; Ney, *Bland ormar och drakar*; McKinnell, "The Sigmundr/Sigurðr Story."

in the Norse world as the Völsung legend (from an Icelandic perspective) or the Nibelung legend (from a German perspective).[85] The focus of this volume is on the Faroese ballads connected to the Völsung legend. The most famous Völsung Faroese ballads, the *Sjúrðar kvæði* (composed of the three ballads *Regin smiður*, *Brynhildar táttur*, and *Høgna táttur*) provide us with unparalleled and undervalued material about Sjúrður, Brynhild, and the events and people associated with them. The content of these ballads is connected to, and the material probably to some degree drawn from, Old Icelandic saga material (oral or written) as well as material from further south in Germany (represented in text form in, e.g., the *Nibelungenlied*) and from ballads from the Scandinavian countries. There are also additional Faroese ballads concerning the Völsungs that will be translated here, and they also have analogues in Nordic balladry from the Scandinavian mainland.[86]

The *Sjúrðar kvæði* is composed of three ballads: *Regin the Smith* (*Regin smiður*), *The Ballad of Brynhild* (*Brynhildar táttur*), and *The Ballad of Høgni* (*Høgna táttur*). These three ballads follow one another in manuscripts as a set and are sometimes joined by a fourth, *The Second Ballad of Høgni* (*Annar Høgna táttur*), also known as *The Ballad of Aldrias* (*Aldrias táttur*). The corpus of Faroese ballads about Sjúrður is completed by *The Ballad of Gestur* (*Gests ríma*)—also known as *The Ballad of Ásla* (*Áslu ríma*); *The Ballad of Nornagestur* (*Nornagests ríma*); *Ísmal the Brave Hero* (*Ísmal fræga kempa*); *Sjúrður and the Dwarf Maiden* (*Sjúrður og Dvørgamoy*)—also known as *Dwarf Maiden I* (*Dvørgamoy I*); *The Beautiful Dwarf Maiden* (*Dvørgamoyggin fagra*)—also known as *Dwarf Maiden II* (*Dvørgamoy II*); *Ása the Dwarf Maiden* (*Ása Dvørgamoy*)—also known as *Dwarf Maiden III* (*Dvørgamoy III*); *The Ballad of Kvørfinn* (*Kvørfins táttur*)—also known as *Dwarf Maiden V* (*Dvørgamoy V*); *The Giant of Hólmgarðar* (*Risin úr Hólmgørðum*)—also known as *The Mound Ghost* (*Dysjadólgur*); and finally *The Giant of Leittraberg* (*Risin av Leittrabergi*).[87]

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85 The former is chosen here, since the Faroes were part of the Norse world.

86 The Nordic ballads *Sivard Snarensvend* (Dan., DgF 2), *Sivard og Brynhild* (Dan., DgF 3), *Frændhævn* (Dan., DgF 4), *Grimhilds Hævn* (Dan., DgF 5), *Kong Diderik og hans kæmper* (DgF 7), *King Diderik og Løven* (Dan., DgF 9), *Sigurð svein* (Norw., NF 9), *Sivert Snarensvend* (Swed., SMB 204), *Regnfred og Kragelil* (Dan., DgF 22), *Karl og Kragelil* (Dan., DgF 23), *Ormekampen* (Dan., DgF 24), and *Lindarormen* (Norw., Utsyn 27) intersect with the same material.

87 The ballad titled *Dwarf Maiden IV* (*Dvørgamoy IV*) in Grundtvig and Bloch, *Føroya kvæði*, vol. 1, pp. 295–96, is not included in this volume of translations because it is a variant (labelled as variant D) of the preceding ballad, *Ása the Dwarf Maiden* (*Ása Dvørgamoy*), also known as *Dwarf Maiden III* (*Dvørgamoy III*). It is noted in

Manuscripts of the Ballads

The ballads printed in CCF are edited from manuscripts in which the ballads were recorded from oral tradition from various informants. Each ballad has a number of variants. Ballad variants can be thought of as different versions of the same ballad. Each ballad variant may have different numbers of stanzas, certain details added or missing in comparison to other variants, and different language used in the narration. When the same stanzas appear in certain sections of the variants, they are often in a slightly different order. All these features are typical of texts originating in oral tradition.

Each variant of a ballad is given a letter in CCF. The ballads making up the *Sjúrðar kvæði* (*Regin smiður*, *Brynhildar táttur*, *Høgna táttur*, and often *Aldrias táttur / Annar Høgna táttur*) appear together in manuscripts and so are edited together in groups and assigned the same letters. The variants of the *Sjúrðar kvæði* are labelled A–H. Variant A, for example, comes from the manuscript NKS 345 8vo (Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek), while B comes from Sandoyarbók (Copenhagen, Dansk Folkemindesamling, DFS 68), and D from Fugloyarbók (Copenhagen, Den Arnamagnænske Samling, AM Acc. 4 a). Sometimes the variants have subsidiary letters. Aa is the text from NKS 345 8vo, while Ab (not actually printed in CCF for the *Sjúrðar kvæði*) is Lyngbye's published edition of the ballads from 1822.[88] The information about the variants for each ballad and where they are sourced from is given in the content pages to CCF. In this book, we have translated the A variant of each ballad, because that variant is the oldest. This is not to say we perceive the oldest variant as most valuable or somehow as most authentic or best; we simply had to make a selection, and this seemed a sensible way to do it.

There are four sources of the A variants of the ballads translated in this book:

1. NKS 345 8vo: *Regin smiður*, *Brynhildar táttur*, *Høgna táttur*, *Annar Høgna táttur*, *Gests ríma*, *Nornagests ríma*, *Kvørfinns táttur*, *Risin av Leittrabergi*
2. GKS 2894 I (Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek): *Risin í Hólmgørðum*
3. Lyngbye's *Færøiske Qvæder*: *Ísmal fræga kempa*
4. Sandoyarbók: *Sjúrður og Dvørgamoy*, *Dvørgamoyggin fagra*, *Ása Dvørgamoy*

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the edition that it is a side piece or parallel (*sidestykke*) to Ása the Dwarf Maiden recorded on Suðuroy; Grundtvig and Bloch, *Føroya kvæði*, vol. 1, p. 295n1.

88 Lyngbye, *Færøiske Qvæder*.

Ballad	No. of stanzas in A variant	Manuscript	Pp. in CCF vol. 1 (A variant)[89]
Regin smiður	142	NKS 345 8vo	1–8
Brynhildar táttur	271	NKS 345 8vo	8–22
Høgna táttur	177	NKS 345 8vo	22–31
Annar Høgna táttur	123	NKS 345 8vo	31–40
Gests ríma	37	NKS 345 8vo	244–45
Nornagests ríma	34	NKS 345 8vo	248–49
Ísmal fræga kempa	61	Lyngbye's *Færøiske Qvæder*	254–57
Sjúrður og Dvørgamoy	65	Sandoyarbók	263–66
Dvørgamoyggin fagra	60	Sandoyarbók	273–76
Ása Dvørgamoy	67	Sandoyarbók	283–86
Kvørfinns táttur	93	NKS 345 8vo	297–301
Risin í Hólmgørðum	40	GKS 2894 I	311–13
Risin av Leittrabergi	107	NKS 345 8vo	326–31

In each case, for the Faroese text we have used the version printed in CCF, rather than an individual edition of the manuscript or printed book.

NKS 345 8vo and Lyngbye's *Færøiske Qvæder*

NKS 345 8vo is a manuscript written by Johan Henrik Schrøter in 1818 and contains the oldest known versions of many of the ballads to do with Sjúrður.[90] It was sent to H. C. Lyngbye in 1819 and used in the preparation of his *Færøiske Qvæder* (1822). Lyngbye himself has written this information on the title page and provided a list of contents. Schrøter collected the ballads for Lyngbye, who himself had been to the Faroe Islands in 1817 and recorded some ballads from the informant Joen Jacobsen. The ballads Lyngbye had were an incomplete version of the *Sjúrðar kvæði*, which had been identified as such by P. E. Müller. Müller had written to Schrøter about the incomplete ballads. In 1818, Lyngbye sent his incomplete recording to Schrøter and asked him to fill in what was lacking. Schrøter sent variants and

89 All the ballads translated in this book are to be found in CCF, vol. 1: Grundtvig and Bloch, *Føroya kvæði*.

90 The collection is the second oldest Faroese ballad manuscript, the oldest being from Svabo in the eighteenth century, published as Svabo, *Svabos færøske visehaandskrifter*; Matras, *J. H. Schrøters optegnelser*, ix.

an abstract of what was missing to Lyngbye already in 1818, with a promise to send what was missing. His recording of what was missing is now known as the manuscript NKS 345 8vo. Lyngbye's own recording and Schrøter's abstract and variants are lost.[91] The original orthography of the manuscript was published and the language analysed by Christian Matras in 1951.[92]

GKS 2894 I

This manuscript is a fair copy from around 1783 of Jens Chr. Svabo's ballad collection performed in 1781–1782. There are three volumes; the one ballad translated in this book, *Risin í Hólmgørðum*, is from volume one. There are 52 items in the collection, and it was purchased by the crown prince of Denmark, who later went on to become King Frederik VI (r. 1808–1839).[93] The manuscript was published by Christian Matras, who also published the accompanying word list.[94]

Sandoyarbók (DFS 68)

The manuscript is written by Jóannes í Króki (Johannes Clementsen) in 1821–1831, and the ninety ballads are either recorded or, less frequently, copied by him from other texts. Í Króki provides an index that details the date recorded or copied and the name and place of the informants or collector. He also wrote an afterword describing the reasons for his collecting.[95] The manuscript has been published by Rikard Long.[96]

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91 For details of this story and a manuscript description, see Chesnutt and Larsen, "Descriptive and Analytical Catalogue," 104–8.

92 Matras, *J. H. Schrøters optegnelser*.

93 For details of this story and a manuscript description, see Chesnutt and Larsen, "Descriptive and Analytical Catalogue," 95–98.

94 Svabo, *Svabos færøske visehaandskrifter*; Svabo, *Svabos glossar*. See also Benati, "Jens Christian Svabo's Glossary."

95 For details of this story, a translation of the afterword, and Jóannes' autobiographical description of the collecting, see Chesnutt and Larsen, "Descriptive and Analytical Catalogue," 88–92. Regarding í Króki's (Clementsen's) name, there are several variations in spellings across different sources, where he is referred to as "Klemenson" or "Clemensen" in various scholarly literature; cf. n. 56 for more versions of his name.

96 í Króki, *Sandoyarbók*.

Scholarly Work on the Ballads

The Faroese ballads began to be collected in the eighteenth century by Jens Chr. Svabo, although they were not published at this time. Due to continued work in the nineteenth century by Hammershaimb—a Lutheran minister who established the modern orthography of Faroese—the philologist Jørgen Bloch, and the Danish literary historian and ethnographer Svend Gruntvig (amongst others), the *Føroya kvæði* (CCF), the eight-volume standard edition of the ballads (including registers and melodies), was finally published in print between 1941 and 2003. The eighth volume from 2003 also contains the melodies for the CCF ballads and further ballads that were collected in the twentieth century and labelled EYL rather than CCF.[97] The Faroese ballads are also catalogued in TSB, where they are assigned a tale-type.[98] The CCF and TSB are an important starting point for anybody beginning in Faroese ballad research. CCF vol. 7 provides a catalogue of some of the manuscripts the ballads are recorded in (however not all ballad manuscripts are listed) and registers of first lines, refrains, and medieval ballad types in the Faroese corpus and their analogues, informants, ballad collectors, scribes and owners of manuscripts, known poets, and proper names while TSB offers descriptions of the tale types found in the ballads and a list of the medieval Faroese ballads.[99]

In TSB, six types of ballad emerge: A. ballads of the supernatural; B. legendary ballads; C. historical ballads; D. ballads of chivalry; E. heroic ballads; and F. jocular ballads.[100] Medieval Faroese ballads have been studied almost exclusively by reference to category E, the heroic ballads, which make up half the medieval corpus and number approximately 100.[101] Nevertheless, there are around 90 more ballads from the other categories of ballads that are rarely referenced in the scholarly discourse.

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97 Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*, 502–97.

98 Jonsson, Solheim, and Danielson, *Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*.

99 Chesnutt and Larsen, *History, Manuscripts, Indexes*; Jonsson, Solheim, and Danielson, *Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*.

100 For a discussion of these ballad categories, see Christensen, "'Kvæði í føroyskari samtíð,'" 16–19. For other divisions of ballads into types, see Dahl, *Bókmentasøga I*, 26–27; Matras, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, 19–22.

101 Isaksen, "Kvadene," 22; Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, vol. 1, p. 70.

Translations and editions of individual ballads are thin on the ground.[102] Svabo's recordings were published, and the manuscript collection of ballads DFS 68 (Copenhagen, Dansk Folkemindesamling), known as *Sandoyarbók*, compiled by Jóannes í Króki (i.e., Johannes Clementsen), has been edited and published, and a further compilation by Jóannes í Króki known as *Hentzasavn* has also been edited.[103] The ballads about Sigurðr were collected and translated into Danish by Lyngbye in the early nineteenth century and into English by Smith-Dampier in the early twentieth century, into German in the 1980s, and into Spanish in 2008.[104] There is a lack of modern and comprehensive translations of the ballads, particularly into English (baring the one collected translation of the *Sjúrðar kvæði* into old-fashioned English by Smith-Dampier from 1934), and a lack of introductory and analytical material in ballad scholarship that touches on Faroese material.[105]

From the point of view of Old Norse philology and medieval studies more widely, the Völsung ballads of the Faroe Islands—in particular the *Sjúrðar kvæði*—are an important and undervalued source.[106] That medieval Northern Europe had a thriving and well-developed literary culture is well-known, but research on the different geographical areas has been uneven. Even though these ballads transmit the familiar story of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer, they are seldom mentioned in connection with analyses of the Völsung and Nibelung legends, even when the Icelandic and German textual material and the Norwegian and Swedish visual material are well-trodden patches in medieval studies. The Faroe Islands have a large literary corpus, but the literary tradition of the medieval Faroe Islands is still obscure, and

102 For coverage of translations up to the middle of the 1980s, see Syndergaard, *English Translations of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballads*.

103 Svabo, *Svabos færøske visehaandskrifter*; í Króki, *Sandoyarbók*; Weyhe, *Hentzasavn*.

104 Lyngbye, *Færøiske Qvæder*; Smith-Dampier, *Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer*; González Campo, *Baladas épicas feroesas*. The *Sjúrðar kvæði* in Sandoyarbók were edited with a German glossary by Lockwood, *Die Färöischen Sigurdlieder.* There is also a three-volume edition and translation into German of all three *Sjúrðar kvæði* by Fuss, *Die Faröischen Lieder Der Nibelungensage*.

105 See e.g., Solberg, "Balladen und Volksliedern im Norden," 113–16.

106 It should be mentioned that this retrospective view of the Faroese ballads does not account for the full importance of the ballad tradition in contemporary Faroese society. The ballads were an important aspect of Faroese nation building, as reflected in the work of Simonsen, "Literature, Imagining and Memory," and continue to play an important role in Faroese culture today, as explored in the work of Árnadóttir, "Chain Dancing."

the Faroe Islands are largely absent from the literary history of the Nordic countries. This is despite the Faroe Islands having strong ties culturally, politically, and geographically to all of northern Europe; it thus was likely an important arena for cultural exchange and dissemination.

Previous scholarship has engaged with the Faroese ballads (especially heroic ballads) as derivative of Old Icelandic or mainland Scandinavian literature.[107] The similarity in content has been noted briefly in comparison with other Norse tales.[108] Studies also discuss the oral-formulaic nature of the ballads (the most thorough study is still de Boor from 1918), and more recently Hansen treats repeated motifs in selected Faroese ballads.[109] In his reconstruction of the earliest stages of the Brynhildr legend, Andersson mentions *Brynhildar táttr* only in passing and the ballad is not mentioned in the stemma that anticipates his conclusions.[110] In terms of gender studies, Agneta Ney has written the most important recent monograph on Sigurðr Fáfnisbani from the perspective of the manly ideal in Old Norse literature, and she provides a thorough treatment of the visual material but does not treat the Faroese ballads.[111] Malan Marnersdóttir has written about women and the ballad tradition, while Brynhild Kamban has published her MA thesis on gender and the narratology of the *Sjúrðar kvæði* as a short book.[112] Scholars also situate the ballads in terms of their modern cultural context and their role in nineteenth-century nation-building, although a major recent anthology on the subject includes Norway, Sweden, Iceland, the UK, Germany, and Denmark but not the Faroe Islands.[113] Several ballads and cycles have been treated on an individual basis, for example in the work of Patricia

107 Nolsøe, "Development of the Faroese Heroic Ballad"; Nolsøe, "Forholdet mellom ballade och sagaforelegg"; Nolsøe, "The Faroese Balladry"; Nolsøe, "The Faroese Heroic Ballad"; Nolsøe, "The Heroic Ballad in Faroese Tradition"; Skårup, "De færøske viser om Karl den Store"; Conroy, "Faroese Literature," 548–49; De Vries, *Færøsche balladen*.

108 See recently: Novotná, "Role of the Body"; Korecká, "Óðin Stoyttist í Jørðina Niður"; Árnadóttir, "Den flyvende bejler"; Isaksen, "Kvadene," 24–26; Marnersdóttir and Sigurðardóttir, *Føroysk bókmentasøga*, vol. 1, p. 66.

109 de Boor, *Die Färöischen Lieder*. See also O'Neil, "Oral-Formulaic Structure"; Hansen, *Endurreisn kvæðanna*, 37–54.

110 Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild*, 23.

111 Ney, *Bland ormar och drakar*.

112 Marnersdóttir, "Women and Ballads"; Kamban, *Kenn mær einki um*.

113 Simonsen, "Literature, Imagining and Memory," 194–222; Lassen, *Det norrøne og det nationale*.

Conroy.[114] In summary, there is still a large scope for further research on the Faroese ballad corpus, and it is the hope that this book will contribute to raising interest in Faroese ballads amongst students and scholars of Nordic literature, including medievalists.

About the Translations in this Book

W. P. Ker writes that "to bring out, in English, anything like the value of the Danish ballads would require the finest poetical skill," and this sentiment can also be applied to Faroese ballads.[115] We have not tried to produce translations with immense literary value in their own right; the intention behind the translation presented here is not to mirror the beauty of the Faroese but rather to aid in understanding it. Therefore, we hope that the reader will approach this book of ballad translations with the idea that reading and making sense of the Faroese should be the primary aim, with the English version as a helpful aid.

The translations offered in this book are prose and are a line-by-line rather than a stanza-by-stanza translation, except on the rare occasions when it simply made no sense in English to retain a literal translation of a line. The aim of this approach is to facilitate easy comparison with the Faroese version of the text and to provide a basis for further study. For this reason, the translations are more literal than poetic. Larry Syndergaard, who has studied English translations of the Scandinavian medieval ballads closely, defines a literal translation as following "the original very closely, with such changes as needed to make the translation idiomatic," and a close translation as following "the original quite closely, with minor substantive changes, very limited structural changes, and limited 'enhancement' or intensification."[116] Our translation strategy likely lands between these; we have added the occasional pronoun or left out the occasional particle in the Faroese that seemed to be purely for metrical purposes rather than meaning. Grammatical tenses can change mid-stanza in the ballads, and here we have chosen to follow the Faroese and change the tense in the English translation. No changes to the stanza order have been made, nor have any changes to the substance of the narrative.

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114 For example, Conroy, "Sniolvs Kvæði"; Conroy, "'Hernilds Kvæði.'" See also Kleiner and Piotrovsky, "From Epic to Ballad: The Faroese 'Sjúrður Cycle'."

115 Cited in Syndergaard, *English Translations of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballads*, 39.

116 Syndergaard, *English Translations of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballads*, 31.

Very occasionally the order of two lines has been switched in the translation to preserve the sense in English, and this has been indicated in the footnotes. Explication of the narrative has not been added to the stanzas but is instead contained in the footnotes. Sometimes the Faroese makes little sense or is at best difficult to interpret, and these difficulties have also been indicated in the footnotes. The footnotes are intended to orientate the reader in the action of the narrative, to aid with difficult words and readings, and, occasionally, to justify translation choices. The vocabulary used in the ballads contains a number of poetic words (*heiti*) not used in ordinary discourse. These have been marked in the footnotes and translated with the ordinary word in the translation. Kennings found in the ballads have also been explained in the footnotes. We have used the Faroese names exactly as they appear in the ballads in CCF, although in the nominative case in the English. The names are often inconsistent in form, also often within the same ballad (or between the title and the ballad text, for example "Høgni" in the title and "Høgnar" in the text).

Sometimes refrains are not recorded in CCF with the ballad, and if that is the case in the edition, no refrain has been given in the translation. In the cases of those missing refrains, it is possible to consult Clausen's volume of melodies, which gives refrains for the ballad versions she records.[117] It should be noted that different refrains can be used with the same ballad.

117 Clausen, *Løgini / Melodies*.