Animal-Human Relations on the Household-Farm in Viking Age and Medieval Iceland

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Abstract

Studies of animal-human relations in the Old Norse world have often focussed on symbolic or economic relations with animals. In contrast, this thesis investigates relationships between domestic animals, humans, and the household-farm as expressed in laws, sagas, and material culture from Iceland. It demonstrates the complexity of animal-human relations in forming and sustaining the household-farm, and in shaping the admiration and anxieties expressed towards animals and animal-human relationships in narratives about the creation and operation of these home-places.

Chapter 1 analyses narratives constructed around the settlement of Iceland, examining *Landnámabók* and stories about settlement in the *Íslendingasögur*, as well as modern archaeological interpretations of the Aðalstræti house. It argues that medieval Icelanders presented settlement as a tripartite exchange between humans, domestic animals, and the land; a representation at odds with recent archaeological interpretations.

Chapter 2 reconstructs the legal regulation of animal-human relations in *Grágás*. It demonstrates that these laws encourage a demarcated legal landscape, in which domestic animals were to be controlled, protected, and punished; though these animals were not a homogenous category, and different animals had different status under the law and required differential treatment.

Chapter 3 trials an experimental method to depict the areas of the farm, and to map how associations between animal and human spaces changed over time. It argues that relations between animals and humans shaped, and were shaped by the spatial organisation of the household-farm, and that such interactions constituted the past communities with which the *Íslendingasögur* sought to engage.

Chapter 4 examines the concept of home in medieval Iceland, and the close relationship between the home, humans, and domestic animals in the *Íslendingasögur*. It argues that these sagas emphasise commonalities between certain men and domestic animals, and portray these animals simultaneously as animals, and actors in human social networks.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other University. All sources are acknowledged in the Bibliography.

Conventions

Throughout this work the special character ǫ is used. Old Norse names have been kept in their nominative Old Norse forms, and nicknames or epithets have been retained, although they are translated on their first appearance in the text. The Old Norse quoted is reproduced in the form found in the published editions used, although when discussing individual words from an unstandardised text I have standardised the spelling to enable the reader to identify the word in a dictionary. In the Bibliography, Icelandic authors are listed in alphabetical order by their patronym or matronym in contrast to the Icelandic academic tradition of indexing by first name.

All translations in this thesis are my own, unless otherwise stated. An effort has been made to adhere closely to the vocabulary and idiom of the Old Norse in my translations. The purpose of this is to consider the semantic and conceptual frameworks involved in the descriptions of animals and animal-human interactions. Less literal translations may conceal differences in the Old Norse expressions, and de-Icelandicise idioms and concepts. For example, in translations of *naut* and *fé*, which can both be translated as "cattle," it may be important to distinguish between connotations of use and usefulness in the former, and wealth and property in the latter. In a few cases, however, I have had to make concessions to readability.

This thesis also follows the Scandinavian chronological tradition, in keeping with many of the secondary sources that have been consulted and cited in this work:

Late Iron Age:	Migration Period (AD 400-575) Vendel Period (AD 575-750) Viking Age (AD 750-1050)
Medieval period: (ending with the Danish Reformation)	Early (AD 1050-1200) High (AD 1200-1400) Late (AD 1400-1536)

Regarding the specific chronology of Iceland, Settlement Period or *Landnámsöld* (c. AD 870-930) and Commonwealth Period (c. AD 930-1262/64) are also used.

Key terms

household-farm

a) The physical space in which the household existed and operated, including the main longhouse building, outbuildings, byres, barns and haystacks, the homefield, and pastures.

b) The ideological conceptualisation of this physical space; the cultural sphere in which farm work is processed and members of the household interact with each other.

homefield, *tún, túngarðr*

a) An enclosed space in which the prime hay was grown and collected, close to the main farmhouse, and bounded by a wall (*garðr*) that may also enclose the farm buildings.

b) *Tún(garðr)* is also used to indicate the central area of the farm, whether a hayfield is explicitly indicated or not.

Introduction

In *Hrafnkels saga*, Hrafnkell's prize horse, Freyfaxi, stands outside the door of the farmhouse and neighs loudly to get Hrafnkell's attention:

> Ok er hestrinn kemr fyrir dyrr, hneggjaði hann þá hátt. Hrafnkell mælti við eina konu, þá sem þjónaði fyrir borðinu, at hon skyldi fara til duranna, því at hross hneggjaði, – „ok þótti mér líkt vera gnegg Freyfaxa" (Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 104).
>
> And when the horse comes in front of the door, then he neighed loudly. Hrafnkell said to a woman, who served him at the table, that she should go to the door, because a horse neighed, – "and it seemed to me likely to be the neighing of Freyfaxi."

Hrafnkell's response to Freyfaxi's arrival is muted. He does not rush to the door himself to see what Freyfaxi wants, but sends out a servant woman. While this incident is often highlighted as remarkable, the wording of the episode suggests that Hrafnkell is used to such visits. Indeed, Freyfaxi's knowledge of the route to and from the farm is only plausible to the reader or listener of the saga if this is a journey made many times before (Budiansky, 1997, p. 169). Hrafnkell's initial casual response, and his immediate recognition of the neigh, suggests to the listener or reader that this occasion was a common one. When Hrafnkell eventually ventures out to see Freyfaxi, convinced by the servant's description of Freyfaxi's poor appearance that something is out of the ordinary, he calls Freyfaxi a *garpr* (bold one, rascal) and his *fóstri* (foster-kin):

> „Illa þykki mér, at þú ert þann veg til gǫrr, fóstri minn, en heima hafðir þú vit þitt, er þú sagðir mér til, ok skal þessa hefnt verða. Far þú til liðs þíns." En hann gekk þegar upp eptir dalnum til stóðs sins (Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 104).

> "Bad it seems to me, that you have been treated in this way, my foster-kin; but you had your reason at home, when you told this to me, and this shall be avenged. Go you to your followers." And he went at once up into the valley to his stud-mares.

Hrafnkell has made a vow to kill anyone who rides this horse without permission, and when he realises his shepherd Einarr has done so, he kills him. As a result, Hrafnkell loses his farm and Freyfaxi loses his life.

Re-reading this episode was the genesis moment for this research. The mixture of concern, familiarity, and kinship expressed by Hrafnkell towards Freyfaxi in this episode, and the placing of the communicative encounter at the very point of contact between the human home and the outer animal-spaces, prompted a reading of this episode that considered in greater detail the place of animal-human relations in the social farmscape. The location of the exchange between Hrafnkell and Freyfaxi has never before been considered as a key component in this relationship between horse and man, and the figure of Freyfaxi as a horse and agent in his own right is often neglected, in favour of interpretations that focus on Freyfaxi as a figure of pre-Christian religious focus, and controlled by fate or Freyr (Miller, 2017). However, animals dedicated to pre-Christian gods in the *Íslendingasögur* are rare, with only one other occurrence in *Flóamanna saga* (ch.21), in which a newly-converted Christian must throw an ox overboard while sailing to Greenland because he had dedicated it to Þórr as a calf. This is not a common trope, and should not be considered the dominant pattern into which the *Hrafnkels saga* episode can be placed. Rather, as this thesis will demonstrate, domestic animals often act as agents in these sagas, outside of any divine control. While Hrafnkell's reference to his horse as *fóstri* seems at first to simply demonstrate affection towards a prized animal, the use of *fóstri* in this saga can be read more convincingly as an expression of a relationship beyond solely affection or the religious devotion seen by Miller (Miller, 2017). Freyfaxi is a foster-brother or foster-son figure, and punished for his actions as a free agent. In the relationship between Hrafnkell and Freyfaxi we see sociality and obligation: an animal participating in "human" social networks.

Freyfaxi demands attention in *Hrafnkels saga.* He demands it from the shepherd, Einarr, he demands it from Hrafnkell, and he demands it from the reader or listener of the saga. He is loud and provocative: and does more than demonstrate Hrafnkell's immoderate

behaviour. Freyfaxi's incorporation into human homosocial bonds through Hrafnkell's use of terms such as *garpr* and *fóstri*, echoes the tension between the vividly animal and implicitly human-like features demonstrated by certain domestic animals when placed into relationships with humans in the *Íslendingasögur*.

In the case of Freyfaxi, discussed at length in Chapter 4, we can give this troublesome horse the attention he demands, and move towards seeing animals in the sagas as characters worthy of investigation, and as key players in the networks of social relations between farmers, their families, friends or enemies, and their farms. This thesis investigates in greater depth the presence of domestic animals in Viking Age and medieval Iceland, and their translation into textual culture.

Aims of the thesis

This thesis aims to examine the animal-human relationships expressed in the material and textual culture of Viking Age and medieval Iceland, focussing on the place of the household-farm. It takes a wide approach, considering the formation and development of the Icelandic community from the time of settlement (c.870) to the compilation of the *Íslendingasögur* (c.1200-1400). In undertaking a study of animal-human relations that considers the domestic animals in these sources as embodied animals, not just as symbols, metaphors, economic markers, or disembodied numbers, this thesis aims to state the case for the interdisciplinary study of animals in both textual sources and archaeological remains.

This thesis also trials a methodological experiment to visualise the household-farm. It develops a way of mapping the spatial-functional organisation of archaeological sites to better enable the multi-disciplinary researcher to compare sites and consider associations between buildings, their functions, their visual interrelationships, and the experience of humans interacting with the animals of the farm through these structures. This method is fully outlined and demonstrated in Chapter 3. Furthermore, this thesis aims to reconsider how the animal is translated from Old Norse into English, advocating the retention of foreign concepts and terminology, such as "home-goose" or "homefield-boar." While domesticated translations appear to be preferred in creating fluent translations into a

consumable product for modern domestic readers, this thesis aims to demonstrate that such translations irrevocably lose meaning when it comes to translations of the animal and animal-human relationships that do not adhere closely to the original text (Venuti, 2000, p. 468, 1995, pp. 4–5).

Research Questions

This thesis had four key research questions. First, to assess how domestic animals are represented in textual narratives and interpretations of faunal remains, both those involved with the settlement of Iceland, and the experiencing of everyday life. Second, to consider how the spaces of the farm were represented in laws, sagas and archaeological interpretations of farm sites, to better articulate the relationship between animal and human members of the household and the farm. Third, to investigate how the spatial organisation of the household-farm may have shaped animal-human interactions, and whether certain interactions between animals and humans are represented in the sagas as happening only in specific places; and fourth, to understand how domestic animals and animal-human relations contributed to the formation, adaptation, and remembering of places and events.

Viking age and medieval Iceland

Iceland was settled in the late ninth century, by settlers primarily from Norway and the British Isles (McGovern et al., 2007).[1] It is generally assumed that settlement took place over several decades, though scholars disagree on the intensity of settlement stages (see Chapter 1). By the mid-tenth century, a large part of Iceland had been settled, farmhouses built, and a society of chieftains, free farmers, tenants, and slaves established, who relied heavily on animal husbandry for the survival of society (McCooey, 2017a, p. 33). While there is archaeological evidence for the utilisation of wild resources, and limited cultivation of barley on warmer southern Icelandic farms, the settlers seem to have adopted husbandry

[1] While the settlement of Iceland was previously considered to have taken place around 871±2 due to this date assigned to the *Landnám* tephra layer (Grönvold et al., 1995, p. 152), a more recent study has dated this layer to 877±1 (Schmid et al., 2017).

practices inherited from their homelands, with cattle and pigs playing a significant role in initial settlements (Amorosi, 1991; Brewington et al., 2015; Dugmore et al., 2005; McGovern et al., 2006, 2007, p. 28; Simpson et al., 2002a). The number of pig bones found in the archaeofauna from farm sites decline over time as numbers of sheep increase; however, cattle, as will be seen in Chapters 2 and 3, remain a key feature of how Icelanders presented and constructed their society. Pasture was therefore an important resource, and the cultivation and protection of hay was of paramount concern to Icelandic farmers (Hartman et al., 2017, p. 129; McCooey, 2017a).

The *Alþing* accepted Christianity in c.999/1000, and by the 1260s, when Norwegian rule was adopted, the pressures on the growing numbers of tenant farmers to produce a surplus on their farms for payment of tithes, rents, and participation in overseas trading networks were increasing (Ingimundarson, 1995, 1992; Ólafsson, 2005; Sigurðsson, 1999, p. 116; Sveinbjarnardóttir, 1992; Vésteinsson, 2007, p. 131). These increased pressures were aggravated by climatic fluctuation in the thirteenth century, which resulted in unpredictable farming conditions, and increasing occurrences of sea ice (Ogilvie, 1991; Ogilvie et al., 2000; Ogilvie and Jónsson, 2001; Ogilvie and McGovern, 2000). The care of domestic animals and the production of fodder would have been a source of anxiety in this period in which environmental stability could not be taken for granted, and animal products became an increasingly important part of survival and participation in society.

Research context:

The research context of the methods and sources used in this thesis are examined in greater detail at the beginning of each chapter. However, the genesis and progression of this project rests on several key studies and researchers, of whom a brief overview is provided here.

The relationship between animals and humans is a field of study that has been steadily increasing over the last few decades. Scholars from across disciplines have attempted to redefine or deconstruct the animal-human divide, taking a post-humanist approach to animal-human relationships (see, for example: Taylor and Signal, 2011; and

Watts, 2013). Alongside this explosion of interest in postmodern discussions of the animal, an increasing level of interest in (pre)historic animal-human relations has emerged; and in the last decade, a number of approaches from anthropology and social zooarchaeology have been developed that enhance discussions of past animal-human relations, and emphasise the entanglement of animals, humans, material remains, and narratives (Argent, 2013, 2016, Armstrong Oma, 2010, 2013, 2016a, 2016b; Ingold, 2011; Overton and Hamilakis, 2013; Pluskowski, 2002a). Yet while scholars, such as Kalof (2007), Steel (2011), and Crane (2013) have discussed medieval animal-human relations in western Europe, these studies have often ignored the Viking Age and medieval north.

Animals in medieval Scandinavia

In many respects, discussions of animals in Icelandic archaeology are anthropocentric, focussing on economic relations between sites (Lucas and McGovern, 2007; McGovern, 2009; McGovern et al., 2007; Milek et al., 2014; Sveinbjarnardóttir et al., 2007). A recently completed PhD thesis addressing human-animal interdependencies and farming practices in the Norse North Atlantic (Hogg, 2015) may begin to redress this balance, although this is not yet in the public domain. Currently, while archaeological reports from Icelandic excavations provide summaries of the quantity and location of domestic animals on farm sites, they often have little to say on the interactions between people and animals on the site, aside from theorising on herd management strategies. Where spatial dimensions of farming are considered, the focus lies on discussions of the effect of shielings and transhumance on human social relations (Kupiec and Milek, 2015; Lucas, 2008). However, while cattle, sheep, and pigs appear often restricted to interpretation within economic frameworks, horses and dogs have been discussed in the context of cultural traditions (Leifsson, 2012; Loumand, 2006; Pétursdóttir, 2009, 2007; Sikora, 2003). In particular, the large number of horse burials in Iceland has led to a series of publications on the role of this particular animal in pre-Christian belief systems, of which Þóra Pétursdóttir's MA thesis provides a comprehensive discussion of the multi-faceted relations between humans and horses that may have informed this practice (Pétursdóttir, 2007).

A focus on animals in pre-Christian cultural traditions and beliefs is widespread in scholarship on animals in Iron Age Scandinavia (Hedeager, 2011, 2004, Jennbert, 2011,

2006, 2004, 2002). Jennbert in particular focusses closely on domestic animals and the animal-human relations on the farm that are created and sustained through daily practice (Jennbert, 2011, pp. 70–78). Like Jennbert, this thesis attempts to consider the mentality of Viking Age and medieval Icelanders through the experience of animal husbandry on the farm, and the organisation of space that accompanies this. However, unlike Jennbert, who uses this context to analyse ritual practice in pre-Christian Scandinavia, this thesis uses this context to discuss the representation of these spaces and relations in later medieval writings about the Viking Age past (Jennbert, 2011, pp. 139–189).

Armstrong Oma's most recent publications on the expression of animal-human relations in the organisation of the farm in Iron Age and Viking Age Norway, considers domestic animals in the period of transition between pre-Christian and Christian Scandinavia (2016a, 2016b, 2016c). For Armstrong Oma, animal husbandry practices created and maintained both the need and desire for shared life-spaces in the Iron Age longhouse, and the close animal-human relations that ensue (2016b, 2016a, 2013). She emphasises the intertwining of environmental, economic, and social concerns in the network of animal, human, and house, and how close relationships with animals benefit both parties on the farm. However, while Armstrong Oma suggests that pre-Christian Scandinavia was characterised by a flat ontological structure in which animals and humans co-existed, which was then changed by the introduction of a Christian belief in the hierarchy of species, such an interpretation is less complex than the impression provided by the analysis in this thesis for an Icelandic context. By examining both archaeological interpretations of farm spaces, and textual representations of animal-human relationships on the household-farm, this thesis considers additional perspectives to the animal-human interactions discussed by Armstrong Oma and Jennbert who focus primarily on archaeological sources.

Animals in Old Norse-Icelandic literature

Studies of Old Norse-Icelandic literature have often given limited attention to animal-human relations. Simon Teuscher (1990) attempted a discussion of animals and men in the *Íslendingasögur*, but his method was simply to use the sagas as evidence for society with little linguistic or literary analysis. In contrast, Rohrbach (2009) uses literary analysis to

access a wide range of Old Norse-Icelandic texts in search of animal-human relations. However, Rohrbach primarily considers the uses of animals, rather than the interdependent relationships that exist between animals and humans. Equally, she uses archaeological sources to provide contexts for her discussion of medieval Icelandic animal husbandry, or evidence of a specific animal in Iceland, rather than engaging with the animal-human interaction within such context. For Rohrbach, the presence of animals in Old Norse-Icelandic literature tells us about human-human interactions rather than animal-human relationships. A more ecocritical approach to saga literature is taken by Carl Phelpstead in 'Ecocriticism and Eyrbyggja saga' (2014), which while only briefly dealing with animals (2014, pp. 10–12), highlights key points taken up in this thesis: namely, the role of the animal-human community in the settlement of Iceland as both a physical and conceptual entity, and the establishment and destabilisation of boundaries in saga narrative through animal-human interaction (Phelpstead, 2014).

Wild animals vs. domestic

As mentioned above, this thesis focusses on domestic animals; and interactions between humans and wild animals have been discussed at length elsewhere in relation to pre-Christian Scandinavian society (Andrén, 2006; Hedeager, 2011; Jennbert, 2011, 2006; Loumand, 2006; Ney, 2006; Nielsen, 2006) and Old Norse-Icelandic poetry and prose (Bourns, 2012; Guðmundsdóttir, 2007; Pluskowski, 2015; Rohrbach, 2009; Tuczay, 2015), particularly in reference to a warrior culture that placed great totemic emphasis on animals such as wolves, boars, ravens, and the eagle (Andrén, 2006; Hedeager, 2004; Jesch, 2002). However, Viking Age Iceland had no wild boars, nor wolves, and only the occasional polar bear (Guðmundsdóttir, 2007). The only land mammal prior to settlement was the arctic fox, and Iceland quickly became a landscape populated by migratory birds and the domestic animals the settlers brought with them. This thesis focusses on this distinct identity for Icelandic animal-human relations, as formed not by experiences of wild animals, but through experiences of domestic animals: cattle, sheep, pigs, horses, and dogs. Although not predatory, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, these familiar animals were recognised as having the potential to be dangerous and disruptive to the household-farm, suggesting perhaps that straightforward divisions between wild and domestic animals are

not so useful (O’Connor, 2013, pp. 5, 8), especially ones that consider “wild” animals as unfamiliar, dangerous, and anti-home, and “domestic” animals as familiar, safe, features of the *domus* (Anderson, 1997, p. 471; Hodder, 1990).

Focussing on domestic animal-human relations allows different questions to be asked of my sources. Rather than searching for a wild-domestic dichotomy, in which “wild” animals are placed in contrast to the home-place and the household and “domestic” animals at its centre, this thesis attempts to unpick the relationships, commonalities, and divisions contained within the category of the “domestic,” and examine the identity of the so-called “central” spaces of the Icelandic social landscape. The society of Viking Age and medieval Iceland was an animal-human community, in which certain animals occupied the same spaces as their human partners (Phelpstead, 2014, pp. 11–12). However, so-called “domestic” animals such as horses, sheep, and pigs may also be regarded as having had a semi-wild status in Iceland, due to herding strategies that embraced leaving animals to self-forage in the summer months (Brewington et al., 2015; McCooey, 2017a; McGovern, 2003).

Animals and place

The construction of a farm is a manifestation of a relationship between the builders, the world, and other agents that may come into contact with these structures, such as animals (Thomas, 1996, p. 90); and the construction of boundaries facilitates differing experiences of space, which are produced when places are viewed from alternate perspectives (Merleau-Ponty, 2011, p. 230; Thomas, 1996, p. 84; Unwin, 2012, p. 12). Figures who are within a space (or allowed within a space) will have a different perception and experience of that place compared to those outside of a space, or not permitted within it, or permitted within only in certain circumstances (Gibson, 2005, p. 116; Walsh et al., 2006, p. 437). Experiences of places also change depending on gender, age, household membership, social standing, or, indeed, species; and the ability to move between places is a meaningful, identity-building activity (Walsh, 2008, p. 553). A key part of this thesis is the examination of the spaces occupied by animals, and shaped and maintained by animal-human interactions, both in archaeological interpretations of physical remains and textual depictions of animals and humans in the social landscape of Iceland. Taking a spatial

approach to Viking Age and medieval farm sites in Iceland, enables us to better understand relations between domestic animals and humans in and through places: particularly built spaces.

While previous studies have been clear on the human relations that structure the organisation of space (Dunhof, 2005, p. 109; Marciniak, 2005, pp. 10, 21), it is only recently that animals have been considered in thinking about the organisation of space and the formation of everyday places (Armstrong Oma, 2016a, 2016b, 2013; Sykes, 2014). A particular place may therefore conjure up the memory of animal presence, and animals can act as classifying markers, tying an animal-place into more general conceptions of the environment (Jones, 1998, p. 302; Wolch, 1998). The dwelling of both domesticated and wild animals in particular spaces can be perceived as constituting in part the human experience of that place, and relations of action and reaction between animals and humans are responsible for the formation of many places in the past (Armstrong Oma, 2013; Jones, 1998, p. 303; Mills, 2005; Sykes, 2014, p. 99).

It has been argued that the influence of environmental conditions on the perception of place should be emphasised in approaches that attempt to give both humans and non-human agents appropriate consideration in understanding past networks of relations (Chapman and Gearey, 2000; Feld and Basso, 1996; Hastrup, 2010; Ingold, 2011, 2010; Walsh, 2008, pp. 547, 553). Habitation within fragile or dangerous environments increases the need for agents to be aware of the world around them, and the way in which space is incorporated into worldviews is influenced by topography and climate (Hastrup, 2010, p. 194; James, 2003). Manifestations of experiencing the environment in the *Íslendingasögur*, such as stories about the formation of places, moving between places, and the weather, often contain animals; and the experience of darkness and isolating weather, such as the long Icelandic winters, would have affected perceptions of the household-farm, as well as the requirements and benefits of animal-human relations (Hastrup, 2010; James, 2003). Adverse weather increases the burden of care felt by humans towards domestic animals, and it will be seen in Chapter 4 that certain types of weather influenced the depiction of some animal-human relations in the *Íslendingasögur*. The "good" and "bad" seasons recorded in the medieval Icelandic annals also appear to present conceptions of climatic events that are primarily concerned with the effects on animal

husbandry. In the early fourteenth century, bad seasons are often framed in terms such as *rossa felliss vetr* (winter of the death of horses) and *fiar fellir micill* (Storm, 1888, pp. 265, 343; great death of livestock). In addition, the vital nature of the hayfield in medieval Iceland is evident from the laws and literature discussed in this thesis; and such places, in which fodder is cultivated by humans for animal consumption, are key in the network of relations between animals and humans.

Sources and methods

This thesis considers various representations of Icelandic society. It attempts to examine cultural attitudes manifested through practice, whether the daily rhythm of the farm, the construction of a farm-space, the formula of the law, or the construction and recording of a saga. Textual depictions of animal-human interactions are formed from material encounters, and such material encounters may in their turn have influenced or been influenced by legal traditions. As such, this thesis takes a multi-disciplinary approach to the examination of the animal-human relations expressed in these sources, drawing on data and interpretations from both archaeological remains and readings of textual sources.

Textual sources

In this thesis, I consult and analyse three types of textual source: the *Grágás* law-codes, the nominally-historical work *Landnámabók* (The Book of Settlements), and the more literary *Íslendingasögur* (Sagas of Icelanders). Reference will be made at times to various Old Icelandic annals, which date from the end of the twelfth century onwards, and the law-books *Jarnsíða* (1271-1274) and *Jónsbók* (introduced to Iceland in 1281). Two redactions of *Landnámabók* survive from the late thirteenth (c.1275-80) and early fourteenth centuries (c.1306-1308), and in this thesis I use the earlier of these two versions (Benediktsson, 1968a, p. LXXV; Jóhannesson, 1941, p. 18; Pálsson and Edwards, 1972, pp. 3, 4; Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 48; Vésteinsson and Friðriksson, 2003, p. 143). The *Grágás* manuscripts and manuscript fragments are dated between 1150-1280, and are assumed to reflect the legal traditions of at least the eleventh century (Foote, 2004a, p. 98, 2004b, pp. 102–103; Pedersen, 1999, p. 91).

The *Íslendingasögur* are a collection of around forty texts, compiled in Iceland between the 13th and 15th centuries. In many cases the surviving copies date from a later period, and as we have no autograph manuscripts nor records of authors, the compilers of the sagas remain a mystery. The sagas themselves relate stories of a Viking Age past, specifically the lives of the families of those men and women who settled Iceland in the ninth century. They vary considerably in length, although the shortest of these narratives are often included under the term *Íslendingaþættir*: for example, *Brandkrossa þáttr* discussed in Chapter 4. While, as previously mentioned, these stories are set in the Viking Age, they are cultural artefacts of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. They are considered as written texts drawing on a number of oral traditions, as well as the imaginations of their medieval compilers, and priorities of subsequent copyists (Andersson, 2006, pp. 4, 19, 204; Lethbridge and Hartman, 2016; Meulengracht Sørensen, 1993, p. 180).

The approach taken in this thesis to textual sources involves combining close reading of extracts with linguistic analysis and a consideration of the literary and social context of the texts. In working with these sources, it is important to recognise the various factors affecting both the literary texts and laws, including processes of transmission, and the bias of the views presented in favour of a certain set of Icelanders, primarily the *bœndr* (farmers) and *goðar* (chieftains) who formed the upper strata of medieval Icelandic society. Details on each source are provided at the beginning of each chapter where relevant. The medieval sources used for the analyses in this thesis, both textual and material, are of Icelandic provenance, dating from the mid-ninth to the early-fifteenth century. It is known that significant changes in husbandry practices took place from c.1200 onwards, specifically the increase of sheep-farming for payment of tithes and taxes in *vaðmál,* and for participation in an increasing export economy (Ingimundarson, 1995, 1992; Ólafsson, 2005; Sveinbjarnardóttir, 1992). As highlighted above, at this time the island also experienced increasing climate fluctuation (Hoffmann, 2014, p. 335; Ogilvie, 2010, 1991, p. 240). The fact that most of the *Íslendingasögur* in question were recorded in this later period, that of Norwegian rule, allows me to consider how such documents, while gazing at a re-created past, relate to, and interact with the contemporary society in which they were composed and recorded.

Archaeology

The three sites on which I focus my analysis in this thesis are Aðalstræti 14-18 in Reykjavík (Chapter 1), Vatnsfjörður in the Westfjords, and Sveigakot in Mývatnsveit (both Chapter 3). Individual descriptions of the sites are included in the following chapters, but it should be noted here that all the phases examined at each site belong to the Viking Age and Early Medieval Period. It was not a methodological choice to analyse sites from the earlier end of my timeframe, but rather a result of the bias of prior and current archaeological practice in Iceland: early sites are more easily identifiable in the Icelandic landscape, and often more likely to receive funding for the extensive excavations required to provide the data necessary for the spatial-functional analysis I discuss in Chapter 3 (Kathryn Catlin, 2017, pers. comm.).

When working with archaeological data, it is necessary to consider how patterns have been formed, and acknowledge the multiple possible causes for certain results. For example, when considering the distribution of animal indicators on a farm-site, the parasites associated with sheep can either be a symptom of the presence of sheep, or the processing of wool. Likewise, straw can indicate the stabling of animals, the storage of fodder, or the presence of a straw-covered sleeping area. Archaeological data, for example, animal bones, can be considered in isolation neither from the context of their deposition on the site, nor wider social and economic interpretations of the social landscape, just as my textual sources cannot be considered in isolation from the context of their composition or recording and the range of their focus. In Chapter 3, I focus on the structures of farmsteads as the frames of the household-farm. Networks of use at the sites are constructed based on site plans and the results of floor-level analyses such as micromorphological studies. Spatial-functional analysis diagrams are produced to visualise these animal-human spaces, and the details of the methods developed are outlined in that chapter.

A fruitful relationship: sagas and archaeology

Archaeology and the literature of medieval Iceland have always had a fraught relationship. Prior to the book-prose theory that rose to prominence in Iceland in the 1930s, the

Íslendingasögur had often been seen as products of authentic oral traditions passed down for hundreds of years, and therefore direct sources for Viking Age society (Walker et al., 2012). As such, early archaeological activity in Iceland was focussed around identifying and excavating sites from the sagas (Vésteinsson, 2004a). Then, from the 1930s onwards, the sagas were predominantly seen as works of fiction, and therefore unreliable historical sources for Viking Age Iceland (Andersson, 2006, p. 3; Walker et al., 2012). As a result, Icelandic archaeologists attempted to reject any connection with textual sources, preferring instead to draw on the increasing number of scientific methods available to them to build datasets for the earlier periods of Icelandic settlement and society.

Adolf Friðriksson's *Sagas and Popular Antiquarianism in Icelandic Archaeology* (1994) discusses the role of sagas in archaeology, and suggests that while many archaeologists since the 1940s have emphasised the need for archaeology to be studied independently from the sagas, there was little discussion at the time of why this should be, and that combining literature and archaeology could lead to productive investigations of the Icelandic past (Friðriksson, 1994, pp. 190–191). Indeed, in the last few decades a middle way has been adopted in which the *Íslendingasögur* are seen as narratives constructed by an author, but drawing on collections of pre-existing oral traditions to reconstruct stories about the past that were meaningful to thirteenth-, fourteenth-, and fifteenth-century compilers and copyists (Andersson, 2006; O'Connor, 2017; Walker et al., 2012). In this way, the sagas can be seen as anthropological sources, reflecting both cultural memories and traditions of the Viking Age past, as well as the concerns and preoccupations of the time of their composition (Cormack, 2007, p. 207; Hermann, 2013). It is this view that I take in my readings of the *Íslendingasögur* in this thesis.

Recent studies involving archaeology and the sagas have attempted to read the sagas for evidence of cultural responses to social, economic or environmental events, or use saga episodes as another dataset in archaeological investigations (Byock and Zori, 2013; Lethbridge and Hartman, 2016). The Mosfell Archaeology Project (MAP), in particular, has tried to use archaeology to test the historicity of certain saga episodes (Walker et al., 2012), but a more nuanced approach is taken by a recent interdisciplinary project, Inscribing Environmental Memory in the Icelandic Sagas (IEM), which aims to understand how people in the past responded to environmental changes. On the one hand

this involves using the sagas as sources, but also considers how environmental changes may have influenced the writing of the sagas and the preoccupations of their narratives (Hartman et al., 2017, p. 136; "IEM: Inscribing Environmental Memory in the Icelandic Sagas," n.d.). The sagas are seen as both sources for environmental responses, and responses in their own right, and the IEM project recognises the rootedness of the *Íslendingasögur*, which is integral to my understanding of the value of archaeology to reading the sagas (Lethbridge and Hartman, 2016, p. 386). The inscription of memories in the sagas is, however, not a simple process, as past traditions and cultures are presented and represented for a later medieval audience (Lethbridge and Hartman, 2016, p. 386). This thesis attempts to understand the cultural positioning of domestic animals within the medieval Icelandic world (Chapters 1, 2 and 3), in order to better understand the representations of these animals and their relationships with humans in the *Íslendingasögur* (Chapter 4). It is also hoped that the close readings of the laws and literature in this thesis, alongside the spatial-functional analysis utilised, will enable alternate perspectives to be cast on animals on past farm sites. I work with the sagas, laws, and archaeological interpretations of farm sites side by side – not to benefit one aspect of a study by using the others in a one-way exchange, but to come to more nuanced understandings of both textual and archaeological interpreations, through analysis of multiple sources.

Structure

This thesis explores animal-human relations in Viking Age and medieval Iceland, through literary narratives about, and archaeological interpretations of the settlement of Iceland, the legal constructions of an ideal Icelandic society, the organisation of space on the Viking Age household-farm, and literary depictions of animal-human interactions with this home-place.

Chapter 1 considers the role of domestic animals within the establishment of Iceland as a cultural and ideological entity, as well as a physically-settled landmass. By exploring the settlement origin stories recorded in *Landnámabók* and select settlement episodes from the *Íslendingasögur*, it analyses the relatively high presence of agro-pastoral

concerns in these narratives, alongside archaeological interpretations of animals and farms in the earliest Icelandic contexts.

Chapter 2 examines the earliest extant set of laws for Iceland, the collection of texts known as *Grágás*, which can be seen as an expression of the rules and regulations with which the post-settlement community of Iceland constructed and maintained itself. This chapter contains a detailed discussion of those laws in which animals and humans interact, and analyses the framework presented in the laws of how farming should have been undertaken in the Icelandic landscape: a framework characterised by control and compensation. This chapter demonstrates how medieval Icelanders may have been expected to act in relation to their domestic animals, and the animals of others; and considers how these interactions relate to ideas of social and environmental responsibility embodied in the strictly regulated space of the Icelandic social landscape.

Chapter 3 attempts to map the human and animal spaces at two Icelandic farm sites, to better understand animal-human relations on the Viking Age and medieval Icelandic farm by conducting spatial-functional analysis of human- and animal-places. The chapter argues that the spatial organisation of the farm, and the lived experience that both shaped and was shaped by this spatial organisation, would have impacted on interactions between humans and animals. While the whole farm is considered, the area of the *tún(garðr)* and central farm enclosure is chosen for this analysis, as the area most relatively accessible and measurable in the archaeological remains. Specifically, the chapter focusses on the organisation of space at the farms of Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot, and places these case studies in the wider context of Viking Age and medieval Icelandic farm sites. The need for potential animal-places to be given closer attention in future excavations is highlighted, to more fully understand the internal networks and past experiencing of a site.

Following the close examination of the household-farm area in the preceding section, Chapter 4 explores Old Icelandic concepts of home, including linguistic associations, legal traditions, and narrative representation. It then analyses a series of animal-human interactions that take place within, and around the home, and demonstrates

the importance of place, environment, bodily practices, and two-way communication in animal-human relations in certain *Íslendingasögur* and *Íslendingaþættir*.

This thesis encourages a new way of reading the sagas that first and foremost recognises animals as agents in these narratives, and the importance of the emplaced animal-human relationships in Viking Age and medieval Icelandic society. Throughout this thesis, the *Íslendingasögur* are valued as cultural-historical documents: texts that can tell us about certain aspects of the Icelandic past, and how medieval Icelanders used and embellished traditional narratives. The addition of archaeological interpretations to these readings enables us to analyse these sources with an awareness and active consideration of the physical spaces of the medieval Icelandic farm, and the relations between humans, animals, and environment that shaped the lived experience of Icelanders, and hence the stories that they told about their ancestors and the earlier periods of their settlement in Iceland.

In addition to its contribution to theoretical discussions of animal-human relations, this project may also provide a context to more scientific enquiries, such as those conducted by archaeologists working in the north Atlantic on the provision and technicalities of agriculture and animal husbandry, and the impact these practices had on the north Atlantic environments. By providing a cultural and social aspect to these processes, my project may shed new light on the interpretations produced. More generally, this project will contribute to studies concerning the changing relations between humans and non-humans in contemporary society, especially with relation to the intensification of farming and the destruction of the environment: both situations which find a sort of microcosm in the settlement, establishment, and development of Iceland as an agro-pastoral society. Such contemporary studies emphasise the need, and the growing recognition of the need, to alter the way in which we relate to animals. By studying historic cultural relations between humans and domestic animals, I hope to provide another piece of the framework on which these contemporary studies can position themselves.

1. Animal and human spaces in Icelandic settlement narratives

Introduction

In the story of medieval Icelanders and their animals, we should start at the beginning. This chapter will analyse material and literary narratives surrounding the settlement of Iceland, focussing on the presentation and use of animals and space. The animals of agro-pastoral Iceland are non-native species, exclusively brought in by the colonists who settled the island, and in this way, the physical presence of domestic animals in the Icelandic landscape is part of the "Iceland" constructed by these settlers. While Iceland was not an empty island when settlers arrived in the ninth century, it was a blank cultural canvas of spaces open to (re)construction. By building farms and boundaries, clearing land, and naming places, the settlers created homelands out of the Icelandic environment, and wrote the terms of their society: terms in which domestic animals played a significant part.

A multitude of narratives exist surrounding the settlement of Iceland. Previous debates have been dominated by those narratives found in Old Norse-Icelandic written sources, especially *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*; and, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, archaeological methods have been used in attempts to justify these narratives (Friðriksson, 1994, pp. 13–14). In recent decades, however, archaeologists studying

settlement-era Iceland have questioned the dominance of medieval texts in shaping our view of Viking Age Iceland, and as a result, competing narratives of settlement have emerged.[2] For example, the view presented in "The Peopling of Iceland" (Vésteinsson and McGovern, 2012a) relies on intensive and organised ferrying of migrants to Iceland for farming purposes, while the exhibition-book *Reykjavík 871±2* (Vésteinsson et al., 2006) emphasises the early actions of walrus hunters in the region (see also: Frei et al., 2015). In contrast, the textual narratives favour a rather different set of causes, approaches, and results of Icelandic settlement. It is these complexities with which this chapter is concerned: how do the various textual narratives of the settlement of Iceland relate to the different archaeological interpretations, and more specifically, which places do domestic animals and the household-farm occupy in each?

Structure of this chapter

The many stories of the settlement of Iceland, including the most recent archaeological interpretations, must be the background to this study of relations between domestic animals and humans in the Icelandic household-farm. This chapter will explore the representation of domestic animals in the main narratives about the settlement of Iceland, first outlining the theories of settlement most often included in archaeological studies, and then analysing the presence of domestic animals and agro-pastoral practice in *Landnámabók* and three examples of settlement narratives from the *Íslendingasögur*. This analysis will focus on the relation between settlement, land, domestic animals, and the household or family in these texts, and in the latter section of the chapter, I will discuss these theories and findings in relation to *Landnámsöld* archaeology in the Reykjavík area, and the Viking Age farm across Iceland. The chapter will demonstrate that not only are animals prominent in the establishment and (re)construction of Iceland, but that this importance is reflected both in later medieval narratives and the early construction of farms.

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[2] For more detailed discussions of the interaction between written sources and archaeology, see: Austin (1990); Friðriksson, (1994); Moreland (2001); and Vésteinsson and Friðriksson (2003).

Sources

This chapter explores three forms of settlement narrative: those contained in interpretations of material remains from *Landnámsöld* sites in Iceland, those found in the historiographical text, *Landnámabók,* and those included in selected *Íslendingasögur*. For my material sources, I focus on the excavations at Aðalstræti 14-18 in Reykjavík, and supply a critical discussion of the narratives of settlement that have been constructed around these excavations (Milek, 2006; Nordahl, 1988; Roberts, 2004, 2001). For my discussion of settlement narratives in textual sources, I analyse the *Sturlubók* redaction of *Landnámabók* on account of it being considered the earlier and more reliable of the two medieval redactions (Pálsson and Edwards, 1972, pp. 3–4), and stories of settlement from three of the *Íslendingasögur: Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (1220-30), *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* (1264-1300), and *Gull-Þóris saga* (or *Þorskfirðinga saga*; 1300-50).[3] Due to the fairly complex histories of some of these textual sources, I shall provide a brief overview of relevant debates below.

Landnámabók exists in two redactions from the medieval period, attached to the names of Sturla Þórðarson (1214-80) and Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1331), and these two men compiled their own redactions of *Landnámabók* c.1275-80 and c.1306-1308 respectively (Benediktsson, 1968a, p. LXXV; Jóhannesson, 1941, p. 18; Pálsson and Edwards, 1972, pp. 3, 4; Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 48; Vésteinsson and Friðriksson, 2003, p. 143). Although the differences between the two versions appear to be minor compared to the bulk of similar text, there is a notable variation in their order of the first visitors to Iceland, and the status of some of these first explorers (Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 48).[4] In *Landnámabók* we find a text devoted to describing or recording individual settlements, and yet *Landnámabók* also contains much material not explicitly linked with the initial claiming of land. Such material may rather be considered as having contributed to the establishment of the medieval agro-pastoral society in which the text was compiled. In this

[3] Dates after Ólason (2005, pp. 114–115). The alternate titles for *Gull-Þóris saga* are discussed below.

[4] For more detailed discussion of the differences between the two redactions, see: Benediktsson (1966, pp. 275–279, 290, 1968a, pp. L–LI), Jóhannesson (1941), and Pálsson and Edwards (1972, pp. 3–12).

way, the narratives contained in *Landnámabók* not only record stories of settlement, but stories of the development of Icelandic society.

Instead of the title of a single work, like *Íslendingabók*, *Landnámabók* has become an overarching title for a collection of information about the settlement, the Icelanders, and their land(-takings).[5] From its complex history, it can be seen that *Landnámabók* was not only a text that people were keen to copy, but also one that people were eager to alter by varying degrees since the initial collection of information in the early twelfth century (Ólason, 2004, p. 31; Ulff-Møller, 2015). This is a point that I shall return to at the close of this chapter, after my discussion of *Sturlubók*'s various animal-related features. In this chapter, I use the term *Landnámabók* when referring to the idea of this text as a sum of all its redactions, and *Sturlubók* when referring to the specific redaction text I use for my analysis; all *Landnámabók* quotations used in this piece are from *Sturlubók* unless otherwise specified. I focus on this redaction of the text because there are no significant differences between it and *Hauksbók* regarding the episodes I discuss in this chapter, except in two cases: the ordering of the opening stories of the discovery of Iceland, and the elaboration of the story of Ásólfr the Christian in *Hauksbók*.

Modern perceptions of the settlement of Iceland

In *Grettis saga*, Ǫnundr considers the changing circumstances he has experienced by moving from Norway to Iceland:

> Krǫpp eru kaup, ef hreppik
> Kaldbak, en ek læt akra (Jónsson, 1936, p. 22).
>
> Narrow is the bargain, if [I have] obtained
> Kaldbak [mountain], but I have given up [my] fields.

The risk of colonising a new land requires people to give up everything that cannot be moved with them; for Ǫnundr, this meant leaving his prosperous fields and farm in

[5] Analysis of *Íslendingabók* is not included in this chapter as the section that deals with the settlement process itself is brief, and adds little to the account as seen in *Sturlubók*.

Norway, to be pushed to apparently hostile land in Iceland, as represented by the mountain.

Colonisation is a process, rather than a single event, and the choice to settle in a new place is a complex one, reliant on a number of push and pull factors acting on a variety of agents (Anthony, 1990, pp. 905, 898; Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 18). With regards to the settlement of Iceland, it is most likely that a range of factors acted on a range of individuals, family groups, and other social units, such as villages or vocation groups, and some scholars have acknowledged the likelihood of great regional variation in models of settlement (Amorosi, 1991, p. 281; Jesch, 2015; McGuire, 2006, p. 13). However, while the excavation of farm-sites and pre-Christian burials have demonstrated the vital importance of agro-pastoral practice and domestic animals to society in Viking Age Iceland, the role of farming and domestic animals in initial settlement has been debated. Both settlement hypotheses focussing on farming and those focussing on trading have profound implications on the formation and value of the agro-pastoral household in Iceland (Frei et al., 2015, p. 4). Each incorporate a distinct relation to domestic animals.

The search for good land

The date and causes of the *Landnám* period have been a matter of intense debate in Icelandic archaeology, and in recent decades, archaeological interest in matters such as settlement patterns, resource exploitation, and anthropogenic influence on the ecology of Iceland has increased (Edwards, 2012, p. 221; Ólafsson, 2005; Sveinbjarnardóttir, 2012, pp. 225–226; Sveinbjörnsdóttir et al., 2007, p. 393; Þeodórsson, 1998, p. 35). Arguments over the starting point of Icelandic settlement have often gone hand in hand with criticism over the previously extensive use of textual sources to inform these arguments (Vilhjálmsson, 1992, pp. 174–175, 1991a, p. 43, 1991b, p. 105), and recent studies have accorded less influence to textual sources, to the point where Vésteinsson and McGovern have suggested that studies on the settlement of Iceland should focus solely on archaeological investigations, and abandon narratives informed by textual sources (Vésteinsson and McGovern, 2012b, p. 231).

However, farming hypotheses of Icelandic settlement have been, and continue to be, heavily influenced by textual sources. Two models have been suggested: the "farmer model" and the "slave" or "Skalla-Grímr model" (Vésteinsson, 2010, p. 501). These hypotheses have dominated discussion, not least because these are the models often indicated by the textual sources. That a literary figure, Skalla-Grímr, has been used in archaeological discourse, indicates the strong interrelationship between these Old Norse-Icelandic texts and scientific discussion of Viking Age Iceland (Vésteinsson, 2010, p. 501). In these hypotheses, the "farmer model" indicates the initial taking of large tracts of land, and then the gradual infilling by dependants, while the "slave model" refers to a system of large land-taking, followed by almost instantaneous division of the land among dependants such as slaves or freedmen (Vésteinsson, 2010, pp. 501, 503, 505). These models support the two stages of settlement suggested by Simpson et al. (2002b) in which coastal and river valley wetland areas were settled first, before woodland was cleared at further inland sites controlled by first settlers (Simpson et al., 2002b, p. 1401). Jón Viðar Sigurðsson has also affirmed his belief in the Skalla-Grímr model and the likelihood that those farmers important enough to have boats would have taken possession of as much land as possible, and brought livestock with them to better cement their social position in the new land (Sigurðsson, 2012, p. 224).

Both these settlement theories, both "farmer" and "slave," acknowledge the important role of the household-farm in this process, and while excavations and archaeological surveys have revealed settlements that appear to have been initially focussed on processes other than raising livestock, these sites often show increased evidence of more general farming activities over time. Such sites, apparently focussed on smelting and the collection and processing of bog iron, may have been minor specialised farms linked to a larger main farm as proposed in the Skalla-Grímr model. However, they may also be seen as evidence for independent settlers with priorities focussed on the acquisition and processing of bog iron to sell to other migrants, perhaps in exchange for food they did not produce themselves (McGuire, 2006, pp. 14–15; Smith, 1995, p. 335).

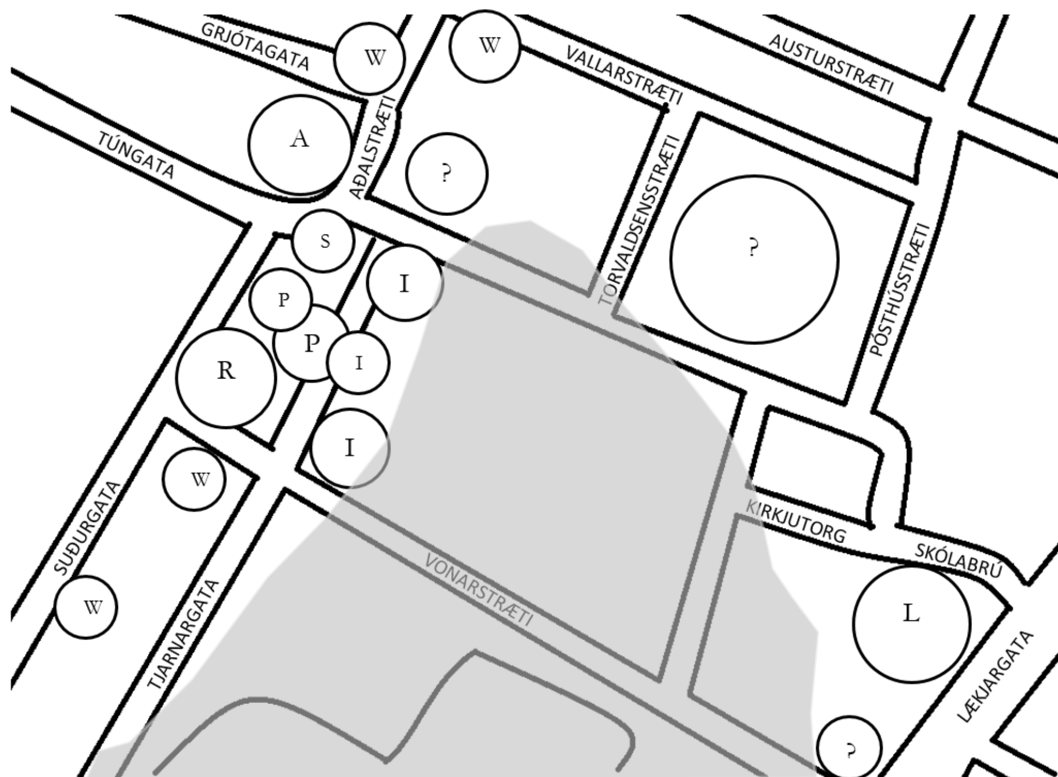
Excavations in the Reykjavík area have supported theories of early agro-pastoral settlement in Iceland. First undertaken from 1971-75, and then returned to between 2001-2003 (Nordahl, 1988; Roberts, 2004), these excavations identified multiple sites, including

a tenth-century residential building at Aðalstræti 14-18, later extensions to this house, and the remains of a turf wall at Grjótagata (see Figure 1). The wall is part of an unroofed outside structure, perhaps a sheep shelter or boundary wall, and has been dated to before AD 877±1 on account of the *Landnám* tephra layer resting atop of the turf (Roberts, 2001, p. 38; Schmid et al., 2017). As such, it cannot be associated with the later house, but must belong to a nearby farmstead as yet uncovered beneath Reykjavík, though it is unclear how early this structure was constructed prior to the *Landnám* tephra deposition (Roberts, 2001, p. 39). The disturbance of the remains by previous excavations and modern development work has limited the scope of interpretation for the structure, but the significance of this wall fragment is not only its early date, but its potential for agro-pastoral associations (Roberts, 2001, p. 64). If such an early, unroofed structure is part of a farmstead that involved sheltering livestock, then this would suggest that the arrival and establishment of livestock on Iceland occurred at an early stage of settlement.

Within the hypotheses discussed above, the acquisition and working of land plays a significant role. This high emphasis on the spaces of settlement is reflected in the textual sources, as the first thing almost every settler to Iceland does in *Landnámabók* and the *Íslendingasögur* is stake out a claim to some land and set up a farm. However, studies of the settlement-era excavations at Reykjavík have also suggested a more complex picture of how the settlement of Iceland may have unfolded (Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 36). This settlement narrative does not involve livestock or agro-pastoral practice; at least not in its initial stages (Frei et al., 2015, p. 20; Vésteinsson et al., 2006, pp. 98–100).

The search for fame and fortune

Once Iceland was discovered, decisions about where to settle may have been directed by considerations as varied as the control of route-ways, access to bog iron, proximity to natural boundaries, and occupation of defensible points; therefore, not just the availability of good land for winter fodder (McGuire, 2006). The desire to exploit trading opportunities for luxury items, such as walrus ivory, can be added to this list (Frei et al., 2015). Some current theories about Reykjavík have increasingly focussed on the high-status economic potential for walrus-hunting in the area. This adheres to a "trading hypothesis," in which such potential provided the impetus for settlement; although agro-



Key

		W	Wall fragments
A	Aðalstræti house	S	House and iron-working
R	Partially excavated; house and iron-working remains	I	Industrial area with evidence for iron-working, craft workshops, brewery, wall, and wooden walkway
P	Stone pathways	Grey area	Waterline in the settlement period
L	Lækjargata house	?	Not yet excavated; suspected early remains

Figure 1 The locations of the main Viking Age and medieval archaeological sites in Reykjavík (map adapted from Helgason, 2015).

pastoral settlement is considered the next step in the process (Frei et al., 2015, p. 5). In this way, this hypothesis does not exclude domestic animals from their role in the settlement of Iceland, merely delay it. This tension between farming, land, and portable wealth parallels archaeological discourse on Viking Age expansion in other areas of the north Atlantic, such as Scotland,[6] though it is only recently that these debates have begun to take root in discussions of migration to Iceland.

[6] For discussions of this, and the motives of Viking Age expansion in general, see: Ashby (2015); Barrett (2010, 2008); and Graham-Campbell and Batey (1998).

At multiple excavation sites in Reykjavík, walrus remains have been found, including bones and tusks (Frei et al., 2015, pp. 4, 5). In the Viking Age house discussed in the final section of this chapter, the walrus bones were apparently deposited in places where they would have been visible to the human occupants of the house, as well as visitors to the dwelling, and so may have acted as a display of prestige or expertise (Frei et al., 2015, p. 5). The walrus tusks found at this site showed signs of having been extracted by experienced hunters or craftsmen, indicating the presence of at least one specialist worker at the site before the extinction of the walrus colonies (McGovern, 2001, pp. 106, 107; Mehler, 2001, p. 71). As can be seen from the map of Reykjavík above (Figure 1), interpretation of this area is ongoing and subject to change with further excavation. This map suggests that smithies and workshops (I, R, and S on Figure 1), were constructed close to the shore on the one side of the water, while definitive animal-buildings have yet to be interpreted from the remains uncovered to-date. Agro-pastoral activity may have been concentrated on the as-yet unexcavated eastern side of the settlement, at a safe distance from the workshops, smithies, and storage buildings. Nonetheless, without further dating evidence on the western sites and excavation of the eastern shore of the Viking Age lake, it cannot be said with any certainty how the first settlements at Reykjavík were inhabited. What is clear, however, is that the remains at Aðalstræti are the tip of the iceberg, and this initial settlement may have been far more complex than first expected.

In *Sturlubók*, when Ingólfr selects the place for his permanent settlement, his thrall Karli expresses surprise:

> Þá mælti Karli: „Til ills fóru vér um góð heruð, er vér skulum byggja útnes þetta“ (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 45).
>
> Then said Karli: “It is bad we travelled over good country, when we should settle this outlying headland.”

Such sentiments, perhaps, reflect the confusion that the compilers of *Landnámabók*, settled into their own agro-pastoralist society, may have felt over the spot of supposed first settlement. The place Ingólfr chooses is far from the best area for seed or cattle; instead, it is perhaps the most suitable area for a settlement reliant on marine resources (Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 44).

It has been suggested then, that the impetus for settlement of the Reykjavík area may have been triggered by walrus-hunters (Frei et al., 2015; Vésteinsson et al., 2006). Prepared and willing to take great risks in search of valuable products for the European market, walrus-hunters may have set up temporary camps at first and then, if Iceland had proved a profitable hunting ground, taken the first steps towards establishing a permanent camp on the island (McGovern, 2015, pers. comm.; Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 36). However, it has been suggested that surviving by hunting alone would have been difficult to maintain in the Icelandic environment (Smith, 1995, p. 324). Such a permanent camp would have required, then, some sort of livestock, most likely cattle and pigs. While pigs could forage for themselves in such virgin territory, cattle would have required winter fodder and shelter, forcing the walrus-hunters to cultivate meadows for hay, and construct byres (Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 36). Such a camp or permanent settlement could then act as a livestock station for subsequent settlers. In this way, the trade opportunities facilitated by temporary camps develop the necessity for an agro-pastoral settlement. On the other hand, such hunters may have left pigs on the island to breed and survive by themselves in between less permanent visits (Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 36). As I shall discuss below, stories apparently mirroring such strategies are found in *Landnámabók*.

In this model of settlement, the initial settlers in Iceland would not have been focussed on livestock. Rather the establishment of a local stock of animals, from which subsequent settlers could procure livelihoods or supplement their own stocks is likely to have come about at a later point from initial temporary settlement. A first group of permanent migrants, in this model, would not have come to Iceland looking for farmland, let alone some kind of agro-pastoral paradise, until this stock was established. It is important to note, then, that the textual sources, and especially *Landnámabók*, focus primarily on domestic animals and the establishment of the household-farm.

A thirteenth-century settlement narrative

From the analysis and discussion in the first section of this chapter, it can be seen that competing settlement narratives shape archaeological discourse on Viking Age Iceland. Scholars consider the settlement of Iceland as a complex set of processes, in which the trade of valuable export goods might have played a greater part than previously thought.

In contrast, the textual sources discussed below seem to consider the draw of land as a much more important factor in the settlement of Iceland than any competing resource, and animals are given a role in claiming, naming, and selecting the land on which these Norse migrants eventually settle.

Landnámabók

The so-called "book of settlements" is the starting point for considering medieval Icelandic attitudes to the settlement of Iceland, and the role of animals in these narratives. However, scholarship on medieval Icelandic literature and history has a long and complicated relationship with *Landnámabók*. Much scholarship on this text has focussed on establishing its unreliability as a historical source for the settlement by arguing for its ideological nature, as either a collection of unifying myths for a new society (Tomasson, 1980, pp. 4, 6, 12–14), a text concerned with an increasing sense of a written Icelandic identity separate from mainland Scandinavia (Benediktsson, 1966, pp. 288–294), or a text exercising distinct political purpose for individuals and families in the thirteenth century (Benediktsson, 1966, p. 288; Ólason, 2004, p. 30; Stefánsson, 2003, p. 209; Whaley, 2000, p. 192). In these ways, the value of *Landnámabók* as a historical source is diminished. However, such studies apply modern conceptualisations of historiography to this text; a model that is very different from the medieval idea of historical texts as written documents not overly concerned with the recording of genuine specifics of events, but rather having a wider, more symbolic function that contributes to the (re)construction of society (Assmann, 2011, p. 66; Hermann, 2007, p. 18; Lindow, 1997, p. 454; McCone, 1990, pp. 62–65; Vansina, 1985).

Some scholars have suggested that the stories in *Landnámabók* may be considered as having their origins in genuine narratives about the settlement of Iceland (Lárusdóttir, 2006, p. 48; Sigurðsson, 2004, p. 248; Smith, 1995, p. 320; Vésteinsson and Friðriksson, 2003, p. 141). However, such studies can become drawn into complicated discussions about the "original" nature of each story. This chapter is not concerned with attempting to uncover the origins of individual passages in *Sturlubók*, but instead on the nature of these narratives as they are recorded in this redaction. The history or myth contained or created within this text can be used to examine a certain set of thirteenth-century

perceptions of a useful past. This recording of the past can tell us about the role that agro-pastoral practice played in certain Icelanders' conceptualisation of their history and the historic landscape. In addition, if these texts were produced in an atmosphere of a degrading environment or fluctuating climate (Hallgrímsson et al., 2004, p. 270; McGuire, 2006, p. 13; Ogilvie, 1991), then perhaps ecological concerns, as well as political ones, might inform these narratives of settlement. Sverrir Jakobsson, writing about the *Hauksbók* manuscript, has analysed the texts included in the manuscript alongside the redaction of *Landnámabók*, suggesting that Haukr Erlendsson intended to create an encyclopaedic collection of texts representing the worldview of the thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Icelandic élite of which he was a part (Jakobsson, 2007, pp. 32–34). Unfortunately, no such study has yet been undertaken placing the *Sturlubók* redaction of *Landnámabók* in its manuscript context.

It is likely that a complex relation of exchange exists between many *Íslendingasögur* and *Landnámabók*, with stories often appearing in both sets of texts (Kristjánsson, 1998, pp. 205–6, 263, 288; Ólason, 2004, p. 31; Tómasson, 2004, p. 76). However, rather than an indication of the complete lack of differing settlement traditions as suggested by Vésteinsson and Friðriksson (2003, pp. 144–145), this may have been the result of a concerted effort by members of the Icelandic élite to present a united myth of settlement to the modification or exclusion of varied thirteenth-century traditions. Gísli Sigurðsson refutes the idea of saga writers drawing solely on *Landnámabók* (or vice versa) as a result of a lack of extant traditions in his discussion of the *Austfirðinga sögur* and orality (Sigurðsson, 2004, p. 248), and it is too simple an interpretation to suggest that the narratives contained within these texts were the only settlement traditions known in medieval Iceland. The narratives in *Sturlubók* are in places distinctly different to those found in the sagas in both style and focus (Benediktsson, 1968a, pp. LVIII–LX; Clover, 1985, p. 254); therefore the different narratives chosen by each text must express a deliberate intention in their way of depicting the settlement of Iceland.

Rather than attempting to construct a chronological order of settlement, *Sturlubók* is arranged into five sections: an introductory section, and then four parts corresponding to the division of the Icelandic landscape into political spheres based on the cardinal points. The text moves from the western quarter to the southern, and shapes its narrative

therefore in terms of place rather than time. This arrangement of entries according to place means that events described far apart in the text often overlap as the chronology jumps backwards and forwards, and time is perceived through households, families, and social alliances rather than in a linear fashion (Smith, 1995, p. 321). With its emphasis on space, animals, and the formation of the household-farm, I would argue that this ideological history rationalises the adoption of a uniform settlement pattern of choosing land with respect to livestock, building a farm, and becoming in this way integrated with the new society of medieval Iceland. If the creation of *Landnámabók* was indeed dictated by the needs of the Icelandic cultural and political elite, the role of domestic animals and the emphasis on the establishment of agro-pastoral society is notable.

Explorer traditions and agro-pastoral settlement

The opening chapters of *Landnámabók* present the reader with three stages of discovery for Iceland. According to the account in *Sturlubók*, the first Norsemen to encounter Iceland were led by a Viking called Naddoddr, who stayed only to ascertain the uninhabited state of the island (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 34). Despite naming the territory Snæland, these Faroe-bound travellers spoke highly of the *mikit land* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 34; great land) they had encountered. Likewise, the second visitors led by Garðarr Svávarsson, *lofuðu mjǫk landit* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 36; praised the land very much), and the island is thereafter called *Garðarshólmr* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 36). When Garðarr returns to Norway, a man called Náttfari (and two slaves) are left behind on the island, and settle at Náttfaravík (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 36). Although these two episodes contain no mention of agro-pastoralism or livestock, such explorations may have been motivated by trade opportunities: motivations that *Landnámabók* neglects to include.

The traditions as recorded in *Sturlubók* make no mention of the purpose or result of these visits, other than the discovery of the land, and these brief accounts are clearly not as valuable to the compiler as the settlement of Ingólfr that follows. They are an indication of the various traditions surrounding the settlement of Iceland, from which the compilers of *Landnámabók* wished to make a coherent settlement narrative. While the compiler of *Sturlubók* lists these events as though in a chronological sequence, these traditions may

have co-existed before the written record was composed. As such, they would have been told alongside each other, as well as with the two episodes I shall discuss below. That no mention is made of the discovery of Náttfari's settlement in the subsequent settlement stories further supports the view that these may be descriptions of co-existing traditions of the discovery of Iceland. This would also fit with the place-orientated construction of time in the rest of the text, and explain, perhaps, *Hauksbók's* re-ordering of the explorers' visits that lists Garðarr as the first explorer, then Naddoddr (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 35).

The third exploration or settlement test of Iceland is attributed to a *víkingr mikill* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 36; great Viking), Hrafna-Flóki Vilgerðarson, and it is here that agro-pastoral concerns are highlighted in the text:

> Með Flóka var á skipi bónda sá, er Þórólfr hét, annarr Herjólfr. Faxi hét suðreyskr maðr (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 36).
>
> With Flóki on the ship was that farmer, who was called Þórólfr, another Herjólfr. A Hebridean man was called Faxi.

There are two significant points to draw from this introduction to Flóki and his companions: firstly, that Flóki is described as a *víkingr mikill*, and secondly, that he brings a *bóndi* (farmer) or two with him. While Faxi is defined by his place of origin, the three other named individuals in the expedition are listed by their occupation. This allows a comparison to be made between Flóki and his companions, and the sworn-brothers Ingólfr and Hjǫrleifr (discussed below), as these later "first settlers" are also emphatically not farmers. Rather they are raiders, especially Leifr, who gets his name Hjǫr-leifr (Sword-Leifr) after killing a man in Ireland and taking his wealth and possessions, including *mikit fé* (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 41–42; great wealth, cattle, or sheep).

The stories spread by these first travellers to Iceland about their discovery are mixed, and are given different amounts of space in the manuscript. While both Naddoddr's and Garðarr's companions' positive reports of Iceland are mentioned only briefly (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 34, 36), in the case of Flóki Vilgerðarson's attempt at settlement, a more elaborate anecdote is recorded:

> Þá var fjǫrðrinn fullr af veiðiskap, ok gáðu þeir eigi fyrir veiðum at fá heyjanna, ok dó allt kvikfé þeira um vetrinn. Vár var heldr kalt (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 38).

> Then the fjord was full of fishing (or hunting) catch, and they heeded not to get the hay before gathering all the fishing (or hunting) catches and all their livestock (or cattle) died over the winter. The spring was rather cold.

In these lines, the ease of fishing or hunting is contrasted with the responsibility of agro-pastoral practice. The reference to hunting or fishing may indicate walrus hunting, however, the presence of livestock in the settlement also suggests that Flóki and his companions brought animals with them. No mention is made of their acquiring animals from existing settlers (for example, Náttfari), and presumably such a disaster would not have occurred had previous settlers been around to advise Flóki and his men on the necessity of gathering hay to feed the livestock over the winter. As well as being the only reference to hunting in *Sturlubók*, this extract seems to advertise the dangers of focussing solely on hunting or fishing, to the detriment of the herd, no matter if the former is the easier or more lucrative option. The construction of such a narrative may act as a warning to those future Icelanders who neglected their hay and jeopardised their livestock in such a way. By setting Iceland up as a difficult land, in which settlers must be responsible to survive, the compiler of *Landnámabók* is perhaps emphasising the importance of such responsibility in his post-settlement society.

The conception of Iceland as a land for agro-pastoralism is further emphasised in the responses from Flóki's party on their return to Norway:

> Ok er menn spurðu af landinu, þá lét Flóki illa yfir, en Herjólfr sagði kost ok lǫst af landinu, en Þórólfr kvað drjúpa smjǫr af hverju strái á landinu (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 38).

> And when men asked of the land, then Flóki expressed disapproval, but Herjólfr said the good and faults of the land, and Þórólfr said butter drips from each straw in the land.

Here it is the great Viking who is reluctant to present Iceland in a positive light, whereas the farmer is provided with an over-the-top commendation for the environment. Rather than *Íslendingabók*'s apparent attempt to present Iceland as an island akin to the Christian conception of paradise (Hermann, 2007, p. 24), this story presents Iceland as a paradise for agro-pastoralists. The use of butter for this metaphor reflects the society of post-settlement Iceland, the time and place in which *Landnámabók* was formed, in which dairy products were a vital part of the community and social ideology (Orrman, 2003, p. 279).

While *strá* is most often translated as "blade of grass," it also means "straw," and the agricultural association is clear, especially when put into the mouth of a man emphatically listed as a farmer, as butter from grass is only achievable through dairy animals (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 597).

As discussed above in relation to the archaeological theories of settlement, Ingólfr Arnarson, the most famous of Iceland's settlers, is not overly associated with agro-pastoral practice. Both he and his sworn-brother Hjǫrleifr appear to be raiders, which is perhaps why Hjǫrleifr's plan to embrace the agricultural promise of Iceland goes so badly for him:

> Hjǫrleifr lét þar gera skála tvá [...] En um várit vildi hann sá; hann átti einn uxa, ok lét hann þrælana draga arðrinn. En er þeir Hjǫrleifr vára at skála, þá gerði Dufþakr þat ráð, at þeir skyldu drepa uxann ok segja, at skógarbjǫrn hefði drepit, en síðan skyldu þeir ráða á þá Hjǫrleif, ef þeir leitaði bjarnarins. Eptir þat sǫgðu þeir Hjǫrleifi þetta. Ok er þeir fóru at leita bjarnarins ok dreifðusk í skóginn, þá settu þrælarnir at sérhverjum þeira ok myrðu þá alla jafnmarga sér. Þeir hljópu á brutt með konur þeira ok lausafé ok bátinn' (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 43).
>
> Hjǫrleifr let there be made two temporary sheds, [...] And in the spring, he wanted to sow; he owned one ox, and he let the thralls draw the plough. When Hjǫrleifr and his men were at the sheds, then Dufþakr (one of the thralls) made this counsel: that they should kill the ox and say that a wood-bear had killed it, then afterwards they should attack Hjǫrleifr, if they should seek the bear. After that they said this to Hjǫrleifr. And when they went to look for the bear and were dispersed throughout the wood, then the thralls set on each of them separately and then they murdered all an equal amount. They ran away with their (the men of the settlements') women and loose-property and the boat.

Hjǫrleifr has an unorthodox approach to farm work, forcing his slaves to pull the plough rather than commit his ox to hard labour. Using his Irish slaves as animals leads to the failure and destruction of his settlement, and the theft of his property. Hjǫrleifr's decision to only bring one ox, or to actively remove his ox from farm labour is a choice grounded either in complete ignorance of farm work or a significant animal-human relation in which he values his ox higher than his slaves. When Ingólfr finds the slaves after Hjǫrleifr's death, they are *at mat* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 44; at meat/food) rather than working to establish a settlement proper; and perhaps they should be imagined as eating Hjǫrleifr's ox, relegating the animal to a position below them in the social value system of the household. The conflict between men who value animals too much and those who see

animals merely as possessions is repeatedly emphasised throughout the literary narratives discussed in this thesis (see Chapter 4).

Animal-places

One of the most prominent appearances of domestic animals in *Sturlubók* is in the naming of places. Place-names indicate spaces that span three temporal aspects of the landscape. They occupy the past through the story of their naming, they are reinforced in the present through the process of everyday use of names and stories, and they may influence the future by providing conceptions of utility associated with the place, and encouraging its use for a specific purpose. As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, animals play an important role in the conception of landscapes and environments, and this is particularly significant in relation to the "ovigenic" landscapes of Iceland, a term that is used to reflect the role of grazing sheep in shaping the landscape of Iceland (Dugmore and Buckland, 1991, p. 156). The complex relation identified between spaces, animals, and humans in the formation of places can be used to consider the role of animals in generating place-names in medieval Icelandic settlement narratives.

Human relations with certain aspects of the environment assists in the formation of identity (Jones, 1998, p. 302). In Iceland, this may be reflected in the association of different groups of people with the fjord or valley of their settlement, but these fjords and valleys are in turn associated with animals that occupy those spaces. A particular space may convey the memory of animal presence, and animals can act as classifying markers, tying that animal-place into more general conceptions of the environment (Jones, 1998, p. 302; Sykes, 2014, p. 99). A distinction can be made between place-names that are generated by the act of observing an animal in a place, or those that are formed by the active participation (including death) of an animal, or animals, in the environment. For example, Hrútafjǫrðr (ram-fjord) in *Sturlubók* is named by Ingimundr *enn gamli* (the old) and his company of exploring migrants after seeing two rams in the area (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 218). This episode can be compared to other narratives in *Sturlubók* in which the naming of places after animals is an active exchange of animal, human, and landscape. Three such exchanges are episodes in which pigs are abandoned, or escape human control to reproduce and claim their own places on the island.

It is currently suggested that the pig population of Iceland had declined by the eleventh century (McGovern, 2009, p. 216), and so the inclusion of stories about large numbers of pigs roaming the Icelandic landscape, preserved or re-created by a society in which the presence of the pig is assumed to be reduced, suggests that pigs may have been a key part of later medieval conceptions of early Icelandic settlement. The first of these exchanges in *Sturlubók* appears to set the linguistic formula for this type of story:

> Steinólfi [enn lági] hurfu svín þrjú; þau fundusk tveim vetrum síðar í Svínadal, ok váru þau þá þrír tigir svína (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 158).
>
> Three pigs turned away from Steinólfr [the low]; two winters later in Svínadalr [pig-dale] they were found, and then there were thirty pigs.

Here we see the pigs turning away from their human owner, multiplying in number (in this case by ten), and being found after a certain period of time. Whether the compiler of *Landnámabók* is suggesting the area was called Svínadalr because of this event, or whether the pigs did well there because it was known to be an excellent area for keeping pigs (hence Svínadalr) is not made explicit. What is strongly implied, though, is the productivity of these pigs and Iceland, regardless of human intervention, and through the initiative of the pigs. The pigs are the subject of the verb and are therefore the ones doing the losing or the turning away. As we shall see in the episode discussed directly below, and the instances involving Skalla-Grímr's settlement in *Egils saga*, this is not an isolated occurrence of animals driving the success of settlement.

The second episode of livestock abandonment is longer, and contains a named boar:

> Ingimundi hurfu svín tíu ok fundusk annat haust í Svínadal, ok var þá hundrað svína. Gǫltr hét Beigaðr; hann hljóp á Svínavatn ok svam, þar til er af gengu klaufirnar; hann sprakk á Beigaðarhóli (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 220).
>
> Ten pigs turned away from Ingimundr and they were found the next autumn in Svínadalr [pig-dale], and then there were a hundred pigs. A boar was called

> Beigaðr; he leapt into Svínavatn [pig-water] and swam there until his cloven hoofs fell off; he died (from exertion) at Beigaðarhól.[7]

As in the above passage, the verb *hverfa* is used to indicate the action of the animals, the pigs are the subject of the verb, and they are also found at a place called Svínadalr; but this episode is more extensive. Perhaps indicating the status and wealth of Ingimundr, this time it is *tíu* pigs who disappear, and a *hundrað* pigs that are found. As mentioned above, given the destructive tendencies pigs have towards farmland, this scenario must be viewed as having taken place in a landscape that was far from heavily settled, and the low presence of pigs in the later material and textual record is assumed to reflect their unwelcome destructive nature (McGovern, 2009, p. 216; see Chapter 2).

While Svínadalr and Svínavatn are plausible place-names based on the value of an area for pig-keeping, the naming of Beigaðarhólr after a named boar marks out this animal-place as a stronger example of interaction between animals, humans, and the environment. Here, this place is remembered and named because of the actions of this boar, who actively participated in the manner of his death in the area. That such an animal's death should be remembered, or seem plausible to the recorder of *Landnámabók* to be remembered in this way, suggests that this text engages with a strong recognition of relations between the experience of places and events associated with animals, particularly events in which animals exercised agency. This shall be further discussed below with regards to the mare, Skálm.

The naming of a place after a boar is also found in the third episode involving the reproduction of pigs in Iceland. However, in this episode, the agency of the event rests on Helgi, who puts these pigs ashore while looking for a place to settle:

> Helgi lendi þá við Galtarhamar; þar skaut hann á land svínum tveimr, ok hét gǫltrinn Sǫlvi. Þau fundusk þremr vetrum síðar í Sǫlvadal; váru þá saman sjau tigir svína (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 250–252).

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[7] The same event is depicted in *Vatnsdœla saga* (ch.15), although in the saga the episode is extended further, and the wildness or anger of the pigs is emphasised.

> Helgi then lands at Galtarhamarr [Boar's crag]; there he set to land two pigs, and the boar was called Sǫlvi. They were found three winters later in Sǫlvadalr [Sǫlvi's dale]; then there were together seven tens of pigs.

This passage is distinguished from the two discussed above in several ways: the numbers involved (no longer ten times the starting number of pigs), length of time the pigs are left (three years instead of two), the lack of pig-agency, and the placement of the pigs explicitly next to the shore, at a place called first Galtarhamarr and then Sǫlvadalr. Unusually, both the landing place and the valley in which the pigs are found are named after boars rather than the apparently more common Svín- place-names. Perhaps this story was not associated with an area previously considered good for allowing pigs to sustain themselves and multiply, suggesting that it may belong to an earlier tradition than those seemingly better remembered episodes discussed above. In relation to other animal reproduction narratives in *Landnámabók*, the absence of human intervention in the first two pig episodes may suggest an association with the influence of land-spirits (*landvættir*) in the productivity of the animals, as discussed below in relation to more explicit *landvættir* episodes. This latter episode, which shows human impetus behind the pig-colonisation of the area, may emphasise instead a desire for humans to control the shaping of animal-places, and this tension between animal agency and human control is a feature of many of the sources discussed in this thesis.

In another episode of place-naming after an implicitly autonomous animal, a named cow, Brynja, triggers a conflict between Hvamm-Þórir and Refr *enn gamla* (the old):

> Þórir deildi við Ref enn gamla um kú þá, er Brynja hét; við hana er dalrinn kenndr. Hon gekk þar úti með fjóra tigu nauta, ok váru ǫll frá henni komin. (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 56, 58).

> Þórir quarrelled with Refr the old about that cow, which was called Brynja; after her is the valley named. She went out there with four tens of cattle, and all had come from her (were her offspring).

Like the passages above, this episode links an exchange between unsupervised animals and the reproduction of the herd with the naming of a place. However, this incident of place-naming is not the central focus of the passage, perhaps suggesting that such names and stories were commonplace. The naming of places after animals is a feature that recurs

throughout *Sturlubók*. As can be seen from these episodes, the Icelandic landscape presented in *Sturlubók* is a fertile resource for both animals and humans, although there is a contrast between narratives that emphasise the importance of human agency and those that emphasise the agency of the animals.

In *Sturlubók*, the enforcement of human-orientated agro-pastoral order on the land is best associated with Geirmundr *heljarskinn* (Hel-skin), and Geirmundr is linked with the naming of animal-places. In this section of *Sturlubók*, Geirmundr is listed as having four farms run by slaves or servants, and these settlements were closely tied to the division of his livestock:

> Hann var vellauðigr at lausafé ok hafði of kvikfjár. Svá segja menn, at svín hans gengi á Svínanesi, en sauðir á Hjarðarnesi, en hann hafði selfǫr í Bitru (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 155–156).
>
> He (Geirmundr *heljarskinn*) was incredibly wealthy with regards to movable property and had [wealth] from livestock. So people say, that his pigs went to Svínanes, and [his] sheep to Hjarðarnes, and he had the keeping of cattle at a shieling in Bitra.

This expansive approach to farming is akin to Skalla-Grímr in *Egils* saga, and this description would not seem out of place in one of the *Íslendingasögur*. In *Sturlubók*, however, such itemised descriptions are rare. The details could have easily been constructed by the compiler of *Landnámabók*, as pigs kept at "pig-ness" and sheep at "herd" or "shepherd-ness" are obvious links to be made; but equally these places may have been named after traditions of keeping these sorts of animals in these locations. However, this passage stands out from other place-naming episodes in *Sturlubók* due to its sole emphasis on human activities, and it may be suggested that this episode was included in *Landnámabók* to present Geirmundr in a certain way.

The compiler of *Landnámabók* chose to include or create these details alongside the description of Geirmundr's settlement in Iceland. Despite his prestigious ancestry as the son of a king in mainland Scandinavia, it is Geirmundr's wealth from livestock that is emphasised here. Geirmundr's past status means nothing in this new land without a specific type of wealth: animals and farming-skill. By being listed as keeping pigs, sheep, and cattle, it is implied that Geirmundr had enough land to allow the pigs to roam without

doing damage to the land of others, and that he could be a producer of meat, milk, and wool. Geirmundr is very much an animal-wealthy figure. Evidently the use of animal-associated place-names in *Landnámabók* cannot be considered a uniform tradition; instead such place-names are used in various ways depending on whether they are contributing to the perception of the land, an animal, or a human figure.

Landvættir and the herd

As mentioned above, *landvættir* (land-spirits) can appear either explicitly or implicitly in these settlement narratives, especially in relation to the productivity of animals in Iceland, and the subsequent prosperity of the settler. Two episodes in *Sturlubók* appear to portray supernatural animals: one that shows a horse running away when abused under the agro-pastoralist's yoke, and the other in which the *landvættir* send a billy-goat to assist a settler with his livestock.

In the first of these, a *hestr apalgrár* (apple-grey stallion) comes to Auðunn's stud-horses from Hjarðarvatn (Herd-water) and *hafði undir stóðhestinn* (subdued one of the stud-horses). Rather than allowing the stallion to breed with his horses, Auðunn takes the *grái hestrinn* (grey stallion), and:

> (Hann) setti fyrir tveggja yxna sleða ok ók saman alla tǫðu sína. Hestrinn var góðr meðfarar um miðdegit; en er á leið, steig hann í vǫllinn til hófskeggja; en eptir sólarfall sleit hann allan reiðing ok hljóp til vatnsins. Hann sásk aldri síðan (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 120).
>
> (He) set (the horse) in front of a two-ox sled and ploughed all of his home-field. The horse was easily managed through the middle of the day; but eventually stepped in the ground up to his fetlocks; and after sunset he snapped all the harness and ran to the water. He was never seen afterwards.

Kirsten Wolf notes that *grár* and *apalgrár* are considered indicators of supernatural animals (2009, pp. 235–6), and the line: *Hann sásk aldri síðan* (he was never seen afterwards) suggests that this was not a stray horse from a known neighbour, but rather a horse of folkloric origin, with an assumed home in the lake mentioned in the episode (Wolf, 2009, p. 236; see also Almqvist, 1991). The strength of the horse in pulling a two-yoke plough and stamping fiercely enough on the ground to sink into it, is also reminiscent of the feats of strength of the giant-horse of the *jǫtunn* builder in the *Prose Edda* (Faulkes,

1982, p. 35). That Auðunn attempts to force the stallion to assist him with his farm-work rather than accepting a reproductive contract, seems to lead to the animal vanishing; and nothing is said of any offspring resulting from the stallion's visit to Auðunn's studhorses. This shows a possible *landvættir* willing to assist with pastoral concerns, such as maintaining and improving the herd, but not with the agricultural processes of arable farming represented by the ploughing.

It seems that the compilers of *Landnámabók* considered pastoralist concerns much more appropriate to *landvættir* assistance. The prosperity of a man called Hafr-Bjǫrn (Billy-goat-Bjǫrn), is established through a contract made between a man and a *bergbúi* (rock-dweller) for the purposes of livestock breeding. When Bjǫrn's supply of livestock is sparse, this supernatural figure appears to him in a dream:

> Bjǫrn dreymði um nótt, at bergbúi kœmi at honum ok bauð at gera félag við hann, en hann þóttisk játa því. Eptir þat kom hafr til geita hans, ok tímgaðisk þá svá skjótt fé hans, at hann varð skjótt vellauðigr; síðan var hann Hafr-Bjǫrn kallaðr (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 330).
>
> Bjǫrn dreamed at night that a rock-dweller came to him and offered to make a partnership with him, and it seemed to him that he agreed to this. After that a billy-goat came to his goats, and then his property (or livestock) rapidly thrived in such a way, that he quickly became immensely rich; afterwards he was called Billy-goat-Bjǫrn.

Bjǫrn's partnership with the figure manifests itself in the form of a billy-goat, and this episode explicitly emphasises the reproductive purpose and potential of the land(-spirit), as well as the material rewards of allowing such a contract. A tale similar to both of the episodes above is that of a horse, Fluga, who is impregnated by a *hest fǫxóttan ok grán* (a grey stallion with a different coloured mane), producing a violent and noteworthy stallion called Eiðfaxi (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 235–236). The name of Eiðfaxi (oath-mane) perhaps reflects the nature of his conception through a perceived contract with a supernatural figure, as explicitly laid out in the story of Hafr-Bjǫrn.

However, Bjǫrn's partnership with the land isn't simply focussed on agro-pastoral practice as represented by livestock-breeding, and *Sturlubók* describes how *ófreskir* men (men endowed with second sight) were able to see the *landvættir* accompanying Bjǫrn and his companions to the assembly (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 330). As discussed later in this

chapter, animals in *Landnámabók* appear to play an important role in initiating and forming Icelandic society, so it is perhaps significant that these *landvættir* are associated both with the increase of the herd as well as attendance at the *þing*, which was a vital part of the experience of being a medieval Icelander. In addition, the use of the term *félag* in the Hafr-Bjǫrn episode, which is normally used to indicate a business partnership between two men, places the *bergbúi,* and perhaps the billy-goat, on the same social and ontological level as Bjǫrn in this settlement narrative. This language of homosocial partnership used between human and non-human figures will be discussed further in Chapter 4 in relation to the *fóstri* episodes from the *Íslendingasögur*.

A fourth example of a contract made with the *landvættir* for agro-pastoral success is suggested in the story of Þorsteinn *rauðnefr* (red-nose) and his apparent worship of a waterfall. Þorsteinn is able to recognise each of his sheep individually and assess their health, and the text implies that this success was due to his worship of the waterfall:

> Þorsteinn rauðnefr var blótmaðr mikill; hann blótaði forsinn, ok skyldi bera leifar allar á forsinn. Hann var ok framsýnn mjǫk. Þorsteinn lét telja sauði sína ór rétt tuttugu hundruð, en þá hljóp alla réttina þaðan af. Því var sauðrinn svá margr, at hann sá á haustum, hverir feigir váru, ok lét þá skera. En et síðasta haust, er hann lifði, þá mælti hann í sauðarétt: „Skeri þér nú sauði þá, er þér vilið; feigr em ek nú eða allr sauðrinn elligar, nema bæði sé." En þá nótt, er hann andaðisk, rak sauðinn allan í forsinn (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 358).
>
> Þorsteinn red-nose was a great heathen worshipper; he worshipped the waterfall (with sacrifices), and instructed that leftovers should all be carried to the waterfall. He was also possessed of great foresight. Þorsteinn was able to count twenty-hundred sheep from the common (sheep)fold, when he ran around the whole fold. The sheep were so many, because in the autumn he saw those which were fated to die, and let those be slaughtered. But at the last autumn that he lived, then he said in the sheep-fold: "Now the sheep may all be slaughtered by you, if you want; either I am fated to die, or all the sheep, unless both of us." Then that night, as he breathed his last, he drove all the sheep into the waterfall.

Þorsteinn's reputation as a *blótmaðr mikill* is here linked with his ability to predict which of his sheep will die that winter, an ability that seems implicitly tied to his veneration of the waterfall.

Þorsteinn's bargain with a land-spirit is indicated by the words spoken before his death. He stands in the sheep-fold and says to an anonymous figure that they should slaughter all the sheep if he dies; and then as Þorsteinn dies, the sheep are driven into the

waterfall, again by an anonymous figure. No indication is given as to who drives the sheep, and likewise there is no suggestion that there is a shepherd in the sheep-fold with Þorsteinn when he made his earlier remarks. It may be suggested that Þorsteinn's companion is one of the *landvættir*, like those that accompanied Hafr-Bjǫrn and his men to the assembly. If this is the implication of the story, it makes sense that the sheep are driven into the waterfall, rather than slaughtered and kept as meat for the farm. The sheep are driven into the waterfall at Þorsteinn's death in acknowledgment that these were sheep born from partnership with the waterfall, or the land, and not to remain in human society. By depicting agro-pastoral success in Iceland as the result of an arrangement between land(-spirits) and humans, in which animals are the mediators and vehicles of such success, these narratives fit within the tripartite relationship of animal, human, and land presented in many of the settlement narratives discussed in this chapter; particularly those stories involving animal place-names discussed above, and the conceptualisation of animal settlement discussed below.

Animals and the migrant family

Exchanges between humans, land, and animals in the settlement narratives in *Landnámabók* seem to have been especially strong when the animals involved are presented almost as a part of the migrant family. In an episode combining supernatural figures, animal-inspired place-names, and the choosing of the correct piece of land, a settler comes across a *mermennil* (mer-man) whilst fishing, who tells him his son *skal þar byggja ok land nema, er Skálm merr yður leggsk undir klyfjum* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 96; shall settle and take land there, where Skálm your mare lays down [her] packs). Like the episode involving Helgi and his pigs (discussed above), this line suggests that there was a period in Iceland after prospective settlers had arrived, before they selected their final settling place: a place in which the preferences of animals could not be avoided. While this episode includes a supernatural figure, in this case a water-spirit rather than a land-spirit, it is the named mare, Skálm, that drives this passage. The feminine noun *skálm* means "short-sword," and is therefore not an unlikely name for a horse in Old Norse traditions, as horse names associated with battle are common in skaldic poetry (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 542; Evans, 2013, p. 11). However, to have a mare associated with battle through naming is perhaps unusual.

This episode displays a recognition of the importance certain domestic animals may have played in the settlement traditions of certain Icelandic families. However, the text is disappointingly sparse: it does not tell us whether this mare was brought with the family from their homeland, or whether she was purchased on arrival in Iceland from a previous settler. Nonetheless, the close role this animal plays in this story in which her name is recollected, suggests a close relationship with the human family to whom her actions are vital – if only to the descendants of this family, who have created or preserved this settlement narrative. Even if this story were solely orchestrated to explain the place-name here associated with Skálm's death, *Skálmarkelda* (Skálm-bog), the conceptualisation of deciding where to settle – a decision that would have had severe implications for the migrant household – on the actions of a mare, suggests that domestic animals were considered by thirteenth-century Icelanders as plausible companions in such important decisions. Notably, Skálm is a mare, and not a stallion, which is the usual object of favour in Old Norse-Icelandic texts (Evans, 2013). However, recent aDNA analyses on horse burials in Iceland have suggested that there were more mares present in Viking Age inhumations than previously thought, and Pétursdóttir has emphasised the potential belief in horses as co-settlers that may have been expressed by these burials (Pálsdóttir, 2015; Pétursdóttir, 2007). Pétursdóttir links the presence of horses in, and alongside human burials to the process of settlement in Iceland, suggesting that these animals may have been those that came to Iceland with settler-families and struggled alongside the human colonists to carve out a place in this new land (2007, pp. 74, 76). The cooperation between humans and non-humans that Pétursdóttir sees as indispensable to the construction of Iceland and Icelandic society (2007, p. 76), is also the impression given by the settlement narratives in this chapter that show horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs, as co-creators of the Icelandic world.

The introduction to the Southern Quarter settlements presents this view of animal-influenced settlement:

> Sumir þeir, er fyrstir kómu út, byggðu næstir fjǫllum ok merkðu at því landskostina, at kvikféit fýstisk frá sjónum til fjallanna (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 337).
>
> Some of those, who came out first, settled near to the mountains and marked out the best land that the livestock desired from the sea to the mountains.

This passage does two things: first, it places the first settlers as far as possible from the sea; and second it gives the impression that cattle and other livestock dictated the settlement patterns of Iceland for these first settlers. However, the line: *sumir þeir, er fyrstir kómu út,* could be interpreted in various ways (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 337). It could indicate that only some of those who came out first to Iceland settled in this way, or that some of the settlers, that is, those who came out first to Iceland, settled in this way, leaving later settlers to colonise the land closer to the sea. Either way, the relation to the sea and marine resources is minimalised. These lines portray Iceland as a land settled from the inside out: a practice that, as outlined in the first half of this chapter, would not have been practical if the initial settlers needed to rely on the sea or exploit tradeable goods, such as walrus ivory, until their livestock herds were sufficiently established. The emphasis on the agency of cattle and other livestock in this description echoes the impressions from other episodes in *Sturlubók* and the *Íslendingasögur* (discussed below), in which the actions and preferences of animals are strongly linked with the settlers' experiencing of Iceland.

The role of animals in integrating with an agro-pastoral society

In addition to the strong role of animals in narratives concerned with the process of physical settlement in Iceland, animals also appear in *Sturlubók* as important mediators in the establishment of Icelandic society. However, such episodes focus less on the actions of animals and more on their use and appropriation by human settlers for social and personal advantages within society, especially in secondary-level implications, such as meat and representations of wealth. Emphasis on secondary-level meanings of animals can be seen in the story of Hjǫrleifr's ox and the human-directed animals of Geirmundr *heljarskinn* discussed above. The exchange of livestock and meat between households in Iceland must have been a common event in the establishment of settlements. Such relations between people, mediated by animals, foster bonds of community and obligation that are central to the formation of society.

In *Sturlubók,* settlers generously sharing their food is considered noble (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 102, 127, 234), while a settler who refuses to trade food with others is portrayed with suspicion – and the story of Ásólfr the Christian can be

interpreted as a narrative on the formation of an agro-pastoral community, as well as emphasising tensions between Christian and heathen settlers. The text describes how Ásólfr *var kristinn vel ok vildi ekki eiga við heiðna menn ok eigi vildi hann þiggja mat at þeim* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 62; was a good Christian and wanted not to have to deal with the heathen men and he wanted not to receive meat/food from them). While we must bear in mind the Christian nature of the compilers of Old Norse-Icelandic texts such as *Sturlubók* (Clunies Ross, 2000, p. 117), Ásólfr's determination to isolate himself from the other settlers is not regarded as suspicious because he is a Christian. Rather the settlers mistrust his behaviour because he has no need (or desire) to trade for meat or livestock with them:

> Þá var um forvitnazk, hvat hann hafði til fœzlu, ok sá menn í skálanum á fiska marga. En er menn gengu til lœkjar þess, er fell hjá skálanum, var hann fullr af fiskum, svá at slík undr þóttusk menn eigi sét hafa. En er héraðsmenn urðu þessa varir, ráku þeir hann á brutt ok vildu eigi, at hann nyti gœða þessa (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 62).
>
> Then it was enquired about, what he had for food, and men saw many fish in the house. And when men went to the brook that fell near to the house, it was full of fish, so that it seemed to the men they had never seen such a wonder. And when the men of the district came to be aware of this, they drove him away and wanted not that he should become enriched from this advantage.

This situation repeats itself three times, and Ásólfr is eventually venerated as a holy figure. He is praised for his commitment to his Christian values and the miraculous nature of his settlement. Nonetheless, the text does not suggest that the heathen settlers were wrong to be suspicious of Ásólfr, or drive him away from their community because of his disinclination to share his abundance with them: instead, the language suggests that the heathen settlers were willing, even eager, to trade with Ásólfr, but he held himself apart, thus justifying their behaviour.

Alongside distrust of those wishing to stand outside of the animal-orientated exchange network, this story also acknowledges the power-relations mediated through the exchange of animals and food in which the objects of trade are not only a necessity of life, but also symbols of power and control. By refusing to trade for livestock with the other settlers and focussing only on his abundance of fish, Ásólfr places himself outside of their system of economic and social obligation, and outside of their animal-orientated world.

The exchange of domestic animals as a method of integration with Icelandic society is also seen in a reference to Uni Garðarsson, son of one of the first visitors to Iceland discussed above, who attempts to claim Iceland for King Haraldr (and for himself as *jarl*). *Sturlubók* says that when the *landsmenn* (men of the land/settlers) discover his intentions, *tóku þeir at ýfask við hann ok vildu eigi selja honum kvikfé eða vistir, ok mátti hann eigi þar haldask* (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 299–300; they took it upon themselves to be angry with him and wanted not to sell to him livestock or other provisions, and he was not able to stay there).

Along with refusal to trade, animal theft is also an anti-social act in *Sturlubók*, especially the stealing of sheep; however, occasions of active *sauðataka* (sheep-taking) may contribute to the formation and integration of settlers into an agro-pastoral society. There are three instances of sheep-stealing recorded among the anecdotes in *Sturlubók*, and one of the episodes contributes to the establishment of the land systems we recognise in later medieval texts and documentary sources. These three episodes involve the three different classes of men at the time: a slave, a freed man, and a named man; however, of the three it is the slave that shall be discussed here. The slave, Bjǫrn, belongs to Geirmundr *heljarskinn*, who, as discussed above, was associated with extensive and successful agro-pastoral practice. However, the episode of sheep-stealing for which this man is punished is recorded as having taken place after Geirmundr's death. Firstly, then, this takes place after the period of initial settlement in Iceland, and secondly, after the passing of an excellent farm-manager. Of the punishment that is given to Bjǫrn, the text has this to say: *af hans sekðarfé urðu almenningar* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 154; from his confiscated goods was become common pasture). In this way, Bjǫrn's anti-social act of taking sheep unlawfully from the community, enables society to continue to prosper, and shows the association of enforcement of social order with communal success.

When does *Landnám* end?

Studying *Landnámabók* is a challenge, because unlike the *Íslendingasögur*, it does not follow a linear narrative thread, focussing on one family or district. Instead, its nominal focus is the whole of Iceland, over a period that stretches beyond *Landnám*. As such, it is difficult to make divisions between "settlement" stories, and those dealing with the

descendants of the initial settlers (down to the eleventh century). Perhaps such a distinction should not be made. All these stories are included in a text that appears to set itself the task of recording the discovery and settlement of Iceland. In such a text, perhaps these later stories were considered as much a part of the settlement of Iceland as the immediate settlement stories themselves.

If we read *Landnámabók* as an ideological history, in which multiple compilers have attempted to historicise the landscape of Iceland (Vésteinsson and Friðriksson, 2003, p. 146), we can trace a thematic line from these stories of the settlement to the society in which they were recorded. The genealogical lore included in *Landnámabók* may reflect actual family lines, but more significantly expresses the history of individuals within these families, and their ties to the physical and social landscape of Iceland (Whaley, 2000, p. 192). This tying of Icelanders to the land further reinforces the apparent desire to construct an agro-pastoral myth of settlement for Iceland, to the exclusion of traditions portraying the possible hunter-origins of the very earliest settlers. Through descriptions of the settlements, the physical environment of Iceland is reconceptualised as a cultural landscape in which the agro-pastoral society of medieval Iceland was forged (Glauser, 2000, p. 209). This appropriation of settlement narratives and cultural reconceptualization of the Icelandic environment is also found expressed in variant ways in certain *Íslendingasögur*.

Settlement narratives in the *Íslendingasögur*

The *Íslendingasögur* are considered as texts compiled later than *Landnámabók*, and relate stories of families or districts beyond the settlement period, but, as mentioned above, many of the *Íslendingasögur* also contain stories of individual settlements made in the *Landnám* period.

Outlined below are brief analyses of the settlement narratives used in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, and *Gull-Þóris saga* (*Þorskfirðinga saga*). The two names given for this last saga are telling, as they represent the divide between sagas such as *Egils saga* or *Hrafnkels saga*, that stand focussed on a single figure or family, and those sagas such as *Eyrbyggja saga* that take their names and foci from a specific area of Iceland. *Þorskfirðinga saga* is referred to in both the *Sturlubók* and *Hauksbók*

redactions of *Landnámabók,* and can therefore be assumed to be a title given to an earlier saga similar to that preserved in the late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century vellum manuscript that is introduced as*: Hér hefst saga Gull-Þóris* ("AM 561 4to," 16v; Here begins the saga of Gull-Þórir; Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 154; Cardew, 2004, pp. 18–19; Ólsen, 1910, pp. 35–61). The divide between "individual" and "regional" sagas often reflects two different ways of using settlement narratives in the texts. For example, the sagas focussed on one figure or a certain family tend to use settlement narratives as a way of saying something about that family or figure, whereas the sagas focussed on a region of Iceland are more general in their use of settlement narratives, often using them to place the saga in a socially-constructed temporal and physical space. Both uses reflect the primacy of agro-pastoral concerns, although the focus shifts from personal (or family) excellence, to a more general sense of agro-pastoralism as a defining feature in the establishment of social cohesion.

Animal-human settlement in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*

Chapters 27-29 of *Egils saga* relate the settlement of Skalla-Grímr and his companions in Iceland. As discussed above, Skalla-Grímr's settlement has provided a model for settlement patterns more generally, and has often been used in archaeological interpretations of settlement. However, in literary analyses, Skalla-Grímr has received little attention (Barreiro, 2015, p. 29).

As mentioned above, the sagas use the settlement of Iceland in various ways. In *Egils saga,* we find the settlement of Skalla-Grímr used as a medium through which the family of Kveld-Úlfr is established as one closely linked to agro-pastoral success. Industriousness and farming ability are claimed as important parts of the family long before the move to Iceland:

> Svá er sagt, at Úlfr var búsýslumaðr mikill. Var þat siðr hans at rísa upp árdegis ok ganga þá um sýslur manna eða þar, er smiðir váru ok sjá yfir fénað sinn ok akra (Nordal, 1933, p. 4)
>
> It is said, that Úlfr was a great farmer. It was his custom to rise early in the day and then go around the workings of the men or those who were smiths, and oversee his livestock and fields.

Although this description is set in Norway, it promotes the idea of agro-pastoral success as something natural to Kveld-Úlfr, though necessarily something that requires work. It also presents him as a figure greatly involved in the workings of the farm, rather than a distant overseer. Involvement with all members of the household is also shown by his son Skalla-Grímr in this opening Norwegian episode, as Grímr is described as going fishing with the farm workers (Nordal, 1933, p. 5). Skalla-Grímr's willingness to embrace this work, even with those lower members of the household, implies perhaps that he will successfully negotiate the complex subsistence demands of settlement in Iceland.

This implication of settlement success comes to the fore of the narrative as Skalla-Grímr starts his settlement process:

> Skalla-Grímr var iðjumaðr mikill; hann hafði með sér jafnan margt manna, lét sœkja mjǫk fǫng þau, er fyrir váru ok til atvinnu mönnum váru því at þá fyrst hǫfðu þeir fátt kvikfjár, hjá því sem þurfti til fjǫlmennis þess, sem var. En þat sem var kvikfjárins, þá gekk ǫllum vetrum sjálfala í skógum (Nordal, 1933, p. 75).
>
> Skalla-Grímr was a great hard-working man; he had with him always many people, he had them seek much fishing, those who were already there until there were means of sustenance for people, because at first, they had too few livestock with them as were needed by the many men that were there. But the livestock that was there went every winter self-feeding in the woods.

The representation of Skalla-Grímr's settlement seems to reflect the archaeological interpretations discussed above, and the men focus first on fishing while their herds become established. However, what is most interesting about the establishment of these cattle herds is that the cattle establish themselves independently of the men. They look after themselves, feed themselves through the winter, and in this way, are co-partners of Skalla-Grímr's settlement. Not only are the cattle not a hindrance to the humans, but in establishing themselves and thus allowing the men more time to perform other activities, they are contributing to the continued survival and prosperity of the human settlement.

This cattle herd grows rapidly from little livestock, to too many. As Skalla-Grímr then has too many cattle to graze them near the farmstead, the text informs us that his cattle *gekk* [...] *upp til fjalla allt á sumrum* (went [...] up to the mountains all of the summer; Nordal, 1933, p. 76). In these passages, Skalla-Grímr's farming success and land division seems to rely on the agency of Skalla-Grímr's animals as much as Skalla-Grímr himself,

and the movement of the cattle is represented as something the livestock do regardless of Skalla-Grímr's intervention. Like in the *Landnámabók* episodes discussed above, the preferences of animals shape human settlement; a circumstance that perhaps reflects observable animal behaviour, as cattle are capable of intelligently selecting the best grazing places (Gordon, 1989, pp. 73–74).[8] Skalla-Grímr only reacts to animal activity, as he realises *þat fé varð betra ok feitara, er á heiðum gekk* (the cattle became better and fatter, those which went on the moors/heaths; Nordal, 1933, p. 76). Likewise, while Skalla-Grímr's discovery that sheep could graze all winter in the mountain valleys is described in a way that focusses on his apparent farming-intelligence, the text latterly implies that this was discovered through the agency of the sheep (Nordal, 1933, p. 76). Thus, when Skalla-Grímr builds in the mountains and *átti þar bú; lét þar varðveita sauðfé sitt;* (had there a dwelling; the sheep let themselves be kept there; Nordal, 1933, p. 76), the text makes clear this is a settlement allowed by the sheep. While the settlement narratives in *Egils saga* are clearly deployed to position Egill's family as exceptional farmers and farm-managers, the ways in which this is achieved emphasise the vital role of animal agency in agro-pastoral strategies.

The destruction of a household in *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*

The settlement narrative in *Hrafnkels saga* is used, as in *Egils saga*, to link a central family with a certain relation to agro-pastoral practice and the foundation of a successful household, but this process is mediated through the presence of a dream-figure, perhaps echoing the land-spirit narratives preserved in *Sturlubók*. Among the *Austfirðinga sögur*, there exist two versions of the dream-landslide-animal story told in *Hrafnkels saga:* one version in which Hallfreðr, father of Hrafnkell Freysgoða is the settler-dreamer (*Hrafnkels saga*), and the other in which Hrafnkell, son of Hrafn, grandfather of Hrafnkell Freysgoða is the settler-dreamer (*Brandkrossa þáttr*). As well as the name of the dreamer, and the name of the settlement – listed either as Geitdalr in *Hrafnkels saga* or Skriðudalr in *Sturlubók* and *Brandkrossa þáttr* – these two traditions disagree in the type of livestock

[8] This mix of observable grazing behaviour and animal-as-provider is also found in the story of Harri the ox in *Laxdœla saga* (ch.31).

killed by the landslide of which the dream appears to warn. In *Sturlubók* and *Brandkrossa þáttr* the landslide kills a boar and a bull (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 299; Jóhannesson, 1950b, p. 183), as opposed to a boar and a billy-goat in *Hrafnkels saga*.

Hrafnkels saga tells us:

> Ok eina nótt dreymdi hann, at maðr kom at honum ok mælti: „Þar liggr þú, Hallfreðr, ok heldr óvarlega. Fœr þú á brott bú þitt ok vestr yfir Lagarfljót. Þar er heill þín ǫll." Eptir þat vaknar hann ok fœrir bú sitt út yfir Rangá í Tungu, þar sem síðan heitir á Hallfreðarstǫðum, ok bjó þar til elli. En honum varð þar eptir gǫltr ok hafr. Ok inn sama dag, sem Hallfreðr var í brott, hljóp skriða á húsin, ok týndusk þar þessir gripir, ok því heitir þat síðan í Geitdal (Jóhannesson, 1950a, pp. 97–98).
>
> And one night he dreamed that a man came to him and said: "There you lie, Hallfreðr, and rather unsafe. Go you away from this settlement and go west over to Lagarfljót; there is all your luck." After that he woke up and went from his settlement out beyond Rangá in Tunga, to that place which was afterwards called Hallfreðarstaðir, and he lived there until old-age. But a boar and a billy-goat were left there by him. And in the same day as Hallfreðr left that place, a landslide suddenly came to the house, and these valuable things were lost there, and from this that place is called afterwards Geitdalr.

This passage has both positive and negative connotations for Hallfreðr's family. Firstly, the dream-figure who warns Hallfreðr of the impending landslide is not only saving his life, but moving him to a replacement farmstead on which he shall be lucky; although this may simply refer to not being crushed by the landslide, rather than agro-pastoral success. However, the saga does specify that Hallfreðr lives to an old age, and this episode sets up his son, Hrafnkell, as a member of a prosperous family. In this way, the dream-figure can be linked to the land-spirits encountered in other settlement narratives. As seen from the analysis of *Sturlubók* above, such spirits were portrayed as associates in the settlement of Iceland, especially in relation to agro-pastoral success.

However, the positive connotations suggested by the advice of the dream-figure and Hallfreðr's subsequent successful settlement, are contrasted with the negativity of the destroyed household and the two animals left behind to be crushed. The destruction of the initial settlement may imply that Hallfreðr does not make the correct choice in his first place of settlement. Rather, he chooses a place from which the land itself violently rejects him. The leaving behind of the *gripir* (valuable things) also reflects negatively on Hallfreðr.

While this tradition could simply be a record of a memorable natural event, and the death of the animals an indication of the speed at which the settlement had to be evacuated, this episode perhaps shows Hallfreðr and his descendants as irresponsible farmers, guilty of neglecting their livestock. This may also be reflected in Hrafnkell's later actions in the saga that lead to the confiscation of his farmstead and the death of his horse (see Chapter 4).

With regards to the place-name that the saga ascribes to the valley after this event, the variation in the different traditions, as well as the fact that *geit* often has the specific meaning of female-goat (rather than the *hafr* mentioned in the text), may suggest that this name is not an example of an animal place-naming story as discussed above. However, if not traditionally attached to this story, it is interesting that the saga-writer chose to include the name, perhaps attempting to ground this story in the context of settlement narratives that showcase the naming of places through animals. The settlement narratives in *Hrafnkels saga* echo the traditions raised from discussion of *Sturlubók*, especially in relation to the *landvættir* as assistants to settlement, and the experiencing of the Icelandic environment through the actions or fates of animals.

Regional obligation

In contrast, the settlement narratives utilised in sagas such as *Eyrbyggja saga* are less focussed on identifying an individual figure or family with agro-pastoral settlement success, and more on establishing an area of collective social settlement in the landscape. The opening chapters of *Eyrbyggja saga* use settlement narratives to tie the identity of the saga-figures to a historic sense of place that is bound up with the possession of *góða landakosti* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 7; good quality land). It can be suggested that settlement narratives are used in two different ways in the *Íslendingasögur*, depending on the individual or regional focus of the saga, often reflected by the title ascribed to it, though the two names of *Gull-Þóris saga* (*Þorskfirðinga saga*), may suggest that use of settlement narratives in this saga might not conform to this simplistic division.

As mentioned above, *Þorskfirðinga saga* is referred to in *Landnámabók*, and the equation of this earlier title with the later manuscript occurrence of *Gull-Þóris saga* is not certain; however, many details in *Gull-Þóris saga* are similar or identical to those found in

Landnámabók (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 154; Ólason, 2005, p. 115; Ólsen, 1910, pp. 35–61). Unlike *Egils saga* or *Hrafnkels saga*, *Gull-Þóris saga* makes no attempt to use settlement narratives to emphasise the agro-pastoral intelligence or strength of Gull-Þórir's family. In this way, the alternate name for this saga: *Þorskfirðinga saga* may be the more appropriate one, reflecting a regional-based attitude towards settlement narratives.

While it cannot be denied that *Gull-Þóris saga* is a saga primarily based around the lead character of Gull-Þórir, it is notable that the description of Gull-Þórir's migration to, and settlement of Iceland (ch.6-7) is not so much a narrative of Gull-Þórir's settlement, but rather emphasises his subsidiary role in the power-exchanges of Hallsteinn and his rivals:

> Þórir helt vestr fyrir Þorskafjǫrð skipi sínu ok lendi við Grenitrésnes. Þar fann hann Hallstein ok aðra bændr, ok buðu þeir Þóri land inn frá Grǫf milli á tveggja. Hallsteinn fekk honum búfé ok Þuríði, dóttur sína, til forráða. Gekk Þórarinn, son Hallsteins, á skip með Þóri, ok váru þeir fimmtán á skipi, en Hallsteinn fór it efra með búferli Þóris, ok váru margir saman (Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, 1991a, p. 194).
>
> Þórir held course on his ship west to Þorskafjǫrðr and landed at Grenitrésnes. There he met Hallsteinn and other farmers and they offered Þórir land inwards from Grǫf between two rivers. Hallsteinn gave livestock to him, as well as his daughter, Þuríðr, to manage the farm. Þórarinn, Hallsteinn's son, was on the ship with Þórir and they were fifteen on the ship; but Hallsteinn travelled along the land with the belongings of Þórir's household, and there were many of them.

In this passage, we see Hallsteinn and his allies offering Gull-Þórir land, livestock, and a farm manager who is familiar with Icelandic conditions. In the view of this saga-society, these are the three things necessary to succeed in Iceland. However, Gull-Þórir does not acquire the land himself but is given it by Hallsteinn. This exchange places Gull-Þórir in Hallsteinn's debt, in a part of the saga that appears focussed on regional politics. It can be argued that the gift of Hallsteinn's daughter as a farm manager places Gull-Þórir in Hallsteinn's family, but not as an equal of Hallsteinn, but as a dependant. In *Gull-Þóris saga* then, it seems that settlement narratives are used in a way akin to the social integration narratives from *Sturlubók*, in which the language and conventions of agro-pastoral settlement are used as methods of social, and in this case perhaps, political integration within the community.

Spaces of settlement

As shown in the above discussion, a multiplicity of narratives surround the settlement of Iceland, each placing varying emphasis on the importance of domestic animals in the settlement process; however, the analysis so far has focussed on the presence of domestic animals in textual narratives about the settlement, with only brief comments on the archaeology of settlement in Iceland. This final section will take a closer look at how the relations suggested by these narratives may have structured, and been structured by, the spatiality of the settlement-era household-farm. General trends of Viking Age farms will be discussed, followed by a closer examination of the excavations at Aðalstræti 14-18 as Iceland's most deeply studied Viking Age house.

The Viking Age farm

The household-farms of Viking Age Iceland were largely dominated by the bow-sided, three-aisled residential building often referred to as a *skáli* in Icelandic archaeology (Milek, 2006, p. 88; Vidal, 2013, p. 49). These houses are reminiscent of those found elsewhere in Scandinavia at this time, and Milek has suggested their form is most similar to late Iron Age buildings found in western and south-western Norway, and the presumed Norwegian settlements in the Faroe islands (Milek, 2006, pp. 147, 150; Myhre, 1998, 1980; Schmidt, 1994; Skre, 1996; Zimmermann, 1992). However, it is important to note the potential differences between the Icelandic building styles, and the house forms from mainland Scandinavia.

Scholars have emphasised the detachment of the byre from the main residential building on these early Icelandic farms, which can be contrasted with the larger and more easily identifiable end-byres of longhouses in mainland Scandinavia, as shown in Figure 2 (Berson, 2002; Hamerow, 2002, p. 15; Milek, 2006, p. 90). However, many excavations of Icelandic Viking Age farms are incomplete or inconclusive, and therefore less useful for analysis of animal spaces than we might wish. Byres, detached or otherwise, are rarely found in a Viking Age context in Iceland and even in later medieval contexts byres are noted in less than a third of cases (Berson, 2002, p. 57; see Chapter 3). At some sites, the assumed detachment of the byre is based on the lack of any findings that can indicate

animal stalls within the house, rather than the explicit presence of an external byre. Given the analysis at Aðalstræti 14-18 discussed below, Milek, in her comprehensive survey of Viking Age houses in Iceland, has suggested that a small number of animal stalls may have been present at earlier excavated sites but remained undetected because of the lack of appropriate excavation techniques, such as micromorphological analysis that might have shed light on spaces the purpose of which was otherwise indecipherable (Milek, 2006, p. 128). Nonetheless, it is clear that if animals were stalled in some part of these Icelandic houses, it would have been a significantly lower number of animals than those stalled in the Scandinavian longhouses shown in Figure 2.

The tenth-century houses at Herjólfsdalur (Iceland), shown in Figure 3, are remarkable for their attached byres (Berson, 2002, p. 54; Milek, 2006, pp. 136–137). The close building of house and byre is found also at Sveigakot (see Chapter 3), although in this case the later house is built adjacent to, and overlapping with the earlier animal-building. In contrast, it appears that a conjoined house and byre was always present at Herjólfsdalur, from settlement to the late tenth or early eleventh century, as when the earlier conjoined byre (VIII) falls out of use, buildings IV and V are built (Hermanns-Audardóttir, 1991, p. 5). In contrast to Herjólfsdalur, Figure 4 shows three examples of the most common early Icelandic building style; however, it should be noted that the house at Eiríksstaðir shows signs of architectural change. As indicated on the illustration, an earlier doorway has been filled in, and the hearth moved (Ólafsson, 1998, p. 149). While the movement of the hearth has been interpreted as a sign that the initial building was placed to the south of the surviving structure and then moved after a landslide, it may also indicate a re-organisation of the interior space of the house very soon after settlement (Ólafsson, 1998, p. 149). It is known that architectural preferences in Iceland changed over time, as indicated by the presence of pit houses in only the earliest stages of settlement (Milek, 2006, p. 307). The later abandonment and, in places, wilful infilling of the pit-houses (see Chapter 3) are considered part of the changing symbolic expression of the farm, and the re-building, movement, or re-organisation of dwellings can likewise be considered as an indication of changing relationships between the builders and their world.

As outlined in the introduction, the aim of this chapter has not been to examine settlement narratives in a quest for the “truth” of the settlement process in Iceland, but

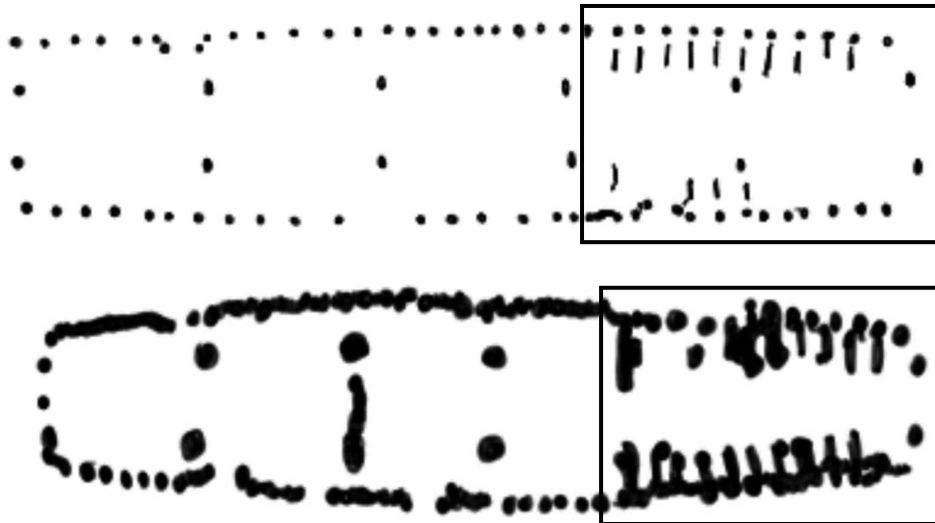

Figure 2 Two examples of longhouse typology in mainland Scandinavia from the 8th century (top) and 9th century (bottom). The substantial animal stalling areas can be seen in the boxed areas. Adapted from Fig. 1 (Beck, 2014, p. 129).

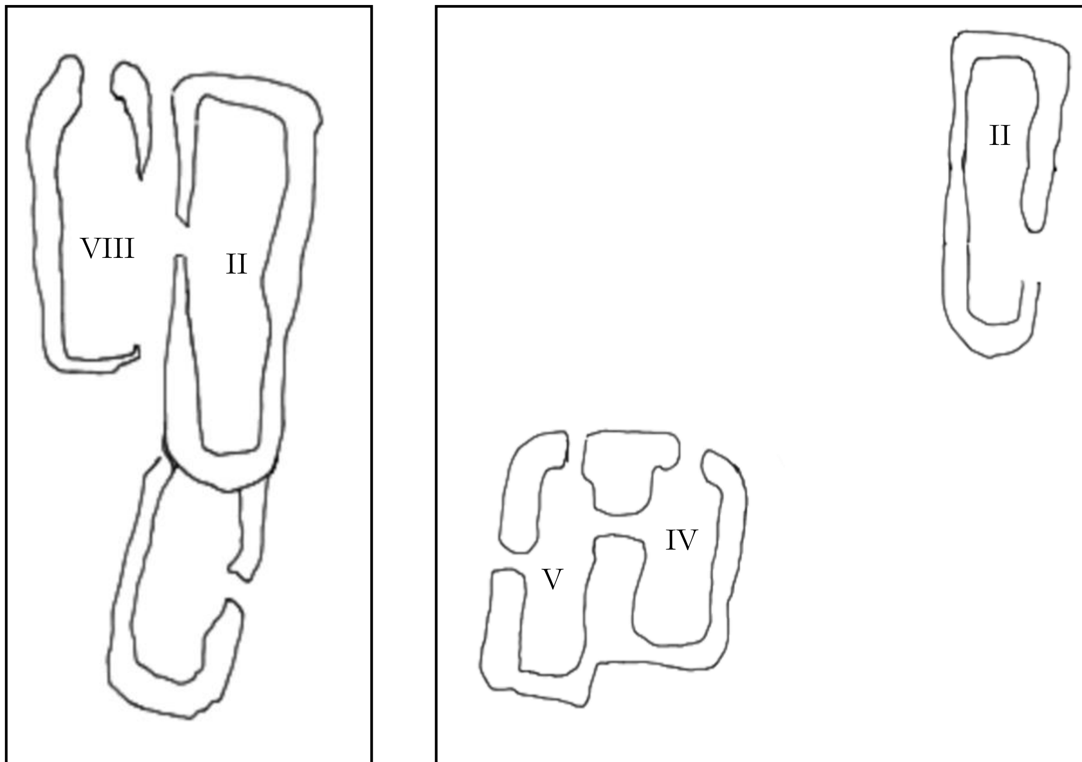

Figure 3 Two residential structures and attached byres at Herjólfsdalur at the earlier (left) and later (right) stages of settlement (after Hermanns-Audardóttir, 1991, fig. 4). The two illustrations are not to scale.

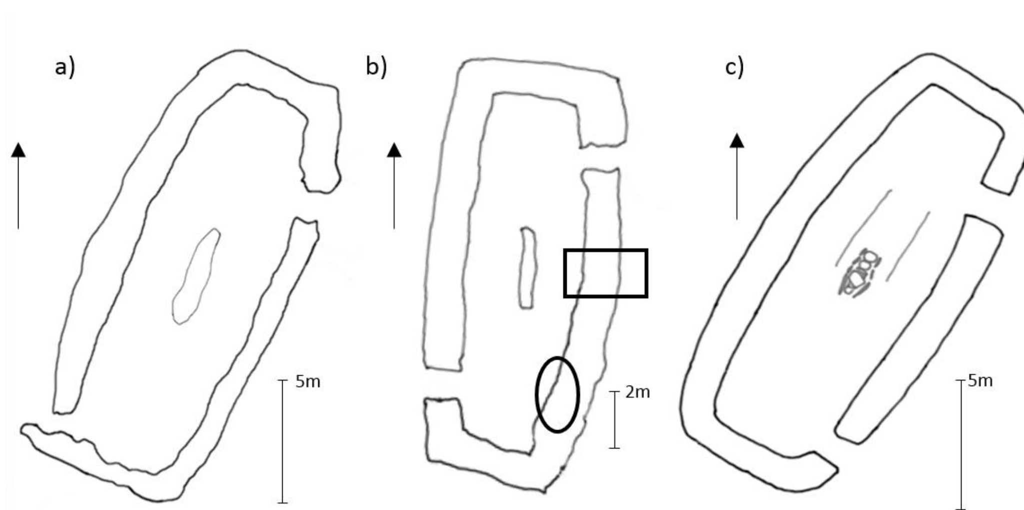

Figure 4 The Viking Age houses at Aðalstræti 14-18 (a), Eiríksstaðir (b) and Vatnsfjörður (c). The rectangle on the Eiríksstaðir plan indicates an earlier doorway that was filled in and replaced by the doorways shown, and the oval indicates the hearth relating to this earlier building phase (adapted from Milek, 2006, p. 200, fig. 4.42; Edvardsson, 2005b, fig. 1; and Ólafsson, 1998, fig. 22).

rather to gather information about the settlement from a variety of perspectives, both medieval and modern, and consider the interplay between animals, humans, and spaces contained in these narratives. By exploring the physical places of settlement, as discussed here with regards to early Icelandic buildings and the Reykjavík settlement, this section of the chapter not only helps shape a multi-faceted understanding of the settlement and later medieval depictions of it, but also allows us to further explore the role that space and built environments can play in the analysis of animal-human relations: analysis that is further developed in Chapter 3.

Aðalstræti 14-18

Reykjavík, the modern-day capital of Iceland, and the supposed settlement place of Ingólfr Arnarson, remains the centre of Icelandic conceptions of the settlement, as can be seen by the establishment of the *Landnámssýningin* (Settlement Exhibition) around the remains of the house found at Aðalstræti 14-18. Aðalstræti 14-18 is the earliest Icelandic house that has been studied at a micromorphological level, and its proximity to a pre-877 structure, combined with its apparent links to walrus-hunting, make it perhaps the most suitable structure excavated to-date for discussion alongside settlement narratives. The house will be used here for a focussed analysis of a close-to-settlement household-farm and an

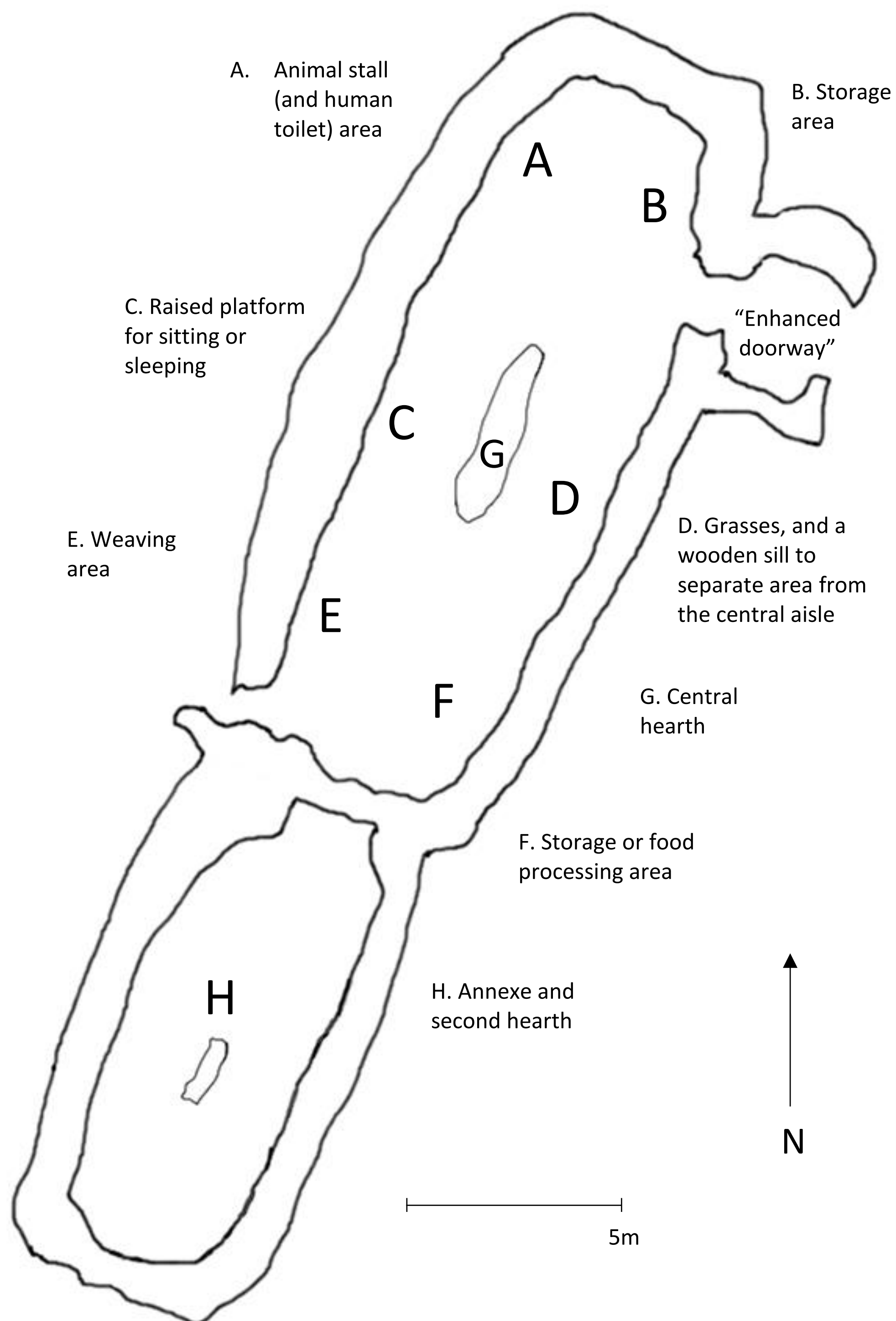

Figure 5 The organisation of space in the later building phase at Aðalstræti 14-18 (adapted from Milek, 2006, p. 200, fig. 4.42).

opportunity to discuss modern narratives of settlement. It should be noted that the 2017 exhibition at the *Landnámssýningin* is that of *Landnámsdýr* (animals of settlement; English name: Viking Animals), focussed around the important role animals played in the settlement of Iceland ("Viking Animals," n.d.).

While the Aðalstræti house is evidently not part of the first phase of settlement in the Reykjavík area (see Figure 1), the built-up nature of the city means that archaeological excavations are limited to those areas being cleared for new construction work, and that sites are uncovered on a basis reliant on the desires of city developers rather than archaeological observation. Despite this, and despite the fact that early sites have been uncovered elsewhere in Iceland, most notably in Mývatnsveit in the north (Edvardsson, 2005b, 2003; Hicks et al., 2013; McGovern et al., 2007; Roberts, 2009; Vésteinsson, 2004b), the house at Aðalstræti 14-18 offers the best opportunity so far to examine the interior organisation of a Viking Age household in Iceland (Milek, 2006, pp. 156–209, 2001, p. 35). Dated from the tenth century, this house conforms to the Viking Age Icelandic trend of a bow-sided, curved roof, three-aisled building with a prominent central hearth; however, it contains unusual internal features in what Milek perceives as the "private" spaces of the house (Milek, 2006, pp. 161, 208; Roberts, 2001, pp. 64, 92).

The division of the main house into six different spaces, as shown in Figure 5, was effectively enforced or encouraged by a number of wooden floor-level or super-structural dividing mechanisms (Roberts, 2004, p. 46). Further divisions are made by the transitory spaces of the doorways and the later extended threshold and attached annexe. As discussed above, the three-aisled structure of the house is familiar from elsewhere in the North Atlantic in this period, but this structural similarity should not be seen solely as a method of reinforcing cultural memory in replicating buildings from the settlers' homelands, but as a decision made by the individual household to conform to a desired cultural standard (Milek, 2006, pp. 146, 147–150; Vidal, 2013, p. 76). Building in a certain way reflects a conscious choice, and that choice must have been meaningful in the context of settlement-era Iceland.

The divisions appear to split the house into an animal-occupation area (A), storage area (B) and entrance porch, a human-occupation area based around the long hearth (G)

and two living areas (C and D) including a weaving area (E), and the south end of the hall with another entrance porch and areas (F) for food preparation and storage (Milek, 2006, pp. 199–209, 2004, p. 86). The two living areas appear to have been separated from the hearth space, one by elevation, and the other by a wooden sill (Milek, 2006, pp. 189–192), and the layout of this building was a deliberate attempt to organise the household, reflecting ideas about the relationships between the occupants of the house.

Evidence for a potential animal-occupation area in this house is considered unusual in an Icelandic context from this period. The exception to this, so far, is Hrísbrú in the Mosfell valley (see Figure 6). Given the small space of the animal stalling area at Aðalstræti 14-18, it has been suggested either sheep or goats would have been likely candidates for this shared human-animal space; and based on the dung remains analysed at the site, it can be seen that these animals were either fed waste from the preparation of human food, or this space was also used as a toilet by the human occupants of the house (Milek, 2006, p. 180, 2004, p. 82). The feeding of food waste to these animals may indicate a lack of fodder available at the site, a recognition of the recycling capabilities of the animals, or a fluid perception between what was classified as human or animal food. This was a common

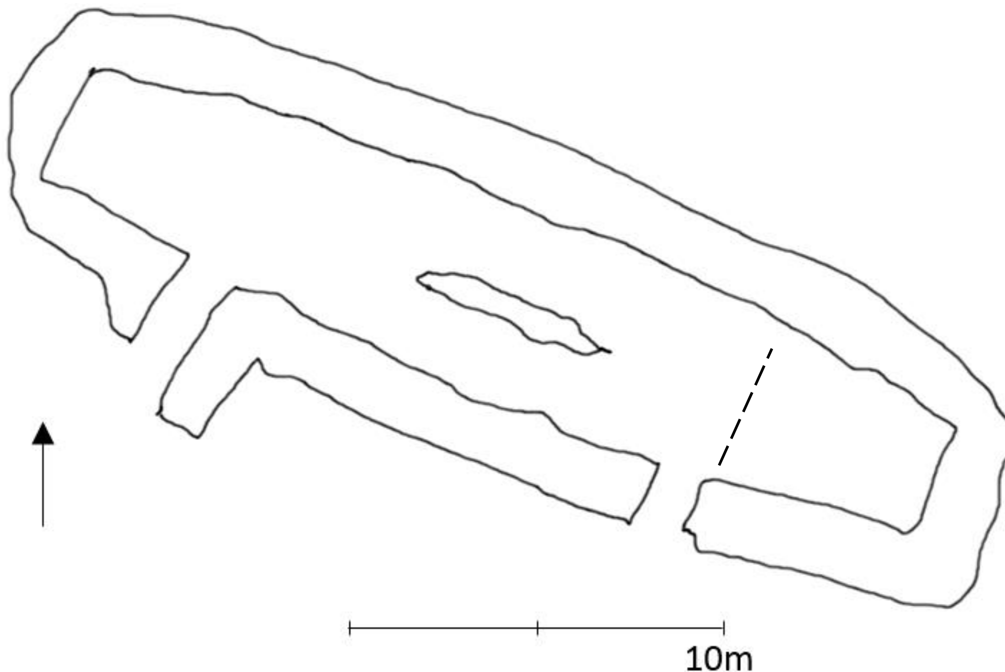

Figure 6 The house at Hrísbrú, with the dashed line showing the boundary of the eastern gable room that was sometimes used for stalling animals. After Byock and Zori (2014, p. 4).

practice with pigs in Viking Age towns, presumably where the penned-up animals were favoured for their ability to consume a wide range of food waste (Wigh, 2001, pp. 137–138).

Unlike Scandinavian longhouses, in which almost half of the building could be devoted to animal stalls (shown in Figure 2), the structure at Aðalstræti 14-18 could only have held a very limited number of animals (Milek, 2006, p. 202, 2001, p. 82; Vidal, 2014, p. 141). The suggestion of shared sheep/goat-human space is surprising given the alleged preference of cattle among the initial migrants; although alternatively a few cattle could have been stalled in the area (Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 100). This may seem to be a less efficient use of space, providing shelter for fewer animals, but may have indicated the status or heritage of the migrant family. If the stalls were primarily for display, then they could have been for the keeping of select animals, such as valued fighting horses or a strong pair of oxen (Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 100). Indeed, closeness to the human inhabitants of the dwelling may indicate a special relationship with whichever animals might have been kept there. However, in the current absence of a separate or joined byre comparable to other farm sites in Iceland (see Chapter 3), the settlement at Aðalstræti 14-18 may also suggest that when the house was first constructed, the limited stall space at the end of the building was sufficient for the livestock initially brought to the island. As mentioned above, the walrus bones deposited in various contexts in the house suggests that this migrant family may have based their prestige, or at least an equal amount of prestige on animals other than cattle or sheep, therefore justifying a smaller stalling area.

For determining what kinds of animals we might expect to find on the settlement era household-farm, a faunal signature has been suggested for Iceland (Amorosi, 1991, p. 281). Using data taken from Herjólfsdalur and Tjarnargata 4 in Reykjavík, Amorosi has suggested the earliest midden layers at farmsteads are characterised by a preferential sequence of remains, with bird bones making up the highest numbers in the assemblages, cattle or pig bones the second most, and sheep and goats the lowest (Amorosi, 1991, p. 280). Although these results vary by region, as land strategies were necessarily diverse, the emphasis on cattle and pigs in the initial period of settlement is consistent across almost every site (Amorosi, 1991, pp. 281, 280; Vésteinsson et al., 2006, p. 100). This might support Vésteinsson's suggestion that a very limited number of cattle were the likely

inhabitants of this space. However, as only sheep or goat dung has been found at the site so far, the suggestion of cattle must remain the least likely suggestion (Milek, 2006, p. 186).

In its later building phase, as can be seen in Figure 5, the house shows evidence of what Anna Beck calls an “enhanced doorway,” in which the main entrance of the building is accompanied by a structure jutting outwards from the main wall (Beck, 2014, p. 132; Milek, 2006, p. 160). In household archaeology, doorways are understood as key points in the construction of a dwelling, acting as both a barrier and bridge to the outside world (Beck, 2014, p. 130). In access analysis terms, an enhanced doorway increases the space between the outside and the deepest part of the house, and therefore formalises the act of moving in and out of the house, as well as providing a greater distinction between the two states of being in or out (Beck, 2014, p. 135). However, this addition to the original structure belongs to the second building-phase of the site, along with the addition of an annexe on the south end (Milek, 2006, p. 157; Vidal, 2013, p. 106). This might suggest that for the initial builders of the house, outward displays of status were only a latter consideration, perhaps after more settlers had arrived in the area, or once the prosperity of the household had increased.

Beck associates the enhancement of doorways in southern Denmark with the Viking Age hospitality principle, and it is notable that the enhanced doorway at Aðalstræti is directly opposite the theorised animal-occupation area. The enhanced doorway may have been the doorway through which animals were moved on their route to the external aspects of the household-farm, given that it provides the shortest distance from the stalls to the outside. If this doorway was not for animal use, and rather the stalls were based opposite it to provide a display to those using the enhanced doorway, then the animals would have to have been led from their stalls, and through the human-occupational space to use the unenhanced doorway at the other end of the building, which seems unlikely. Spatial aspects of animal-human relations are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Alternative spaces and conforming to a cultural norm

The role of alternative housing structures in Iceland have been relatively ignored, with the majority of archaeological work focussed on the remains of farmsteads and only a few scholars considering cave-dwellings (Ahronson, 2015, 2002, 2000; Hjartarson et al., 1991; Hjartarson and Gísladóttir, 1993, 1985, 1983; Holt and Guðmundsson, 1980; Ólafsson et al., 2006; Þórðarson, 1931). This is primarily a result of the method of sourcing sites for excavation in Iceland, which was historically focussed on textual references (Friðriksson, 1994, pp. 14–16). Caves are referenced on three occasions in *Sturlubók* as places associated with outlaws and non-human figures, and are marginal places in the *Íslendingasögur*, outside of society and likewise normally occupied by outlaws or troll-figures (Hastrup, 1986, p. 281; Pálsson and Edwards, 1972, pp. 30, 33, 94). In the sagas, caves are occasionally utilised as animal-shelters, but often become embroiled in the actions of outlaws.[9] They are not places of civilised settlement. This apparent exclusion of cave-dwellings from the structure of the household-farm in Old Norse-Icelandic literature implies the centrality of the traditional form of the farmhouse in these narratives. This is also implied in the apparent determination in *Landnámabók* of the initial explorers to build houses to overwinter in, rather than utilising the potential for manmade caves or natural shelters.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the various settlement narratives formed around the establishment of Iceland in relation to the household-farm and the role of animals, focussing on the textual sources and the most recent archaeological theories of Norse settlement. Iceland is a country in which livestock and agro-pastoralism are the foundations on which society is built; or so the later textual sources seem to tell us.

For decades, scholars have argued over the various redactions of *Landnámabók*, suggesting these texts were compiled and constructed with distinct ideological

[9] See: *Grettis saga Ásmundarson,* ch.57, 62, 66; *Fljótsdæla saga,* ch.5, 17; *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, ch.1 and 2; and *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss.*

frameworks in mind: either to provide a unified myth of settlement for Iceland, or to boost the political interests of certain individuals or families in the post-settlement period. I would suggest that the re-fashioning of the settlement of Iceland as evident in *Sturlubók* has been designed, at least in part, to emphasise animal-places and the association of animals and the land with the establishment of the household-farm as the primary unit of Icelandic society, around which Icelandic identity was constructed. The textual sources appear to show the establishment of domestic animals and the process of setting up a farm as methods of induction into the Icelandic community, perhaps drawing on a collective memory of the farm and its formative role in the establishment of the place of Iceland.

The social relations between spaces and actors are especially significant in a society that is under stress and heavily reliant on each of its members, as settlement-era Iceland must have been (Carlisle and Milek, 2016). It is this strain, perhaps, that the later textual narratives recollect in their emphasis on the establishment of the farm as the primary action in settling Iceland, and the prominence of animal-places in this settlement process. The impetus behind recording such narratives in the thirteenth century may also have been triggered by ecological tension that revived social memories of the time of settlement. Although the members of Icelandic society involved with the recording and redacting of these texts would have been the elite, and therefore not those members of society most affected by the worsening climatic conditions of the thirteenth century, it cannot be said that the conditions of the tenant farmers and other lower-status figures would have had no impact on those of higher status. For example, the events in *Hænsna-Þóris saga* that culminate in the burning of Blund-Ketil show a fourteenth-century perspective on the economic and ecological plight of tenant farmers triggering social conflict between chieftains. Trouble for some farmers would be a cause of concern for all, in this society that relied on cooperation and exchange for the community to survive and prosper. This is explored further in Chapter 2.

While explorer traditions are referred to in the opening chapters of *Landnámabók*, the text is primarily concerned with three main strands of settlement narrative. The first of these is the naming of animal-places and the role of these places in the formation of successful agro-pastoral household-farms, which is also shown in *Egils saga* through the agency of Skalla-Grímr's livestock. The second strand is the mutually-supportive

relationship between animals and the land in establishing a successful agro-pastoral settlement, demonstrated by the intervention of land-spirits in *Landnámabók* and the dream-figure in *Hrafnkels saga*. The third type of settlement narrative is used to show the household-farm and relations with livestock as methods of social integration in Icelandic society and to emphasise the cohesion of this society, often on a regional scale. This is seen in *Sturlubók* through episodes of sheep-stealing and the exchange of food or livestock, and is the primary use of settlement narrative in *Gull-Þóris saga*.

The ideological place of settlement is constructed by the assemblage of various spaces emphasised in these texts and their associated traditions. For example, spaces of animal-grazing memorialised by an animal-associated place-name become enshrined in the social landscape of later Icelandic society, just as the location of a previous, or first farmhouse on a farm was accorded special meaning by subsequent generations of inhabitants of the area. These are two components of the social landscape that have been incorporated into the construction of settlement narratives, or rather, they are components of the socially-construed landscape around which these settlement narratives are constructed. The concept of *land* in Old Norse could indicate a home, or place of rule, as well as a physical landmass, and so the term "Landnámabók" can be read as "the book of the taking of the home-place (of Iceland)" (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 370). Settlement narratives are not only representations of settlement, but part of the settlement itself. The narratives recorded in *Landnámabók* and the *Íslendingasögur* are acts of colonisation, settling ideas and concepts onto the parchment, and into the minds of readers or listeners of these stories. The "settlement" of Iceland should not only be considered as a physical event, but a multi-stranded cultural process in which these texts played an active role in the creation, consolidation, and maintenance of a certain perception of the settlement. A perspective that may have been popular in medieval Iceland. The multiple copies and redactions of *Landnámabók* suggest that these were narratives with a strong social value in Icelandic society.

The complex relationship between the narratives formed from archaeological interpretations of settlement and those exhibited in the textual sources, suggests these textual sources codify the material importance of livestock and the household-farm to medieval Icelandic society, regardless of their actual significance in the earliest settlements.

In this view, the "book of settlements" and certain *Íslendingasögur* become texts dealing with the establishment of Iceland as a development of a society, a community, and a world-view that was at least partly preoccupied with presenting an agro-pastoral myth of settlement. This is a myth based around the agency of livestock and the central importance of the household-farm that may reflect what Carlisle and Milek have called the "climate of uncertainty" in Viking Age Iceland (2016, p. 262).

The construction of place and narratives are both processes of society-building, in which the first and subsequent generations of Icelanders sought to relate themselves to their environment and their animals (Carlisle and Milek, 2016, p. 265) – animals who could both help and hinder processes of settlement and the continuation of the productive community. Representations of a desire for the assistance of animals alongside recognition of the need to control them are discussed further in the next chapter, in which the *Grágás* laws are analysed to determine how ideal relations between animals and humans were constructed and enforced in medieval Icelandic legal traditions.

2. Animals and humans in the legal landscapes of medieval Iceland

Introduction

As highlighted in the previous chapter, domestic animals were vital to the creation and continuation of society in Viking Age and medieval Iceland; and we will see in this chapter that the law-texts produced in the thirteenth century are filled with rules concerning the protection of animals and the structural regulation of their relations with humans. This chapter contains a detailed discussion of the *Grágás* laws of medieval Iceland, focussing on the presentation of correct animal-human relations in these texts. The laws suggest that working with animals, and the responsibility for their actions, were the domain of certain individuals within the household, and both humans and animals had their roles and their obligations towards each other. These laws present a structured framework of how farming should have been undertaken in the Icelandic landscape: a framework characterised by control and compensation. However, the capability of animals to act independently of this control is recognised in the laws, and "domestic animals" in these texts are not a homogenous category; instead different animals are given different legal values, status, and agency. This chapter demonstrates how medieval Icelanders may have

been expected to act in relation to cattle, pigs, sheep, horses, and dogs, and the relation between these animals and certain spaces in the legal landscape.

Structure of this chapter

This chapter begins with an overview of previous scholarship on *Grágás*, emphasising the anthropocentrism of much of this research, and discusses the two key manuscripts in which the bulk of these laws are found. The chapter then outlines and analyses the key areas of animal-human relations that are included in these texts: the value of animals and milk; the importance of careful herding; the relationship between the householder, animals, and the shepherd; and the laws surrounding deviant animals that stray, those that kill humans, and those that are unsuitable for inclusion within a Christian society. The chapter finishes with a discussion of the concept of the *lǫg garðr* (legal wall) as a point of connection between material remains and these laws.

The focus and presentation of *Grágás* stands in contrast to the more narrative texts discussed in this project. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the *Íslendingasögur* often revolve around certain figures or regions. In contrast, most of the laws discussed in this chapter appear to represent the whole of Iceland (though region-specific fragments do exist, such as that from *Belgdalsbók* discussed below). These manuscripts offer a narrative of daily life in an agro-pastoral Christian society, and the focus in this chapter is on the relations between people and things, structures, and animals within this daily practice. I shall demonstrate that the texts of the *Grágás* manuscripts contain laws that focus on the responsibility of individual farmers to keep their farm and household as ordered as possible. In the dispersed settlement structure of Iceland, the tight ordering of the farmstead may be an attempt to secure wider society against disruption, whether by inter-farmstead conflict or the worsening of the environment. On a micro level, the manipulation of domestic animals is linked with control over personal success; and on a macro level, a community of responsible farmers results in a secure and prosperous society. No scholar has yet examined the laws from the perspective of animal spaces, nor considered these in the structure of the legal landscape of medieval Icelandic society. The presentation of animal-places by these laws may have influenced wider conceptualisations of animal-human relations.

Previous scholarship on Icelandic law and its origins

This section will first provide a brief overview of the history of law in medieval Iceland, before looking in more detail at the specific texts used in this chapter: *Staðarhólsbók* and *Konungsbók*. Much of the previous scholarship concerned with early law in Iceland has focussed on tracing the origins of the law and legal system (Byock, 1986; Miller, 1990; Líndal, 1993; McGlynn, 2009; Koszowski, 2014), particularly on detecting oral features of early Icelandic law and tracing aspects of this orality in later manuscripts (Foote, 1977; Jochens, 1993; Koszowski, 2014; McGlynn, 2009; Miller, 1990). Aside from the origins of Icelandic law, the sections of *Grágás* dealing with Christian laws, killings, welfare provision, and outlawry in general have generated the most discussion (Ahola, 2011; Byock, 1986, 1988, 2001, 2003; Foote, 2004b; Miller, 1986, 1990, 1991; Pedersen, 1999; Vésteinsson, 2000a). Although many studies have looked further afield than Scandinavia for more varied influences on the Icelandic laws (McGlynn, 2009; Foote, 2004b; Stein-Wilkeshuis, 1986; Friedman, 1979; Byock, 1986; Runolfsson, 2014; Brink, 2013; Pálsson, 1995; Miller, 1990, 1991; Koszowski, 2014; Orfield, 1953; Schroeter, 1994; Sigurdsson, 1999; Hoff, 2012), when it comes to animals, *Grágás* seems to represent a distinctly Icelandic frame of society, with the regulations around animals in *Grágás* being quite different in many respects from those found in later Icelandic laws and contemporary Norwegian codes (discussed further below).

According to the medieval historian, Ari Þorgilsson, a Norwegian settler in Iceland returned to his homeland and brought back a set of laws for Iceland inspired by the laws used at the Norwegian *Gulaþing* (Benediktsson, 1968c, p. 7). The account in *Íslendingabók* tells us that these laws were then adapted with the advice of Þorleifr *inn spaki* (the wise), who indicated where things should be added or removed (Benediktsson, 1968c, p. 7). It may be assumed that these adaptations were to make a Norwegian law more suitable for Iceland, though this is not made explicit in the text. However, we have no written evidence of Norwegian or Icelandic law from this early period, and so it is difficult to verify or refute this account (Jochens, 1993, p. 47). The earliest legal text we have for the *Gulaþing* law (c.1267) bears little similarity to the main *Grágás* manuscripts, and these Norwegian laws were perhaps instead the influence for the later *Jarnsíða* law

(AD 1271-1281) introduced in the immediate aftermath of Norwegian rule in Iceland (Orfield, 1953; Runolfsson, 2014). Still, Foote has advocated for the pre-Icelandic Scandinavian origins of some of the laws contained in the *Grágás* manuscripts. For example, he notes that the alliterative phrase *arinn ok eldr* (hearth and fire) appears not only in *Grágás*, but also in the *Frostaþing* and *Östgotaland* laws, suggesting that these three occurrences indicate a pre-Icelandic tradition (Foote, 2004, p.93). However, the *Gulaþing* and *Frostaþing* laws do not have the same number or kind of detailed laws about animals, animal-human relations, or hay as those expressed in *Grágás* and analysed in this chapter.[10] There is generally not the same emphasis on careful handling of animals, nor so many regulations concerning milk in the Norwegian laws.

According to Ari, the laws of Iceland were written down in AD 1117-18, and *Íslendingabók* (ch.10), written within fifteen years of this date, provides us with a narrative of collective law-making, instigated by the *Alþing* and undertaken by the foremost legal experts available (Benediktsson, 1968c, p. 23; Foote, 2003). However, it should be noted that chronological proximity to this alleged time of writing does not automatically suggest Ari was offering an accurate portrayal of events, or that scholars should take this moment as the codification of Icelandic law. It seems perhaps that the purpose of this event was not to write the laws for the first time, but rather to make new provisions in the law, and adapt or remove outdated regulations. *Spakir menn* (wise men) are involved both in the bringing of laws to Iceland, and in this (re)writing of the laws, and no one objects to the apparent judgements and changes the wise men have made (Benediktsson, 1968c, p. 23). It seems that Ari's purpose is to emphasise the involvement of wise men in the shaping of law, rather than the first moment of writing.

Scholars have suggested that multiple copies of the laws existed, both before and after this canonised date, and Miller considers the multiplicity of legal texts at this time as a result of oral traditions being recorded in an unregulated system (Foote, 2003; Miller, 1990, p. 225; Stein-Wilkeshuis, 1986). It has been suggested that once written texts began

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[10] In contrast to the protective stance of *Grágás*, trespassing cattle could have been killed with impunity in the *Gulaþing* laws (Larson, 1935, p. 95).

to be produced, each man with an idea of what the laws were may have sought to commission his own copy of a written record (Miller, 1990, p. 225). The *Grágás* laws, then, while largely consistent across manuscripts, should be considered as collections of legal traditions rather than a single definitive law-tract. The term *Grágás* was only applied to these collections of texts from the sixteenth century onwards and therefore gives an unrepresentative impression of unified Icelandic law in the Commonwealth period (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 9). In contrast to the *Grágás* texts, the later law-books for Iceland can be considered as codified documents, commissioned by the king of Norway, and formed as coherent texts from their moment of genesis. After the political union of Iceland with the Kingdom of Norway c.1262-64, a new law, *Jarnsíða*, was brought to Iceland from Norway by Sturla Þórðarson in AD 1271. However, this code was mostly a reproduction of Norwegian law, judged inapplicable for Iceland, and repealed within a decade (Jochens, 1993). After this, *Jónsbók* was confirmed by the *Alþing* in AD 1281, a mixture of the recently formed Norwegian national law and sections taken from the *Grágás* tradition (Orfield, 1953). *Jónsbók* remained effectively the law of Iceland until the modern era (Jochens, 1993, p. 47; Orfield, 1953, pp. 94–95).

The "Grágás" manuscripts

Grágás is a term used to refer to those fragments and complete manuscripts of laws that are not considered to be part of the later law-books, *Jarnsíða* and *Jónsbók* (McSweeney, 2014). These texts are often assumed to reflect the laws used in Iceland in the Commonwealth period, and some scholars have suggested that the laws contained in *Grágás* represent the earliest attempt at recording legal traditions in AD 1117-18, as discussed above (Jóhannesson, 1974; Pedersen, 1999, p. 91). Indeed, the earliest fragments we have attributed to the *Grágás* tradition have been dated to only thirty years from this date (AM 315d fol) and many fragments of law survive from between AD 1150-1250 (Pedersen, 1999, p. 91). In this chapter, I shall use the term *Grágás* to refer to these traditions, and only refer to specific manuscripts by name when required.

Two full manuscripts survive within this tradition: *Konungsbók* (c.1260) and *Staðarhólsbók* (c.1280), and for this chapter I use both manuscript sources. They are similar in content, and differences between the two are mostly in variations in the level of

detail provided. They include many of the same errors in scribal work, suggesting that in some cases the scribes may have worked from a similar exemplar (Foote, 1977; Lárusson, 1958). However, *Staðarhólsbók* is a more coherent manuscript, with evidence of better editing practice and greater detail in the passages which survive in both texts (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 15; Líndal, 1993, p. 57). These manuscripts date from the second half of the thirteenth century, which is around the time these laws would have stopped being used on account of Iceland's political union with the Kingdom of Norway. Nonetheless, it was evidently of value to copy these compilations of traditional Icelandic legal customs while these political shifts were taking place. The production of these manuscripts at the end of the Commonwealth period raises questions over why these texts were written, copied, or compiled in this period. There are laws included in *Konungsbók* that appear to have been rejected by the time these manuscripts were produced. For example, the restriction on owning more than one *goðorð*, when in the thirteenth century, Snorri Sturluson administered at least five (Jóhannesson, 1974, pp. 237–238). If these law-books were not concerned with providing a practical manual of legal practice, then perhaps their commissioners were concerned with preserving old laws for their antiquarian interest. However, the creation of manuscripts was expensive, both in time and resources, and it is hard to believe that antiquarian interest alone would have inspired such production, unless this interest was meaningful in a sphere beyond the personal. As discussed in the preceding chapter, a keen interest in the past is evident from the works of Icelandic historiography and literature produced in this period, and such texts create and sustain ideas of a collective past that were meaningful in the context of thirteenth-century Iceland. The *Grágás* manuscripts may have fulfilled a similar function.

Sigurður Líndal has considered written law as rigid, inflexible, and concerned primarily with conformity as opposed to flexible, evolutionary oral law (1993). This, however, does not correlate entirely with the impression we get from the *Grágás* manuscripts. While the compilers of *Konungsbók* and *Staðarhólsbók* may have wished to avoid uncertainty, and provide a greater sense of order to the Icelandic legal system (Líndal, 1993, p. 73), *Staðarhólsbók* appears to have been a copy of a manuscript that was updated on a number of occasions, and the term *nýmæli* (new law) is written in the margins by multiple early modern hands to indicate where these additions are to be found

(“AM 334 fol.”). The evidence of editing in *Staðarhólsbók* indicates that the exemplar for this manuscript was supposed to be kept up-to-date, containing as it does these “new laws,” and additional definitions for things that are undefined in *Konungsbók* (Foote, 2004a, p. 97). That both old and new laws appear to be copied in *Staðarhólsbók*, clearly indicates that these laws in their entirety were considered valuable to late thirteenth-century society. The majority of the laws discussed in this chapter are assumed to be eleventh- or twelfth-century regulations based on linguistic and orthographic analysis, the inclusion of out-of-date laws, and an assumed slow rate of social change in eleventh-century Iceland (Foote, 2004a, p. 98, 2004b, pp. 102–103; Jóhannesson, 1974, pp. 237–238; Pedersen, 1999, p. 91). That they continued to be copied into the mid-thirteenth century suggests that, in theory at least, these regulations were an active part of medieval Icelandic social thinking or practice for an extended period.

Table 1 The distribution of "animal laws" in *Grágás*

Section of *Grágás*	**Animal law sections**
Kristinnalagaþáttr (Christian laws section)	Law on fasting, haymakers exempt Law against eating animals that have killed men Laws on cleansing flesh when a pig has eaten human or horse
*Þingskapaþáttr** (Assembly Procedures section)	Law on milking-stock making a household Responsibility of a man joining a household
Vígslóði (Manslaughter section)	Laws on provoking animals to attack humans
*Baugatal** (Wergild Ring List)	None
*Lögsögumannsþáttr** (Lawspeaker’s section)	None
*Lögréttuþáttr** (Law Council section)	None
Arfaþáttr (Inheritance section)	None

Ómagabálkr (Dependents section)	None
Festaþáttr (Betrothals section)	Laws on horse theft, mistreatment, and lending Laws on stray horses
Landabrigðisþáttr (Land Claims section)	Laws concerning common pasture regulations and quotas Laws on livestock straying onto land beside common pasture Laws on the driving and mishandling of animals, including driving animals to cause harm, driving animals to avoid milking times or to cause milk to fail Laws about starving pens Section about pigs
Um fjárleigur (On Hire of Property)	Laws on using milk beyond hire period Laws on theft of milk Regulations around collection of purchased animals and animals used as payment Law on the quality of loaned animals Legal imperative for men to treat other animals like their own Laws about collecting another man's animals, and subsequently assuming responsibility for these Further laws on stray animals Laws on animal marks Laws about "unborn livestock"
*Rannsóknaþáttr** (Searches section)	None
Um hreppaskil (On Commune Obligations)	None
Miscellaneous Provisions	Laws on a bull killing a man Section on dogs
Um tíundargjald (On Tithe Payment)	Further laws concerning common pasture

*these sections are in *Konungsbók* only, although *Staðarhólsbók* contains some of the same provisions incorporated into other sections (Burrows, 2007, p. 54).

Legal relations with animals

The rest of this chapter will first outline the limited previous scholarship on animals in *Grágás*, before analysing the laws involving domestic animals in these texts. These laws can be roughly divided into three sections: laws concerned with the value, and therefore protection of animals; laws concerning animal-places and the incorporation of animals into society; and laws stipulating procedures for dealing with animals that move from these spaces. As can be seen from Table 1, these laws are distributed throughout the text, with high concentrations in the *Landabrigðisþáttr* and *Um fjárleigur* sections. However, the inclusion of many of the laws surrounding horses, particularly horse lending, mistreatment, and the procedures for dealing with stray horses within the *Festaþáttr* (Betrothals section), may show these animals placed within a different legal category to other domestic animals in these laws. It is also notable that the laws around bulls and dogs committing manslaughter (discussed below), are placed in the "Miscellaneous Provisions" section, and not with the laws on men committing manslaughter in *Vígslóði* – even when this manslaughter is committed by provoking animals to attack a man, suggesting a division perhaps between human and animal manslaughter.

With regards to animal-human studies, the laws of medieval Iceland have only been considered in any depth by one publication (Rohrbach, 2009), in which Rohrbach provides a concise summary of the main sections of *Konungsbók* concerned with animals. However, in *Mensch-Tier Relationen*, Rohrbach's use of laws appears to be solely functional. She takes the legal points constructed around animals in both *Grágás* and *Jónsbók* to illuminate her examinations of the sagas, and her analysis of the laws for their own sake is limited. She rightly demonstrates that domestic animals are highly valued in these texts, and acknowledges the challenging nature of using these law-codes as sources of Icelandic law at the time of the Commonwealth (Rohrbach, 2009). As a result, Rohrbach asserts that the *Grágás* manuscripts should be viewed, not unlike the *Íslendingasögur*, as products of their time of composition (Rohrbach, 2009, p. 41). However, Rohrbach views the agricultural everyday presented in these texts as representing a state of affairs common to Iceland from the tenth to the thirteenth century, asserting that no significant changes to the daily practice of Icelanders would have taken place, and therefore the practices

portrayed in the laws are consistent with Viking Age and medieval experience (Rohrbach, 2009, p. 41). This statement makes two assumptions: firstly, that no significant changes to Icelandic daily life took place during this period, and secondly, that the laws contained in *Grágás* provide accurate representations of this daily life. While I agree with Rohrbach that these texts portray a society characterised by its close contact with domestic animals, I do not consider this portrayal to be a simple depiction of Icelandic society.

I suggest that, rather than solely examples of functioning procedures and punishments that would have been used at the end of the Commonwealth period, these manuscripts should also be perceived as deliberately constructed images. The production of a text is always a matter of choice, and as discussed in the previous chapter, texts are formed by what is included, or excluded from these narratives. The *Grágás* texts present both laws concerning society as it was, and a depiction of society as it should have been. In pursuing its ideological agenda, and to project an effective narrative, the ideas and concepts in these *Grágás* manuscripts would have needed to have been easily assimilated into thirteenth-century ideas of the Commonwealth and Icelandic law. Thus, the depictions of the reliance of Icelandic society on agro-pastoral production, and the conceptualisation of animal-human relations that we find depicted in these laws should be considered as plausible representations of society to a thirteenth-century Icelander.

Kúgildi

Sections of *Grágás* that use the term *kúgildi* (cow-esteem, or cow-worth) appear to place this animal at the centre of the Icelandic legal value system. The largest of these sections, *um fiárlag mana* (about the fixed value of the property of men) lays out the values of the different domestic animals in reference to the cow as a basic unit of value (Finsen, 1852a, p. 193). This section remained in Icelandic law after the events of 1262-4, as it is reproduced almost exactly into *Jónsbók* (Schulman, 2010, pp. 302–303). This particular legal concept is unique to Iceland, with no similar lists existing in the Norwegian laws of this period (Larson, 1935; Rohrbach, 2009). The *Gulaþing* law does indicate that cattle, stallions, and sheep could be used in the payment of wergild, but only the most perfect and outstanding specimens were suitable to be used in these important exchanges, and they were not to be used for general, everyday valuations (Larson, 1935, p. 151).

In *Grágás*, cows and ewes are both listed as legal tender, but the term *kúgildi* suggests that the cow was the initial sole beneficiary of this status (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 155–153). The section also begins its descriptions of animal valuations with the cow:

> At kýr þrevetr eða ellre .x. vet*ra* e*ða* yng*r*i kalbær *oc* miolk hyrnd oc lasta lavs. e*igi* v*er*re en meðal nav́t herað ræk at fardögo*m* oc mólke kalfs mála sv e*r* giald ge*ng*. Þriu nav́t vetr gavmol vi*ð* ku. ii. tvevetr við kú. Kyr gelld miolc oc q*u*iga ii. vetr kálb bǽr leigo veRe eN kýr. Øxi. iiii. vet*ra* gamall fyrir ku. gelldr e*ða* graðr. Gelld kýr oc öxi þrevetr iii. lut*ir* kugildis. Öxi .v. vet*ra* gamall. þ*r*iþiu*n*gr aN*ars* kúgildis. Öxi .vi. vet*ra* gamall f*yrir* .ii. kyr. oc s*v*a þott ellre se. Arðr öxi gamall a vár þ*at er* met fe (Finsen, 1852a, pp. 193–194).
>
> That cow three-winters or older, ten-winters or younger, calf and milk-bearing, horned and faultless, no worse than a cow driven between districts at the moving days and yielding a calf's measure of milk: that one is taken in legal payment. Three winter-old cows equal one cow, two two-winter-old cows equal one cow. A cow, dry of milk, and a young cow, two-winters old and calf-bearing are worth one cow, minus the hire charge. A four-winter old ox, gelded or entire, is worth a cow.[11] A dry cow and a three-winter-old ox are worth three parts of the cow-worth. A five-winter-old ox is worth a cow-worth plus a third. A six-winter-old ox is worth two cows, and so on for any ox older than that. An old plough ox in spring is a valued animal (that is, subject to individual assessment).

As can be seen from the above passage, a legal cow is defined as *þrevetr eða ellre .x. vet*ra *eða yng*r*i kalbær* oc *miolk hyrnd oc lasta lavs* (Finsen, 1852a, p. 193; three-winters or older, ten winters or younger, calf and milk-bearing, horned and faultless). The valuations in this passage are very specific, categorising different types of animal by age, sex and ability to produce offspring, milk, or wool. However, oxen are some of the most valuable animals in this listing, as all specified groupings of animals that are worth one *kúgildi* involve more than one animal, except certain oxen and horses. While the value of an ox depended on its age, the youngest ox is listed as worth one *kúgildi*, and the oldest worth two. The only other animal that is worth one *kúgildi* is a stallion between three and ten winters old and without defects (discussed below). Several animals, like the old plough ox in the above quotation, are also considered as *metfé* (valued-property), a specific designation suggesting

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[11] This suggests that the Old Norse term *øxi* may refer to a bovine of either castrated or uncastrated status. It may specifically refer to a working animal, as opposed to a *graðungr* (bull), which may refer to an animal used for stud. This value list does not provide any values for a *graðungr*, indicating that bulls used for stud were not used in payments, and perhaps only kept for three years before slaughtering (McCooey, 2017a, pp. 87–88).

that these animals were likely to be variable in quality and usefulness, and therefore required individual assessment.

This section moves through each type of animal in turn, with the valuations of sheep following the cattle:

> Vi. aer við kú. ii. tuévet*ra*r oc iiii. ga*m*lar. *oc* ale Iömb sin oc orotnar loðnar oc le*m*bðar. Ær viii. alsgelldar iii. vet*ra*r oc ellre vi*ð* kú. Viii. gelldi*n*gar vi*ð* kv́. ii. vet*r*ir. Viii. la*m*bgymb*ra*r oc ale lö*m*b si*n*. vi. geldi*n*gar iii. vet*r*ir vi*ð* kv́. iiii. v*etra* geldingr oc aNaR .ii. vetr. f*yrir* ær .ii. Rutr .ii. vetr a gildr. xii. vetr ga*m*lir savþ*ir* vi*ð* kv. Allt þ*etta* fe gillt oc i ullo. Rutr .iii. v*etr oc* ellri *oc* forosto gelldi*n*gr þ*at* e*r* met fe (Finsen, 1852a, pp. 193–194).
>
> Six ewes, two two-winters old and four older, and feeding their lambs and without having lost their fleece and with lamb, are worth one cow. Eight all-barren ewes, three-winters old and older are worth one cow. Eight two-winter-old wethers are worth one cow, as are eight ewe-lambs able to feed their lambs. Six three-winter-old wethers are worth one cow. A four-winter-old wether and another two-winters old are worth two ewes. A ram two-winters old is worth one ewe. Twelve sheep one-winter old are worth a cow. All that livestock should be healthy and with wool. A three-winter-old ram and older, and a leader-wether, are valued animals.

As can be seen in this passage, sheep were considered much less valuable than cattle. However, among sheep a clear distinction is made between the more valuable ewes and wethers, and the less valuable ram. This suggests that animals that provide wool and milk are particularly valued in this system. Nonetheless, the individual valuations specified for older rams and leader-sheep may indicate that certain rams, who produced particularly excellent offspring, and the most intelligent leader-wethers, may have been worth more than other sheep.

A pattern can be discerned in this listing when we consider that the section first considers cows, then oxen, then ewes and other sheep, then nanny-goats and other goats. Clearly, the female animals of each type of domesticate are given prominence:

> Geitr vi. med kiðo*m* oc s*v*a faret se*m* ám. en*n* viii. gelldar vi*ð* kv́. þrævet*ra*r e*ða* ellre. viii. havðnor vi*ð* kv́. oc ale kið sin. Viii. ii. v*etrir* haf*ra*r vi*ð* kv. *oc* iiii. kiarn haf*ra*r. oc iiii. algeld*ir* eN vi. þrevet*r*ir vi*ð* kv́. half*ir* hvárs alsgelld*ir* oc kiringar. iiii. *vetra* gamall hafr oc aNaR ii. *vetr* f*yrir* geitr .ii. Tvevetr hafr vi*ð* geít. Ef haf*ra*r e*r*o

> ellre eN nv ero talþ*ir oc* er þ*at* met fe. ii. vetrga*m*lir geitsavðir[12] við geít. hálf*ir* höðnor e*ða* alsgellди*ngar* en hálf*ir* kiarn haf*ra*r. e*ða gra*þ haf*ra*r (Finsen, 1852a, pp. 193–194).
>
> Six goats with kids and in the same condition as ewes (with fleece and milk), and eight barren goats, three-winters or older, are both worth a cow. Eight young nanny-goats able to feed their kids are worth a cow. Eight two-winter-old billy-goats are worth a cow, when four are uncastrated billy-goats and four are all-gelded; and six three-winter [billy-goats] are worth a cow when half are all-gelded and half uncastrated. A four-winter-old billy-goat, and another two-winters old are worth two nanny-goats. A two-winter-old billy-goat is worth a nanny-goat. If a billy-goat is older than those already listed then that is a valued animal. Two winter-old goats are worth a nanny-goat when one is a female kid or a castrated male, and the other an uncastrated billy-goat or an entire billy-goat.

Again, we see that an old billy-goat, presumably one that is a successful breeding goat, is an animal subject to individual assessment and therefore potentially worth more than other billy-goats. Likewise, nanny-goats with kids, fleece, and milk are worth the same as ewes. This may suggest that the milk of sheep and goats is considered of equal importance, and it is only in the wool-producing capabilities of castrated rams that sheep are distinguished from goats, as eight two-winter billy-goats are only worth a cow when four are castrated and four not, compared to eight two-winter castrated rams (wethers) that are worth one cow. Clearly male goats were more valued for their reproductive, and meat-producing potential than their ability to produce wool.

However, although the regulations concerning cattle, sheep, and goats appear to follow a pattern of listing the value of the female animal before the male, this is reversed in the entry on the value of horses, which starts with an entry on stallions before providing values for mares of various ages:

> Hross ero oc lavgð. Hestr .iiii. v*etra* gamall e*ða* ellre. oc x. vet*ra* oc yng*r*i heill oc lasta lav́s vi*ð* kv́. MeR iiii. v*etra* oc ellre oc x. v*etra oc* yng*r*i gelld heil oc lasta lavs. fiorðungi v*er*ri eN ký́r. Hestr iii. v*etr* iafn við mere. MeR iii. v*etr* ii. lut*ir* kugilldis. Tuav h*r*o*s*s tvé v*etr*. hestr *oc* meR vi*ð* kv́. Þriu vetr g*omol* h*r*oss vi*ð* kv́. *oc* er eitt hestr. Ef m*að*r gelldr mer h*r*oss v*etr* g*amalt* f*yrir* þ*r*iþiu*n*g ku gildis. Þa s*ca*l fylgia eyr*ir*. Þetta s*co*lo v*er*a meðal h*r*oss oc e*igi* v*er*re. Stoð hestr oc se v*er*ðe bet*r*i f*yrir*

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[12] *Geitsauðr* (goat-sheep) is a term for goats in general; *geitfé* is also used (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 196).

> sac*ir* vigs. *oc* gelldr hestr *oc* se v*er*ðe bet*r*i f*yrir* reidar sac*ir*. *oc* fyl meR istóðe þ*at* e*r* met fe (Finsen, 1852a, pp. 193–194).

> Horses are also standardly valued. A stallion four-winters old or older, ten-winters and younger, healthy and without fault is worth a cow. A mare four-winters old and older, or ten winters old or younger, barren, healthy and without fault is worth a quarter less than a cow. A stallion three winters old is worth the same as a mare. A mare three winters old is worth two parts of a cow-worth. Two horses of two-winters, stallion and mare, are worth a cow. Three winter-old horses are worth a cow, if one is a stallion. If a man has a barren mare-horse one winter old that is worth a third of a cow-value, then shall an ounce be added. These shall be average horses and no less. A stud-stallion that is worth more for the sake of fighting and a gelded horse that is worth more for the sake of riding and a fertile mare in stud, such are valued animals.

The initial placing of female cattle, sheep, and goats before their male counterparts seems to place a value on milk-producing animals that will be discussed further below. The reversal of this order when it comes to horses may be a result of the role stallions were perceived to play in the formation of masculine identity (Evans, 2013), and the fact that mares, while useful, were not producers of milk in Iceland. However, the placement of three specific types of horse in the *metfé* category may highlight the threefold importance of horses: fighting, riding, and breeding.

Regarding pigs, there is no mention of boars in this valuation system, perhaps suggesting that boars were not suitable for exchange or use in payments, in contrast to a *sýr ii. v*etr *eþ*a *ellre* oc *ix. gris*ir *m*eð (a sow two-winters old or older with nine piglets), which is worth one cow (Finsen, 1852a, p. 194). This sow with piglets is relatively highly valued compared to the other animals in this section, perhaps suggesting that pigs were expensive animals to keep; and the single mention of pigs in this list may indicate that pigs were not generally used for payments, and instead were kept on the same farm. As shall be discussed below in Chapters 3 and 4, pigs are the animal most often combined with words for "homefield," indicating a close link between these animals and the central area of the household-farm.

The apparent importance of cows in this value system requires further attention. On a linguistic level, the common noun *fé* may imply a cultural tradition linking cattle with systems of exchange. This Old Norse word meaning livestock, cattle, or wealth comes originally from the proto-Indo-European **péku*, meaning "livestock" (Adams and

Mallory, 2006), and the primary importance of cattle-wealth may be reflected in the positioning of the rune *fé* (*fehu) ᚠ at the beginning of both the elder and younger Futhark traditions in Scandinavia, though Barnes has suggested the names of the runes in the Scandinavian systems should be valued more for their assistance in showing the sounds of the rune, rather than any symbolic meaning (Barnes, 2012, pp. 21–22). The multiple meanings of *fé* can cause a problem for translators at times, uncertain about how to render the term in modern English. However, it is perhaps the case that in Old Norse, and medieval Iceland, the concepts of wealth, property, and livestock were combined in the one term. This would create a semantic equivalence of cattle and wealth that underpinned the social and legal landscape of Iceland, and made the protection of cattle of paramount importance. As discussed in the previous chapter, the majority of settlers in Iceland are believed to have originated from Norway, and therefore from a cultural tradition in which the agro-pastoral household revolved around cattle (Fallgren, 2008, p. 73), and archaeological investigations of early faunal assemblages in Iceland appear to favour the idea of cattle as a major resource in the earliest stages of settlement (see Chapter 1).

However, as also seen from the previous chapter, the presence and importance of cattle in later literary narratives of settlement is ambiguous. Cattle appear to have no special position in thirteenth-century narratives of the early periods of Icelandic history, appearing equally alongside sheep, horses, and goats in these tales; and although a named cow appears in *Landnámabók*, multiple named horses also appear. This may problematize interpretations of the *kúgildi* section of *Konungsbók* as a simple representation of the importance of cattle to Icelandic society. In addition, it is important to note the different meanings of *fé* in Old Icelandic texts specifically, as it has been suggested that the term refers especially to sheep in Old Icelandic usage (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 147; "Málið.is - fé," n.d.). This perhaps presents a problem when it comes to linking the *kúgildi* section of *Konungsbók* with the multiple meanings of *fé*. It can be suggested that the meaning of *fé* shifted from livestock, often cattle (original meaning) to wealth (secondary meaning, but equally as prevalent) to sheep, particularly in an Icelandic context, and possibly as the importance of sheep increased in Icelandic economic relations. In the high medieval period in Iceland when the *Grágás* manuscripts were written and copied, wool and homespun cloth had increasingly come to shape Iceland's position in the economic

markets of Europe (Ingimundarson, 1992; 1995), and in the *Grágás* manuscripts, *fé* is used equally to indicate portable wealth and domestic animals in general. Perhaps reflecting this ambiguity or multiplicity of meanings, the *fiárlag mana* section, rather than exclusively detailing every animal's worth in relation to *kúgildi*, sets out the value of all livestock animals in relation to each other. Seen from a functional perspective, this suggests that the importance of *kýr* in the *kúgildi* was perhaps not central to the Icelandic value system after all; rather, domestic animals in general were important.

The version of this section from *Belgdalsbók* (AM 347 fol), dealing with standard values from the Árnes assembly district, seems to express a different system of valuation. Although this section is very similar to the corresponding section in *Konungsbók*, some of the standard values are given in ounce-units, starting with: *kyr kalf bör s*ka*l v*er*a at xxx. þ*riggia *alna aura* (Finsen, 1852a, p. 247; a calf-bearing cow shall be valued at 30 ells of an ounce). As in *Konungsbók*, the cow is the first animal listed, and then oxen, before moving onto the value of ewes, uncastrated horses and mares. Three things are important to note about this alternate text. Firstly, the valuation of animals by ounces; secondly, that the order of animals is the same as in the section from *Konungsbók*; and thirdly, that goats and pigs are completely excluded (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 358). *Belgdalsbók* is estimated to have been produced c.1300-1350, and is therefore a later manuscript than *Konungsbók*. The laws in *Belgdalsbók* also specify the values of food and wool in terms of ounces (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 358–359). This is in contrast to the *Konungsbók* text, which provides the amounts of food or wool in reference to *kúgildi* (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 210). This alteration in focus in this later manuscript may reflect a shift in perception of methods of exchange, from an animal-animal basis, to a system based on ounce-units.

However, the inclusion of *kúgildi* values in *Jónsbók* suggest that this was still a working system in medieval Iceland post-AD 1281.[13] If this cow-orientated system of value was operating in this period, and the system of internal economic exchange was still based around the *kýr*, it is safe to say that cattle, or at least, cows, were important animals to

[13] *Jónsbók*, AM 351 fol (copied c.1360), includes an animal-animal value system, though specifies that these "common standard values" are for use in spring only (Schulman, 2010, p. 303).

medieval Icelandic society. Milk and other dairy products were vital to survival in the long Icelandic winters, and so the value of cattle, as the supreme providers of milk, should not be underestimated, even after the growth of *vaðmál* (standardised homespun cloth) as an important item for internal and foreign trade.

Milk and productivity

The important relationship between Icelanders and their domestic animals is reinforced by the number of regulations concerning their secondary products. These secondary products fall into two categories: those that can be consumed, such as milk and meat, and that which became vital for economic exchanges: *vaðmál*. While these laws do not explicitly impact on the animal-human relations with which this thesis concerns itself, the value of these products would have increased the duty of care taken towards these animal producers, and brought Icelanders into closer contact with them. Close physical contact, as well as socio-economic importance, is a factor that would have increased the mutually beneficial ties of dependence between animals and humans (Armstrong Oma, 2016d).

In the *Grágás* texts, care and protection of milking-stock appears as an important part of the work of the farm. One law suggests that the herder dealing with milking-stock was a person set apart from the main household. This law is included in the section on religious fasting, and states that the men who bring in the sheep or cattle were excused from observing the fast (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 49):

> SEto mavnnu*m* er skylt at fasta v*m* engi v*er*k. oc eigi verk mavNvm. Þeim er i engi v*er*ki erv. oc eigi þeim maNi er smala rekr heim. oc eigi þeim er avNvngs v*er*c viþr. f*yrir* bve m*anz* (Finsen, 1852b, p. 35).
>
> Those men who should be fasting should do no work; but no workmen should fast, not those who work in the meadows, nor those men who drive the sheep home and nor those who do labouring work for a man's household.

However, as this stipulation also includes other labouring workers on the farm, it perhaps demonstrates a perception of farm-work in general as more important than religious observance, rather than any special significance for milking. Nonetheless, it is also stipulated that women may do tasks related to milking on a Sunday, when almost all other work was to cease (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 39). This may reflect not only the important

economic value milk had to the farm, but also an awareness of the care required on the part of humans towards their dairy animals. Dairy animals may develop illnesses and certainly discomfort if they are not milked regularly in peak lactation periods (Gleeson et al., 2007), though this is likely a greater problem in modern-day dairying than medieval practice.

The Icelandic household relied on milk, not only for sustenance, but for legal definition. The ownership of milking-stock was key in establishing a household, and a man, even if he owned land, was not considered as a householder proper unless he had access to milk (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 132):

> Maðr sa e*r* bv ger*ir* v*m* vár s*ca*l segia sic iþ*ing* þ*ar* *er* h*ann* vill. Þ*at* er bv e*r* m*aðr* hef*ir* málnytan smala. þo s*ca*l h*ann* segia sic i þ*ing* þót*t* h*ann* hafe e*igi* mal nyto ef h*ann* er landeigande. Ef h*ann* erat l*an*ðeigande *oc* hef*ir*at málnyto *oc* v*er*ðr h*ann* þ*ar* i þ*in*gi e*r* sa boande er h*ann* felr sec iNi vm (Finsen, 1852b, p. 134).
>
> That man who makes a household in the spring shall declare himself a householder in any assembly he wishes. That is a household when a man has milk-yielding animals, though he shall declare himself a householder at the assembly even if he has no milk, if he is a landowner. If he is not a landowner and has no milk, then he is to join the assembly with that farmer into whose charge he puts himself.

It can be seen here that although milk was not vital to gaining access to legal rights, it was certainly preferable, and the mark of a proper household as opposed to a householder who simply had land.

With such a milk-orientated legal definition of the household, it is logical that the theft of milk is presented as one of the most serious offences in these laws. The penalty for stealing milk is listed in *Konungsbók* as full outlawry (Dennis *et al.*, 2000, pp.166–167), and this extreme punishment is extended even to those who might use or take milk from hired animals after the period of hiring had ended:

> Nv nyt*ir* h*ann* s*er* nyt fiár þe*ss* f*yrir* þ*at* ofan. oc v*arðar* ho*nom* þa s*cog* G*ang*. oc s*va* hv*er*io*m* þ*eir*ra er fiar nytiar þ*eir*rar neyt*ir* visvitande (Finsen, 1852b, p.152).
>
> Now if he benefits from the milk of the livestock beyond that point, then he is punishable by full outlawry, and likewise any of those who intentionally make use of the milk of that livestock.

The wording of this phrase, using the verb *nýta* with its meanings of use, consumption, and benefit, suggests that any work with the milk must be completed before the end of the hiring period. After that, the milk seems to count as part of the hired animal, and must be returned with the animals to the initial owner. The stipulation laid out in this manuscript that the highest possible penalty applied to those who stole milk, indicates the value of this product; and this value is not accorded only to cows' milk, but to the product of all milking-stock. However, what is also implied, is that the milk of an animal is integral to the value and usefulness of that animal, and therefore post-hiring period milking, removes a qualitative item from the animal that must be returned to the owner.

The terms used in this passage: *nyt* (milk) and *nýta* (to make use of), appear to link to a range of associated terms, almost all to do with use, advantage, or worthiness. The adjectives *nytjafullr* (profitable), or *nytjalauss* and *nytlauss* (useless), and the verb *nytja* (to milk) point to a connection between milk and the concept of use or value. The nouns *nytjamaðr* and *nytjungr* are used of useful men, but also men of worth (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1957, p.460). Evidently milk was an important part of the package of a milking animal, and unlawful milking reduced not only the value of the animal to the owner, but the ability of the animal to contribute as a socially useful member of the household. This law may focus on the "animal producer" as another farm worker whose productivity needed protecting. Like the farmhands disobliged from observing a fast because they needed energy for their work, milking-stock needed to be treated correctly to better enable them to provide for the farm, and their milk was the product of this labour. This product belonged to the cow, and the cow's owner, not the person that milked the cow: hence a person milking the cow after the hiring period is over must not profit from the labour of that animal who has now passed back into their initial ownership.

An additional law in *Staðarhólsbók* suggests that conceptions of the importance of milk to the functioning and status of the farm may have changed over time:

> Þat v*arðar* iij. m*arca* secð g*r*ið möNo*m* ef þ*eir* selia ær til ostz (Finsen, 1879, p. 483).
>
> That is punishable by a fine of three marks from household men if they hire out ewes for cheese-making.

This addition stipulates that any householders may prosecute this case on a first-come-first-served basis, and Dennis et al. suggest that this law reflects disapproval of a *griðmaðr* (household-man) loaning out his own ewes in the short period between the weaning of lambs and the drying-up of the ewes (Dennis *et al.*, 2000, pp.345–346). However, elsewhere in the laws a distinction is made between a *griðmaðr* (household man) and a *búandi* (householder), with *griðmaðr* used as a term for a farm labourer and *búandi* indicating a householder owning stock and land (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 74; Dennis et al., 1980, p. 64). In this case, it is likely that the *griðmenn* in this law are giving away the ewes of their householder, rather than their own, so it is remarkable that the punishment is listed only as a fine of three marks, perhaps suggesting that ewes were considered as inferior milking-stock. However, the use of a man's animals and milk without his permission is elsewhere in *Grágás* considered worthy of more severe penalties, so this law might also demonstrate these ewes were hired out with the permission of the householder, but not by the householder himself. This could have been prosecutable if the ultimate responsibility for animals rested with the householder. Deviation from the system of responsibility outlined in *Grágás,* in which the householder is the head of the animal-human household and responsible for all contractual arrangements, may have been perceived as a disruption of society and therefore worthy of punishment. Although as seen above, the law is designed to punish the *griðmenn* and not the householder. Nonetheless, an emphasis on the householder as ultimately responsible for his animals is highlighted in laws about the control and protection of animals discussed in the proceeding section.

Controlling animals and humans

Control of domestic animals appears to be a key concern in these laws. *Grágás* contains many rules regulating the contact between animals (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 170, 347–348), the stipulation of specific times animals were to be moved (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 132), and the areas in which they were allowed to dwell (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 130–131, 347). The movement of animals was not only regulated by space, but also by time; and the places of animals varied throughout the year. This section focusses on the summer grazing space of the communal pasture, and the procedures for moving animals between households.

Communal pasture (*afréttr*), as a section of upland pasture owned by multiple farms, was a highly-regulated space. This regulation manifested itself in rules concerning which animals were allowed to access the space, when they were allowed to graze, which men were allowed to drive animals there, and how the space was demarcated (Dennis *et al.*, 2000, pp.131–139, 315-319). Pigs forfeited their immunity if they accessed communal pasture (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 133), and it was only permissible for certain men to graze their animals on the land at a legally-defined period of the summer, and only then with the permission of all the owners of the pasture (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 131). It is clear from the laws that animals would stray from these areas, but that the animals themselves were not at fault for this straying. If livestock strayed onto another man's land that was beside the communal pasture, the man whose livestock strayed from the pasture was not responsible for any damage done as a result; rather, it can be assumed that the man whose land was next to the pasture was at fault for not protecting his land with sufficient fences or walls (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 136). Often located in the highlands at a distance from the main farm complex, the communal pasture is presented as a space for certain animals to exercise their agency and self-feed themselves over the summer. Shielings were prohibited, and human access was limited to the beginning and end of the grazing season.

Above all, the proper treatment of animals at the proper time and place is emphasised in these laws, and the movement of animals between households to make payments is also a strictly regulated affair. When receiving livestock in payment as legal tender, there was a specified two-week period in the middle of summer in which livestock were to be collected by the person receiving the payment. If the payee did not come forward, nor send anyone else to collect the animals, then the payer had three options: he was allowed to deliver the animals himself, let the animals graze on his own land, or drive the animals to a communal pasture part-owned by the man who was supposed to collect them (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 158; Finsen, 1852a, p. 144). The differing options likely reflect the different types of animal exchanged, for example, cattle would be driven to a different part of the farm than sheep, hence the option of driving animals to the farm or to the communal pasture. Nonetheless, all animals were still entitled to graze on their previous owner's land. Evidently, the care of the animals was paramount, and more important than the fodder resources of either party.

Handle with care

Strict care of individual animals was also required when using animals in payments, not just feeding them until they were collected. This system of exchange was not a straight-forward transaction, but a process that involved responsibility and adherence to strict regulations; demonstrating the intense care taken at every stage of animal-handling. The age, condition, and productivity of an animal played a formative role in its worth, and an offering of substandard animals (indicating substandard care), was not to be accepted. Equally, if a farmer were to loan animals to another man, then he could expect the animals on return to fulfil the value he had given in the first place (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 166). This was not a matter of a cow for a cow, but rather, a system in which individual circumstances were recognised. The wounding of livestock, including horses, carried a number of penalties, depending on the animal harmed and the level of damage done (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 85–86, 136). The most extreme penalty was lesser outlawry, except for the harming of sheep, which resulted in the man forfeiting his immunity – he could then be killed with impunity, regardless of the amount of damage caused (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 227; Finsen, 1879, p. 374).

These sources depict a view of animal-herding that relies on careful handling and presumably skilled technique. The laws state that driving animals in a way that caused damage was punishable either by lesser or full outlawry, depending on the value of the damage (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 136):

> Ef *maðr* rekr geld fe aN*ars* s*v*a at v. avra scaðe v*er*ðe á eþ*a* meire *oc* e*r* þ*at* spellvi*r*ke at meira *oc varðar* þ*at* f*iorbavgs* G*arð oc* á sa þa söc e*r* fe á vi*ð* þaN e*r* rak feet e*ða* reka lét (Finsen, 1852a, p. 118).
>
> If a man drives barren livestock of another so that five ounces worth of damage or more is done, that is doing “major damage” and that becomes lesser outlawry, and that one who owns the livestock [should bring the case] against he who drove the animals or allowed them to be driven.

Lesser outlawry is also laid out as the appropriate penalty for anyone who herded dairy animals in such a way that caused them to become lost or delayed, and therefore miss a milking time:

> Ef m*að*r recr bu fe m*anz* aN*ar*s e*ð*a laetr reca s*v*a at mals mis*ir*. e*ð*a h*ann* villde máls lata missa. þ*at* v*arðar* f*iorbaugs* G*arð* (Finsen, 1852a, p. 112).
>
> If a man drives milking-stock of a second man or allows them to be driven in such a way that they miss a milking time, or he wanted to let them miss a milking time, that becomes lesser outlawry.

The term for milking-stock used here is *bu fé*, which literally translates as "household-livestock." This term may refer to the necessity for such livestock to be owned before a proper legal household can be formed, or to a close association between these animals and the physical household-farm. The link with the householder himself is clear in the lines following this passage, as the figure who caused, or intended to cause the subsequent loss of milk could defend himself by demonstrating that the owner of the livestock could have herded the animals in such a way as to prevent the loss of milk (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 131; Finsen, 1852a, p. 113). Essentially, this stipulates that if the owner could have herded his animals in a more efficient manner than the first man, then the man at fault is the owner, and not the man herding the animals. These laws reinforce the desire for the most efficient herding and handling of animals, and the responsibility of the householder to ensure things function in their correct, and most controlled manner (discussed further below). The same penalty could also be applicable for those who mishandled livestock in a way that caused their milk to fail (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 131; Finsen, 1852a, pp. 112–113). These laws explicitly recognise the importance of care in ensuring a reliable supply of milk for the Icelandic household. In addition to delays causing animals not to be home in time for the milking, stress from mishandling or trauma reduces the milk yield provided by cattle, and careful and attentive care of animals is important for reducing stress not only to maintain milk production, but also to reduce the risk of disease or injury (Broucek et al., 2017; Campbell, 2009, p. 246). A careful approach, aimed at reducing stress and working with animals in the most productive manner, relies on awareness of moods and personalities within the herd.

Awareness of the temperaments of different animals is reflected in the regulations surrounding the construction and use of *sveltikvíar* (Finsen, 1852a, pp. 118–119; starving-pens). These enclosures, which were lawful to be constructed on land bordering common pasture so long as there was no legal wall between the land and the pasture, were places in which animals straying from the common pasture could be detained until their owners

collected them (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 137, 139). This term is found only in law texts, and primarily in the earlier *Konungsbók* manuscript, perhaps suggesting that it was a practice considered unimportant by the redactor of *Staðarhólsbók*, in which it only appears once ("ONP," n.d.). However, while the term "starving-pen" sounds cruel, there were many stipulations regulating the construction of these enclosures:

> H*ann* s*ca*l s*v*a g*er*a suellti q*u*i at e*igi* drucne fe þ*eirr*a m*ann*a e*r* þar eigo ne t*r*oþiz oc lata hlið á oc g*r*ind f*yrir* e*ða* hurð s*v*a at up*p* v*m* luke e*ða* aptr. H*ann* a lavgar dag iN at setia gelld fe þ*at* e*r* ór afrétt ge*n*gr f*yrir* non. Ef fe þ*at* treyðz ísuellti q*u*i þ*eir*re isavre e*ða* iþ*r*ong e*ða* d*r*vcnar e*ða* fellr garðr á. þa abyrgiz sá e*r* iN lét setia. ef v. avra scaðe v*er*dr á oc v*arðar* þ*at* f*iorbavgs* G*arð*. þoat suelti e*ða* sta*n*giz i q*u*i þ*eir*re sua at deyi *oc* abyrgiz sa e*igi* þ*at* e*r* iN let (Finsen, 1852a, p. 119).
>
> He shall make the starving pen so that the animals that other men own that are there do not drown nor are trampled, and let the gate or door of the pen [be made] so that it can open and close. On a Saturday, a man may set [into the pen] barren sheep that walk out of the common pasture before nones (3pm). If the livestock in the starving pen are trampled in the dirt or are crowded in or drowned or a wall falls on them, then that one is responsible who set them in the pen. If five ounces worth of damage occurs, then that becomes lesser outlawry, although [if an animal] starves or is gored so that they die, then that one who let the animals in is not responsible.

The owner of the animals appears to be responsible if his animals are gored to death, perhaps for not collecting his animals quickly enough. In this way, the law may acknowledge the essential animal nature of the occupants of the pen, the need for human restraint to correct this unrestrained animal behaviour, and the limited ability of humans to control this behaviour. The agency of certain animals to act in a certain way despite human attempts at control is recognised elsewhere in the laws, and will be discussed further below with regards to straying horses. Notably, it was considered unlawful to enclose a horse in a starving-pen, and so it seems that certain animals were perceived as unsuitable for enclosure in these structures (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 137; Finsen, 1852a, p. 119).

The details in these texts seem almost too extreme and obsessive over the condition of domestic animals, so that it is tempting to suspect that no man would actually have bothered to adhere to all these regulations (Miller, 1990, p. 223). If that were the case, however, it seems strange that these detailed rules would have been recorded in these manuscripts in the first place, unless these were a key feature of the ideal society presented

in these laws. A high level of detail is not just found in the *kúgildi* section of *Konungsbók*, but throughout the two manuscripts, in almost all regulations concerning domestic animals. Specifically, there are many laws concerning the use, misuse, mutilation, and theft of horses, to be found largely in the "Betrothals section." The theft of a horse could cause all involved in the plot to be subject to full outlawry, if the horse were taken to be unlawfully ridden (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 84; Finsen, 1852a, p. 64). This emphasis on the use of the horse, as well as the theft, suggests that the harshest punishment may have been a result of the combination of theft and use, rather than solely the theft. This suggests that it was not simply the loss of the economic value of the horse that mattered, but the illegal use, which had a wider range of significance in medieval Iceland, linked to the extreme riding or use of the horse. Such concerns are found in Old Norse-Icelandic literary sources (Evans, 2013).

A series of *nýmæli* (new laws) included in *Staðarhólsbók* appear to show greater severity in reaction to the misuse of horses than those depicted in *Konungsbók*. For example, *Staðarhólsbók* lists full outlawry as the punishment for the major use of a man's horse without his permission (that is, if the horse would have suffered less as a result of a day of moderately hard riding to the *Alþing*; Dennis et al., 2000, p. 285; Finsen, 1879, p. 247). Lesser outlawry is also added as the punishment for securing a horse in such a way that it cannot graze (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 285). Again, these laws emphasise the importance attached to animal care, and the important link between a man and his animals. Mishandling livestock, milking or otherwise, is presented as a serious offence in these laws, with the herding of these animals as a heavily regulated and closely protected practice. This impression of herding livestock as an important and careful task rests at odds with the common interpretation of shepherds: that the herding of animals was a low-status and low-paid occupation, only fit for slaves or servants (McCooey, 2017a, p. 74; Miller, 1990, p. 223). These laws also emphasise the relations of obligation and responsibility the householder had to protect and control his animals.

The householder and the shepherd

As seen above in the restriction on the hiring out of ewes for cheese-making, and the multiple laws regulating animal-herding, the householder is an important figure in *Grágás*.

However, while the householder sits at the centre of the legal household-farm, other figures are significant in the animal-human relations depicted. Some tasks on the farm are presented as the domain of many workers, and some appear to be reserved for certain figures.

The emphasis on the ultimate control a householder would have over his animals is further shown by a law that stipulates that it was unlawful for a woman to lend out her husband's horse when she, or the recipient of the loan, knows that the man would not agree to the lending (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 284; Finsen, 1879, p. 207). This emphasis on the owner of the animal is also demonstrated by a law that specifies it was unlawful for a man to drive another man's stock away from a fold unless he had been instructed to do so by the owner (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 169; Finsen, 1852a, pp. 155–156). Presumably the farmworkers responsible for herding work would have had a regular mandate to do so by the terms of their employment; however, the presence of this clause in the text suggests this was a matter worth recording, and that the obligation of care required by the householder to his animals needed reinforcing. The unlawful taker of the animals in this situation would have to assume responsibility for this livestock until the owner claimed it back, and again we see the responsibility emphasised of all men to care for the animals of another as they would their own (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 169; Finsen, 1852a, p. 156).

As will be discussed further in Chapter 4, every man in Iceland had a responsibility and legal obligation to belong to a household, and therefore be answerable to a householder. However, this requirement was further controlled, as there were only certain times of year, the *fardagar* (moving days), when people could enter into this contractual arrangement (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 126; Finsen, 1852b, p. 129). The duties of a man who joined the household, according to these texts, was to accompany the householder on journeys and contribute to the functioning of the farm, including slaughtering, spreading dung, and repairing *túngarðar* (homefield walls; Finsen, 1852a, p. 129):

> f*ra* miðio su*m*re s*ca*l h*ann* viNa bóanda allt ti*l* vet*ra*r slict e*r* h*ann* vill f*yrir* smala for utan. Hann s*ca*l ga*n*ga afiall v*m* siN oc slátra *oc* f*a*ra hei*m*an farar m*eð* husbönda. *oc* sløða v*m* vár *oc* bøta túngarðr (Finsen, 1852b, p. 129).
>
> From midsummer, he shall work for the farmer in all things until winter such as he wants except tending sheep outside. He shall go on the mountain once and

> slaughter and go from home on a journey with the householder and spread manure in spring and repair the homefield-wall.

It can be argued that the *túngarðr* is the most important wall on the farm, representing the enclosure and guarding of the farm buildings, the household members, and the prime hay, as will be discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4. The requirement of new male household members to be responsible for repairing the *túngarðr* then, may be read as a symbolic gesture, representing an initiation act of joining the household.

The explicit exclusion from shepherding emphasised in this passage could indicate that this job was too low-status for this type of man, although it could also imply that shepherding was a job that required a specialist skillset and was therefore only suitable for certain people with these skills. As shown above, there is an indication that proper handling of livestock was important in these texts. According to Miller, shepherding was a low status occupation, though his evidence for this negative view appears to be one reference from *Hrafnkels saga*, and a law in *Konungsbók*, that stipulates the whole household should assist in the digging up and reburial of bodies, except the shepherd, on account of his being too low status (Miller suggests) to touch the consecrated bodies (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 31; Finsen, 1852b, p. 13; Miller, 1990, p. 223). However, this passage is far from clear, and cannot be used as evidence for the derogatory opinions commonly supposed to have been held of shepherds in medieval Iceland. It may be, in fact, that the shepherd was too important a figure to waste time on non-shepherding activities. As seen above, handling and herding animals required care and experience to avoid legal repercussions. It does not follow that one of the most vital tasks on the medieval Icelandic farm would be entrusted to the lowliest of workers. Rather, the position of herder would have needed to be extended to workers that could be trusted and relied upon as capable men or women. Shepherds and cow-herders are depicted ambiguously in the social landscape of the *Íslendingasögur* – though these relationships are not addressed in this thesis, focussed specifically as it is on relations in the homefield area. For the moment, it suffices to say that the high value of and protective concern for domestic animals in these laws is presented in such a way that problematizes traditional readings of the Old Norse-Icelandic literary sources and the theory of the despised, low-status role of animal-herder.

Deviant animals

The previous sections of this chapter have demonstrated that the careful control of domestic animals and regulation of human actions towards these animals were twin concerns in the *Grágás* manuscripts. The following section attempts to interpret those situations which imply that certain domestic animals were especially difficult to control, could break out of their prescribed animal-spaces, or could be pulled out of these places by humans for a violent or sacrilegious purpose.

Animals and killings

Domestic animals could be used to harm or kill people, and the laws around these acts provide separate punishments depending on the type of provocation used, and the animal involved. For startling an animal into causing accidental harm, a person could be subject to lesser outlawry, whereas to deliberately attack another man with a dog, fighting stallion, or bull, resulted in the outcome of the attack being considered as though the man provoking the animal had inflicted the damage himself. In this latter case, an animal being used to kill a man would result in the same penalty being given to the man using the animal as if he had killed a man himself (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 147; Finsen, 1852b, pp. 155–156). In this case, the animal becomes an extension of human agency, and the crime is punished as such.

However, there is a marked division made between situations in which an animal acts as an extension of human agency, and those in which the animal acts by themselves. These manuscripts include the provision that a bull forfeits its immunity if it wounds or kills a man, or other animals, and so not only would the owner of the bull be subject to lesser or full outlawry for this, but the bull could also be killed without incurring any penalties (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 203; Finsen, 1852a, p. 188). The bull and the man are equally liable for punishment, and the bull, if three winters old or older becomes effectively an outlaw, as he is *o heilagr við a*ve*r**k*om *þeg*a*r h*ann *viðr a m*onno*m* (without security with regards to wounds as soon as he injures a man; Finsen, 1852a, p. 188). This lack of *heilagr* is the same concept used to indicate the outlawing of a man, as *heilagr* is that space within which human life is sacrosanct (Kanerva, 2015, p. 65), and if a bull kills a man, *þa va*rð*ar*

*slict se*m *hundr bane m*ann*e* (Finsen, 1852a, p. 188; then it becomes such as a dog killing a man). The designation that this killing is the same as a dog killing a man (discussed further below), places it into the category of *víg sǫk*, a manslaughter case, just as a human killing another. However, as highlighted in Table 1, the laws about bulls and dogs as agents are found in the "Miscellaneous Provisions" section of the laws, separate from the other laws about manslaughter, perhaps indicating a separation between the concepts of animal and human manslaughter.

Relations between animals and humans also became skewed when domestic animals assumed the role of meat-eaters. Men were not permitted to eat domestic animals that did so, including dogs and cats, for which the penalty was lesser outlawry (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 49; Finsen, 1852b, pp. 34–35), though the eating of horses was also under the same punishment (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 49). These laws are found in the "Christian Laws section," and like the process of cleansing a pig which has eaten horse or human flesh, have traditionally been linked to Christianity. The procedure to cleanse a pig involves starving and then fattening the pig before slaughter, and the starvation period is listed as three months if horse flesh had been eaten, or six months if human flesh had been consumed (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 48; Finsen, 1852b, p. 34). These rules echo laws found in the seventh-century canons of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, suggesting they were heavily influenced by ecclesiastical tradition (Foote, 2004b, p. 5).

Such regulations may suggest a conceptualisation of the animal-human boundary that is fluid and permeable: the eating of a pig that had eaten horse or human flesh was taboo because, for a period of months, the pig was viewed as having been infected with that which it was forbidden Christians to eat: horse or human flesh. The act of eating meat itself may have also been considered an activity limited to humans and wild carnivores – not one to be adopted by domestic animals. Fear of the adoption of human characteristics by animals can be seen in the stipulation that a man may not under any circumstances eat a domestic animal that has killed someone, for which the penalty was lesser outlawry (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 49):

> þ*at* fe er eigi ætt. er m*aþ*r veit at manz bani verþr (Finsen, 1852b, p. 34).
>
> That livestock is not eatable which a man knows has become a mansbane.

This may suggest that the act of killing was likewise perceived as a human action, and an animal that enacts this receives the same label as a human killer: *mannsbani* ("ONP," n.d.). If we return to the prohibition on men eating carnivorous animals mentioned above, we can suggest that the killing and eating of prey may have been considered a humanlike action, and therefore the eating of a killing-animal is forbidden, as it may be viewed as ingesting an animal with human characteristics. Unlike the pig which has only eaten of human flesh, the act of killing a human evidently damaged the animal so much that it could not be eaten afterwards. Stipulating that the animal was not to be eaten reinforces the serious nature of this transgression. Elsewhere in *Grágás* the food value of animal bodies seems to be considered of vital importance, as apparently highlighted in the procedure for dealing with rogue pigs.

The most detailed regulation surrounding the killing of an animal, is the procedure for when a man found another man's pig on his land (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 139; Finsen, 1852a, pp. 121–122). Like bulls, pigs had immunity they could forfeit by their actions, and a pig without a ring or stud in its snout could be legally killed for trespassing and damage (Finsen, 1852a, p. 121). However, this procedure was not to be followed if someone's pig was killed by a man on land belonging to a third party. In this case, the texts suggest the matter be treated as though the second man has killed the pig on the first man's land itself (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 139). Pigs had immunity on their owner's land, and so in this case the man who killed the pig would be prosecuted for harming livestock. This stipulation reinforces the responsibilities of the householder, in this case the second man, to take action on his own land. It was not the role of the third man to protect the second man's land or punish the first man's animal.

The treatment of pigs in these laws can be interpreted in two ways: firstly, pigs were extremely valuable animals, as the text suggests that a pig with a ring in its snout could trespass on another's land without forfeiting its immunity; and secondly that pigs without rings in their snouts were dangerous and should be killed. The implication is that this killing is the correct action to take, and it is not condemned so long as the correct procedure is followed. Once the animal is killed, the killer *scal hylia þar hræ sva at þar falle eigi á dýr ne fuglar oc gera orð þeim er svín á* (Finsen, 1852a, pp. 121–122; must cover there the dead body so that it falls not to animals nor birds and send word to those who

own the pig). The text emphasises the importance of providing enough time so that the owner of the pig can collect the body before it had spoiled or been destroyed by wild animals.

Presumably the spoiling of the pig's carcass is undesirable because the owner of the animal would wish to utilise the body for food. However, this stipulation is found nowhere else attached to the killing of an animal, and instead echoes the procedure for manslaughter committed against men, which echoes the wording almost exactly:

> H*ann* s*ca*l hylia hræ ef h*ann* ge*n*gr f*ra* m*anne* davðo*m*. s*va* at h*v*arke æte fuglar ne dýr (Finsen, 1852b, p. 154).
>
> He shall cover the body if he walks from a dead man, so that it is eatable by neither birds nor animals.

In the sagas, we also find the same phrasing used to describe the actions of characters after killing a man, who must *hylja hræ hans* (cover his dead body; *Laxdœla saga*, ch.37; *Njáls saga*, ch.17; *Egils saga*, ch.80, 81). In addition, the text states specifically that the killer of the pig must announce the act to his neighbours, which is also a regulation required to be performed by men after a slaying (Dennis et al., 1980, pp. 142–143).

Staðarhólsbók elaborates on this law, specifying that failure to follow the correct procedure could be punished by full outlawry, unlike the punishment for failing to cover a dead man after a killing, which only incurred lesser outlawry (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 320, 1980, p. 146). While the value of the pig's body for food is protected here, procedures such as this also represent a method of returning a deviant animal to the proper space of the legal household-farm of its owner, and may suggest that such violent ritualised action is based on a more-than-economic value of the pig.

Stray animals

If the complex procedure following the killing of a pig was a method of returning order to the household-farm after a disruption, then the laws concerning stray animals may be less violent incarnations of this process.

Straying animals are a clear concern in *Grágás*, and the resulting procedures are as varied as the types of domestic animals themselves (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 83–84, 171–172). However, the emphasis in all cases is on careful treatment of the animals and a responsibility to avoid damage, except in the case of pigs, as discussed above. For all other animals who stray onto inhabited land, it is the duty of the farmer whose land has been strayed upon to gather up the livestock and treat them as though they were his own until they are claimed. The man who owns stray animals is considered at fault and must collect his animals before a month of winter passes, or pay the cost of their upkeep as assessed by neighbours. If this upkeep is not paid, the original owner owes a fine of three marks as well as the upkeep cost. If this upkeep is still not paid, then the man on whose land they have dwelt may keep the animals without penalty (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 171; Finsen, 1852a, p. 157). Such detailed procedures emphasise above all things the need for balance and compensation in animal-human, and human-human relations, and the obligation of men to support animals until they can be re-established on either their initial owner's land, or the land they strayed upon.

The ability for certain animals to travel great distances while straying is acknowledged in the detailed protocol for dealing with a stray horse following a man (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 85):

> Ef h*ro*ss m*anz* beisltamt rennr ept*ir* m*ann*e a næsta bö. *oc* s*ca*l h*ann* beiða m*enn* taca hross þ*at oc* secz h*ann* e*igi* þa a þot*t* reNi ti*l* aN*ar*s böiar (Finsen, 1852a, p. 64).
>
> If a man's horse, tamed to the bridle, runs after a man to the next farm, then he shall request men take that horse and he himself is not then responsible if it runs after him to a second farm.

Although the man has responsibility for this horse, the agency of the horse is presented differently than that of other livestock, explicitly chasing after a man rather than simply being found on someone else's land. The responsibility of the human is also not as simple as presented in other cases; the man is not responsible for any damage the horse might cause while following him, nor for any damage that might be caused to the horse, who to a certain extent is responsible for their own actions. In addition, this passage emphasises co-operation and social responsibility. The men at the farms asked to catch the horse may be subject to fines or lesser outlawry for refusing to act, while the initial man is only liable

for lesser outlawry once the horse has followed him over moors, from one Quarter to another, or away from farms.

If a horse approaches a man in uninhabited country, it may follow him anywhere so long as the man tethers it at the next farm he reaches. The phrase used in this law is worth noting. It begins: *Ef h*r*o*s*s kø*mr *at m*ann*e a obygðo*m (Finsen, 1852a, p. 65; if a horse comes upon a man in the wilderness), placing the horse securely as the subject of the clause and the instigator of the encounter. In addition, the man is only required to tether the horse at the next farm he reaches if the horse is *beisltamt* (Finsen, 1852a, p. 65; used to the bridle), suggesting that horses could either be *beisltamr*, or not. A horse that was not bridle-tamed was perhaps conceived as too difficult for men to catch, and thus permitted to go wherever it pleased; although it might also be the case that such horses were accorded a special legal status. They are certainly presented as capable of independent action in these texts. In *Landnámabók*, missing horses are described using the verb *hverfa* (to lose/turn away from a thing), in contrast to sheep, which are stolen using *taka* (to take; see Chapter 1). These studhorses in *Landnámabók* are the subjects of the verb, emphasising the agency of the animals in becoming lost or refusing human control (Benediktsson, 1968b, pp. 114, 202); however, the same missing-horse episodes are also included in *Eyrbyggja saga* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, pp. 33–34), and *Hrómundar þáttr halta* (Sveinsson, 1939a, p. 308), and in these saga episodes, only the *Hrómundar þáttr halta* episode uses this *hverfa* construction. Depictions of animal agency evidently depended on the perception or preferences of individual scribes or compilers.

Dogs

As mentioned above, men were generally expected to treat the livestock of others as they would their own, and take responsibility for any livestock encountered (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 167–168, 174–175). Like other domestic animals, a dog is listed as the legal responsibility of the man who takes it into his care. However, unlike other animals, a man has a choice whether to include or exclude the dog from his society:

> Ef hundr k*øm*r ifor m*eð* m*ann*e oc biðr h*ann* mat gefa h*onum* e*ða* sysl*ir* v*m* h*ann* e*r* þ*eir* co*m*a til húss. Þa abyrgiz h*ann* hu*n*d þót*t* aNaR eigi. eN e*igi* ef h*ann* scipt*ir* ser ecki af (Finsen, 1852a, p. 188).

> If a dog goes along with a man and he (the man) asks for food to be given to him or works for him when they come to a house, then he is responsible for the dog even if another owns it; but not if he concerns himself not (with the dog).

While the man's actions decide whether he is to take responsibility for the dog, the dog is not a passive figure in the exchange. Like the horse in the passage quoted above, the dog approaches the man, and the two are presented as accompanying each other. The partnership of the canine-dog relationship is also indicated in the emphasis on the work the human figure performs for the dog before he is given responsibility for the animal: procuring food and seeing to the dog's welfare.

This mutual companionship between dogs and humans is one way in which dogs are placed apart from other domestic animals. Unlike bulls and pigs who can forfeit their immunity by their actions, dogs are classified as having *eigi hælgi* (no legal immunity; Finsen, 1852a, p. 187) to begin with, and they seem only to gain security by being correctly leashed. Both men and other animals are responsible for their own actions if they are wounded after approaching a leashed dog, and while the dog is correctly leashed, neither the human owner of the dog, nor the dog itself are responsible for its actions (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 201; Finsen, 1852a, p. 187). However, if a dog is not leashed correctly, a scale of punishments is laid out, ranging from a three-mark fine to full outlawry (Dennis *et al.*, 2000, p.201–202). As mentioned above, if a man dies from a dog bite, the case is to treated as a *víg söc* (manslaughter charge; Finsen, 1852a, p. 187), as if the crime were committed by a man. Likewise, just as it is unlawful for a man to harm another's livestock, it is unlawful for a dog to attack or chase another man's animals, though the penalty is based on compensation rather than fines or outlawry, indicating a distinction between the violence of dogs and humans towards livestock (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 202; Finsen, 1852a, pp. 187–188). This distinction may suggest that in violence towards men the dog is considered as committing a human crime, but in violence against animals this dog is very much the carnivorous semi-wild animal. There is an implicit recognition of the blurred nature of the dog, as both carnivore and domestic animal, both capable of human actions, and as animals bound by an animal nature that required human-imposed restraint (the leash) to participate in society.

Un-Christian animals

If the procedures dealing with trespassing or stray animals were designed to return animals to their proper places on the farm, then the marking of animals with ownership marks was one method (wall-building being the other) by which this proper place was established (Dennis *et al.*, 2000, pp.166, 168–169). In the *Grágás* manuscripts, failure to mark animals, or to alter marks promptly when animals changed hands, could result in fines (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 158), but falsifying marks, with the purpose of claiming an animal that was not your own could result in full outlawry (Dennis *et al.*, 2000, pp.168–169). These marks were important to the farm, allowing the workers to keep track of which animals belonged to which household. However, rather than just assisting in the identification of who owned which animals, a passage in these law-texts suggests that these marks of ownership may have had a secondary association.

The marking of animals branded them as figures included within the human society that valued and required ownership of them. Through this process, animals were positioned within the sphere of the known and controllable. In contrast, animals who were left unmarked were a risk. They perhaps encouraged dishonest behaviour by making it easier to commit theft, and they were also linked with un-Christian practice. As mentioned above, Christian thinking is seen to have impacted on some laws involving animals in *Grágás*. This impact is not restricted to the regulations on meat-eating or violent animals, but rather may pervade the conceptualisation of agro-pastoral society at a wider level. *Konungsbók* provides us with a law concerning the illegal nature of so-called *fé óborit* (unborn livestock):

> Scalat m*aþ*r eiga fé öborit. ef m*aþ*r a fe oborit. oc letr omerkt ganga. ti*l* þ*ess* at *hann* trvir aþ*at* h*e*ldr en*n* a an*n*at fe. eþa ferr m*e*þ hindr vitni neccvers kyns. oc varþ*a*r h*on*v*m* f*iorbavgs* G*arþ* (Finsen, 1852b, p. 23)
>
> Men must not own unborn livestock, if a man owns unborn livestock, and lets it walk unmarked, so that he believes in that rather than in other livestock, or goes with idolatry of any kind, then he is punishable for that by lesser outlawry.

It has been assumed that the phrase *fé óborit* refers to those animals that required a caesarean delivery in order to be born (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 39). The stipulation that allowing the animal to live unmarked would incur lesser outlawry, suggests that these

animals were not automatically discarded, as the law indicates should happen, but were sometimes kept and esteemed within a value system excluded from *Grágás*. By being left unmarked, the animal was not tied to a specific ownership, and the text implies that the refusal to mark the animal was the result of a desire to believe in it rather than in other livestock. Although this passage is clearly influenced by Christian ideas, and the implicit purpose of the law is to prevent superstition and the remains of perceived pre-Christian practice, the link made between marked animals, and included, safe animals, is worth noting. The act of marking an animal may be perceived as drawing the animal into Christian society, and this law is included alongside prohibitions on heathen practice (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 39). The animal that is not marked is the opposite of the ordered, natural, safe, Christian society that *Grágás* promotes.

Connecting legal and physical spaces

The *Grágás* laws depict the relationships that people were perceived or encouraged to hold with each other, their animals, and the environment in which they lived, and may be used as an example of the interaction between texts and the physical environment. The final section of this chapter examines the interrelation of narrative, legal theory, and physical landscape depicted in these laws.

Foote has noted that in the *Grágás* manuscripts, although the rights of the landowner are paramount, a strong emphasis is also laid on the management of resources (Foote, 2004a, p.99). There is a concern reflected in some parts of *Grágás* seemingly aimed at protecting the environment in which the Icelanders' animals grazed, and this perhaps suggests recognition of the close relationship necessary between the environment, domestic animals, and the humans who relied on them both. The heavy emphasis on the protection of livestock in these texts would have been of little use if the land were overworked and unable to sustain them. The laws stipulate that a tenant was legally obliged to take on enough workers to properly work the land (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 150; Finsen, 1852a, p. 135), a householder could be punished for letting land be abandoned (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 112; Finsen, 1852a, p. 92), and quotas were established, apparently to ensure the communal pasture was not overgrazed (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 109, 132–133). These laws seem to represent a desire to safeguard the productivity of the

environment. While explicit concern for the environment is only reflected in a few laws in the *Grágás* corpus, and to use these laws as evidence for ecological awareness in the medieval Icelandic worldview is therefore difficult, ecological security was sought through the regulation and division of spaces by *lǫg garðar* (legal walls).

Lǫg garðar

The laws refer to two types of boundary: *merki* (marks) and *garðar* (walls, enclosures). Both *Konungsbók* and *Staðarhólsbók* refer to land-marks and meadow-marks, and *Konungsbók* refers to *skógarmerki* (forest marks; Finsen, 1852a, p. 82; "ONP," n.d.). The movement, concealment, or falsification of boundary markers was punishable by lesser outlawry (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 103). With regards to more substantial boundaries, different types of *garðar* are referred to in these law-texts: *túngarðr* (homefield wall), *heygarðr* (hay enclosure), and *lǫg garðr* (legal wall). Of these, references to legal walls and legal walling work (*garðlag*) are the most common, and these specific terms appear much more in the earlier *Konungsbók* manuscript than in *Staðarhólsbók* ("ONP," n.d.). Their usage also seems mostly restricted to legal texts, with only one appearance of *garðlag* in one of the *Íslendingasögur* (*Svarfdœla saga* c.1450). In contrast, *túngarðr* is predominantly found used in the saga literature of medieval Iceland. *Heygarðr* appears mostly in legal or documentary texts, and while both *heygarðr* and *garðlag* appear in the same version of *Svarfdœla saga*, they appear hardly, if at all, in any other literary texts of the medieval period ("ONP," n.d.). This suggests that different boundary or enclosure terminology belonged to different types of text.

A man was legally obliged to build a *lǫg garðr* around haystacks (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 116; Finsen, 1852a, p. 96), any parcels of land he owned within another man's outfields (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 115–116; Finsen, 1852a, p. 96), between communal pasture and privately-owned land (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 138; Finsen, 1852a, p. 121), and even around hay that had been blown onto another man's pasture (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 116; Finsen, 1852a, p. 96). It was the responsibility of all men to be vigilant for damage done to their *lǫg garðar*, or anyone else's, and according to the *Grágás* texts, there were specific periods of time in which these turf walls were to be built and maintained (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 116, 111; Finsen, 1852a, pp. 96, 91). The laws set aside three months for

this work, and *Staðarhólsbók* emphasises that during *garð önn* (walling season; Finsen, 1879, p. 450), work-men should work only on the walls, aside from driving home sheep and collecting firewood (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 301). Taking three months out of the year to build walls seems extraordinary, especially when the working seasons in Iceland are so short, and such dedication to wall-building may reflect the importance of these structures to the functioning of the household-farm and the wider community.

Many collapsed *garðar*, constructed out of turf in the Viking Age and medieval periods, are still visible in the Icelandic landscape today, and a series of projects have focussed on mapping these structures in the north-east of Iceland (Einarsson et al., 2002; Einarsson, 2015; Einarsson and Aldred, 2011). Árni Einarsson's "Viking Age Fences and Early Settlement Dynamics in Iceland" (2015), attempts to analyse these turf walls in relation to systems of farming in Viking Age Iceland, and the resources available to these early Icelanders. The project takes a structural approach to the archaeological landscape that has the potential to alter the way we read textual representations of the division of space. Since 2002, over 600km of boundaries have been mapped in north-eastern Iceland (Einarsson, 2015, p. 4), and of these, outfield boundaries are the most prominent features recorded, although they are by no means the only structures visible (Einarsson and Aldred, 2011). Aerial photography has also highlighted other earthworks, which have been interpreted as homefield walls, hay storage enclosures, and animal pens: all structures defined or regulated in the *Grágás* laws (Einarsson and Aldred, 2011). However, like the excavated farm sites highlighted in Chapter 3, the best preservation of these boundaries is biased. In these cases, this bias is in favour of marginal or abandoned places, which have been the least disturbed by subsequent building and modern farming practices (Einarsson and Aldred, 2011, pp. 253, 303). Therefore, applying the analysis generated from these boundaries to less marginal places may be difficult.

The perceived outfield boundaries are seen stretching from the coastline to the lower highlands (Einarsson, 2015, p. 2; Einarsson and Aldred, 2011), and yet the so-called outfield is the most elusive aspect of the household-farm in the textual sources used in this project. While the literature of medieval Iceland gives us an idea of where the infield area was perceived to belong, and the communal pastures are described in both laws and sagas, this outfield area can be seen in the laws and sagas only by its individual parts of shielings

and pasture. There is also no term for outfield used in *Grágás*: rather the outfield is a disjointed concept, made up of separate parts of farm-work not permitted in the communal pasture or the homefield.

As previously mentioned, scholars have suggested that some laws in these manuscripts can be traced back to the twelfth century in their written form, and perhaps even to eleventh-century traditions (Foote, 2004, pp.102–103). This would appear to correlate with the construction of the majority of the earthworks surveyed and dated in the earthworks project (Einarsson, 2015, p. 5). The tephra layers visible in cross sections of these structures, suggest these outfield walls had collapsed long before c.1477, and Einarsson claims many of them could have ceased to have been repaired in the thirteenth century (2015, p. 5). This period of neglect corresponds with the production of the *Staðarhólsbók* and *Konungsbók Grágás* manuscripts (Einarsson, 2015, p. 4). The eventual cessation of repairing these walls may be linked with a shift in focus from cattle farming to wool production, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis. Sheep were often grazed on highland pastures, and therefore required little structural direction, whereas the keeping of cattle required a system of intensive hay-production to sustain the animals throughout the winter, as well as the division of the herd into milking-stock, juvenile males, and bulls. Such a division would have been reflected in the demarcation of land. Increased emphasis on sheep-farming for wool production may have encouraged diminished use of these walls, and a reduction in the need to maintain so many boundaries. However, the abandonment of this walling system corresponded with other major changes in the Icelandic landscape, including the abandonment of previous farm sites and the uptake of a different farming structure on "cottage" farms; therefore the reasons behind the neglect of the walls should be viewed as a complex process, part of many changes in Icelandic society (Einarsson, 2015, p. 17). It is nonetheless interesting that these changes take place alongside increased compilation of these textual sources, and the ambiguity of the continuing value of *kúgildi* and definition of *fé* discussed in this chapter.

In these earthwork structures, we may see the physical representations of the legal walls required in the *Grágás* manuscripts. It is evident that both the physical structures that survive in the landscape and those discussed in these texts are significant features within the separate spaces in which they exist. The earthworks that we can see today in

the archaeological landscape of Iceland are remains of structures that would have taken a considerable amount of time and effort to build and maintain, and would not have been tasks to undertake lightly. Likewise, the marking and controlling of space in these legal texts was considered important enough to demand the walls on a farm were maintained, even when there were other aspects to farming more obviously vital to survival than wall-building. The legal walls required by so many regulations in the *Grágás* manuscripts should be constructed, not only in the three months set aside for wall-building, but at any point when a wall begins to no longer function in the correct manner. The maintenance of these walls ensures the correct functioning of the farm. It ensures that animals remain where they are supposed to be, that a man's hay is reserved for his animals alone, and that other men know where their actions are restricted. The laws stipulate that a *lǫg garðr* was expected to be five feet thick at ground level, three feet thick at the top, and the shoulder height of a man (c.150cm; Dennis et al., 2000, p. 110). The substantial size specified for the *lǫg garðr*, and the time and effort legally required for building and repairing them, suggests that these were important structures for the organisation and conceptualisation of the Icelandic landscape in *Grágás*.

The choice to use the specific term *lǫg garðr* in *Grágás* is significant. Einarsson suggests that the terms used for certain types of walls would depend on the perspective of the person using the term: a wall between a haystack and a pasture was either a haystack-wall or a meadow-wall depending on where the person was stood (Einarsson, 2015, p. 13). By calling walls in these texts *lǫg garðar*, they are marked out as something specific to these sorts of narratives: an explicitly legal demarcation of space. As mentioned above, this term is used little in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, but greatly in legal documents. Clearly, *lǫg garðar* were an important way of conceptualising the legal landscape of Iceland.

Conclusions

Writing laws is a matter of establishing boundaries. The above sections have demonstrated that the household-farm, as presented in these texts, is a place to be controlled. Farming in medieval Iceland, including livestock management, hay collection and storage, renting land, and using animals in payments, was a practice involving complex legal procedures

and strict adherence to regulations. Within these detailed laws nothing was to be lost or wasted, everything was to be balanced, and men were to treat animals with respect or face the consequences. In this discussion of the careful relationship represented in the laws between men, animals, and the environment, the strong association of the structured landscape with social order is emphasised. Domestic animals were valued and cared for within society. They had rights of protection, and immunity to forfeit. They lived within the legal walls demarcating the landscape and had their places on the legally-structured household-farm – and it was destructive for society when they disregarded these. The de-structuring of the spaces of the farm was the opposite of the structured community, and concern over the spaces and structure of animal-human relations is found also in the *Íslendingasögur*, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The next chapter of this thesis will consider the demarcation of farm spaces in Viking Age and medieval Iceland in greater detail, by looking at archaeological interpretations of the physical household-farm, and the animal-human relations that formed, and were formed by the processes of care, protection, and socialisation encouraged by these laws.

3. Animals and humans in the *tún*

Introduction

Animals do not respect disciplinary boundaries, and depictions of animals and animal-human relations in medieval literature are infused with the experience of real animals (Crane, 2013, p. 171). As outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, this research undertakes a holistic, grounded approach to animal-human relations, and this chapter builds on the work of the previous chapters by examining places of animal-human interaction on the Icelandic farm.

This chapter attempts to better understand animal-human relations on the Viking Age and medieval farm in Iceland by combining spatial-functional analysis of human and animal spaces with a consideration of the experience of dwelling in these places. Within archaeology, approaches interested in embodied experience have sought to engage with archaeological remains in a way that assists our understanding of how agents in the past dwelt, moved within, and interacted with their surroundings through the activities of the everyday (Edmonds, 1999; Mills, 2014, p. 20), and two studies in Icelandic archaeology

have focussed on the embodied practice of everyday activities (Aldred, 2013, 2010; Heide, 2009). The area of the *tún* (homefield) or main settlement space is chosen for detailed analysis in this chapter because of its relative accessibility and measurability in the archaeological record. However, analysis of the *tún* is also used as a point of departure for exploring relations between animals and humans, and outfields or highland pastures. As shown in Chapter 2, the *túngarðr* was an important component of the Icelandic household-farm, and the homefield and homefield wall are significant structures in the saga narratives discussed in Chapter 4. Referring both to an area important for hay-making, and the associated central farm enclosure, the *tún(garðr)* structures the interactions of both animals and humans with(in) the household-farm.

For this part of the thesis I focus on the organisation of space at the household-farms of Vatnsfjörður in the Westfjords, and Sveigakot in Mývatnsveit (shown in Figure 7), and place these two case studies in the wider context of Icelandic Viking Age and medieval farm sites. I first provide an outline of the method developed for my analysis, before discussing the previous work undertaken in examining and classifying animal-buildings in medieval Iceland. I then focus on the sites at Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot,

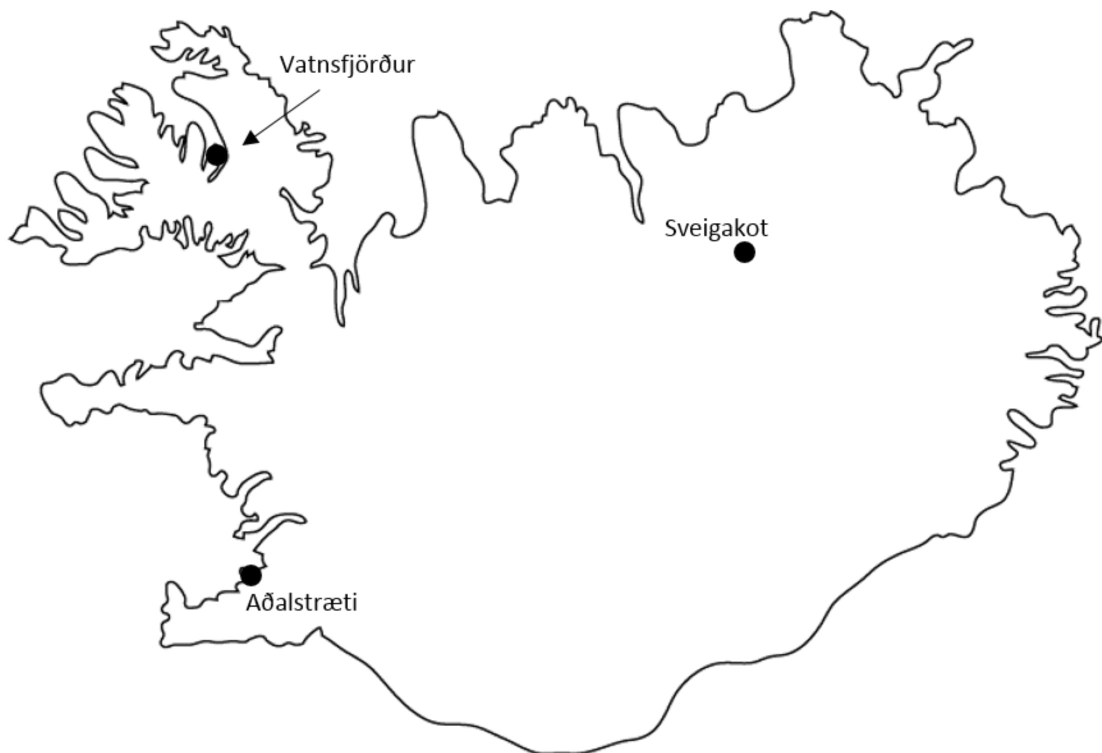


Figure 7 Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot locations in relation to the Aðalstræti house in Reykjavík. Author's own.

specifically on the built features of the homefield area, and consider these built spaces in relation to animal-human interaction on the farm. I finish this chapter with a comparative discussion of the two sites. It is hoped that the approach trialled in this chapter will contribute to ongoing social and economic interpretations of these settlements, especially interpretations that focus on the utility of animals in inter-farm networks (Sayle et al., 2016; Simpson, 2009). The visual impact of animal-buildings, and the tactile experience of animal-keeping would have both shaped the animal-human relations that developed at these farm sites.

Methodology and sample

My method in this chapter is to reconstruct the possible interactions between humans and domestic animals in the central built area of two Viking Age farms through analysis of associations between buildings and routeways on the sites, and the interactional experiences that would have been part of living and working on these farms. Such a study contributes to ongoing analyses of society in Viking Age and medieval Iceland, and offers an alternate approach to zooarchaeological discussions of domestic animals in these periods. In this chapter I (re)consider the data collected from the excavations at Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot and synthesise this information into diagrammatical depictions of space, function, and meaningful associations in the homefield area. These diagrammatical representations are then used to discuss potential animal-human interactions on the site and consider how interpretations of animal-human relations may impact on readings of the wider economic, social, or political role of these sites in the Viking Age. The data used in this study has been collected from the seasonal excavation reports, but as there is no monograph yet published for either site, I have also consulted with people involved in the post-excavation work, namely Thomas McGovern and Céline Dupont-Hébert (Vatnsfjörður) and Orri Vésteinsson (Sveigakot).

I have focussed on these sites for two reasons. Firstly, they are two sites in Iceland for which significant evidence is available, and the only two sites that have the detailed information about site plans and phasing, including animal-buildings and human dwellings, required for the implementation of this method. Secondly, multiple buildings have been excavated at both Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot with a clear chronological cut-off

point for their use. That is, we do not find structures that have been repaired and used throughout Icelandic history, but rather only for a short amount of time. This is necessary for this study as it is important to be able to map the spatial organisation of the site with some confidence that the structure of the locale has not been substantially altered between abandonment and excavation. While it is not wholly possible for contemporary viewers to reconstruct how a site may have looked in the Viking Age, in some excavation reports there are more details available than others, and Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot are two such sites. Despite the wealth of information available for Hofstaðir and Hrísbrú, and the wide range of analytical methods applied at these sites, these farm sites lack the extensive site plan data required for the kind of study undertaken in this project, as well as the evidence for roofed animal-buildings. The aim of this chapter is therefore not to consider a sample and offer statistical analysis, but rather to propose a method that might be adopted for use with suitable sites excavated in the future.

My diagrams are formed from a combination of site plans, descriptive data, and by consulting independent maps of the area (ArcGIS and Kortasjá/Landmælingar Íslands). The decision to use geometric shapes and varied dashed lines as symbols to represent certain types of building or functional space was influenced by access analysis diagrams, in which circles are used to symbolise specific spaces, which are linked by lines representing the routes taken to those spaces (for example, see Figure 8). I wanted a way of visualising the spatial organisation of areas that would allow for easy comparison across sites, as well as allow me to consider whether functional variation plays a role in the creation of places in relation to other features. I also believe associative links may be made between structures based on proximity, threshold direction, and supposed function, as shall be shown below. In the diagrams used in this chapter, the differing functions of buildings or fenced areas are demonstrated by different dashed lines, and the direction of thresholds are indicated by arrows of varying thickness, as a starting point for discussing the accessibility of the buildings and intervisual relationships between structures and agents. Ideally, it would have been advantageous to consider the pathways between structures, and the possible interactions to be expected upon those routes. However, the open nature of the links between buildings in many cases, means that few specific pathways can be indicated on the diagrams; only the point in which these pathways

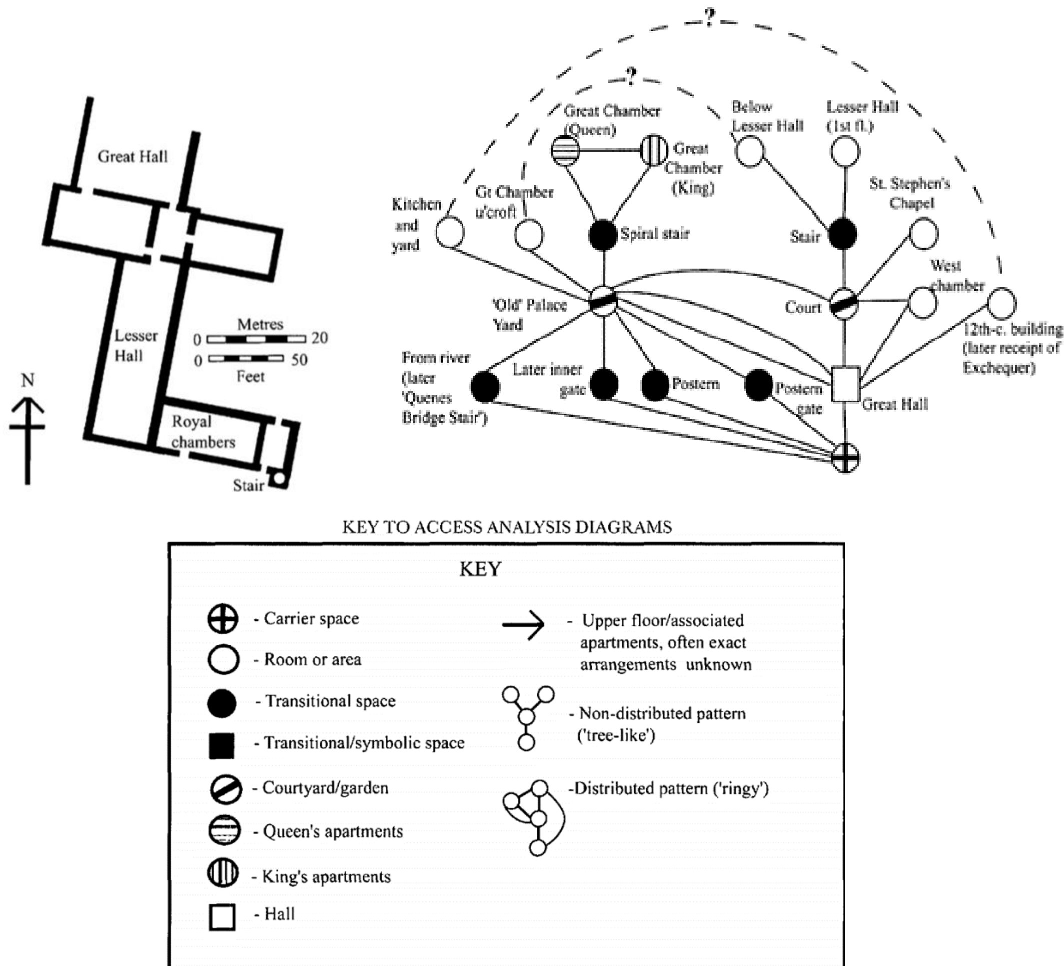


Figure 8 Floor plan and access analysis diagram for the palace at Westminster c.1160. (Richardson, 2003, p.135, fig. 1 and fig. 2 and Richardson, 2003, p.133, Table 1).

transition into a building via a threshold can be highlighted. Nonetheless, suggested route-ways may be postulated at Sveigakot, given the number of marked pathways at the site. To demonstrate the diagrammatical method developed and utilised for this analysis, I include a hypothetical farm plan (Figure 9), which I then convert to the diagrammatical form used in this chapter.

In Figure 9 we see all structures from two stages of occupation at a farm. Taking the information presented in the site plan, I can represent the relationships between space and function with the following diagrams (Figure 10 and Figure 11). It is also possible to represent any waterways significant to the site, and the sloping terrain. These hypothetical structures have been built and used at two different stages of the site's history, and the diagrams reflect the two stages of activity at the site and subsequent changes in spatial

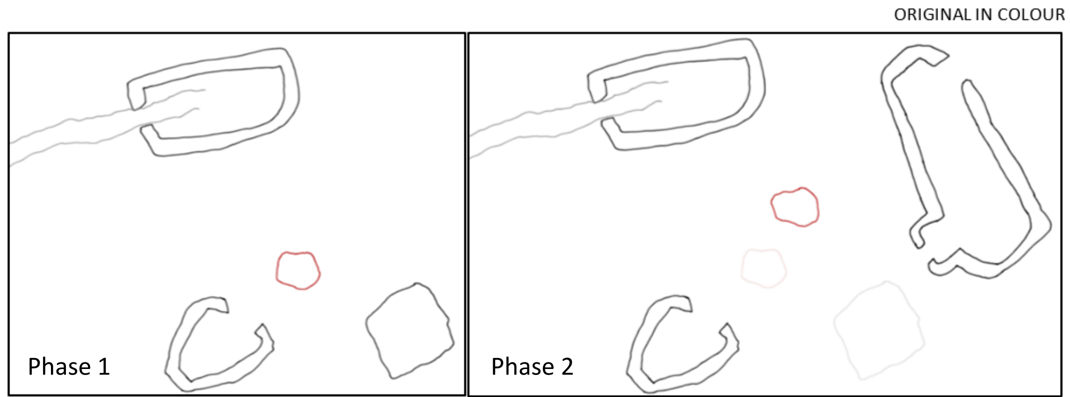


Figure 9 Example site plan with two stages of occupation. Author's own.

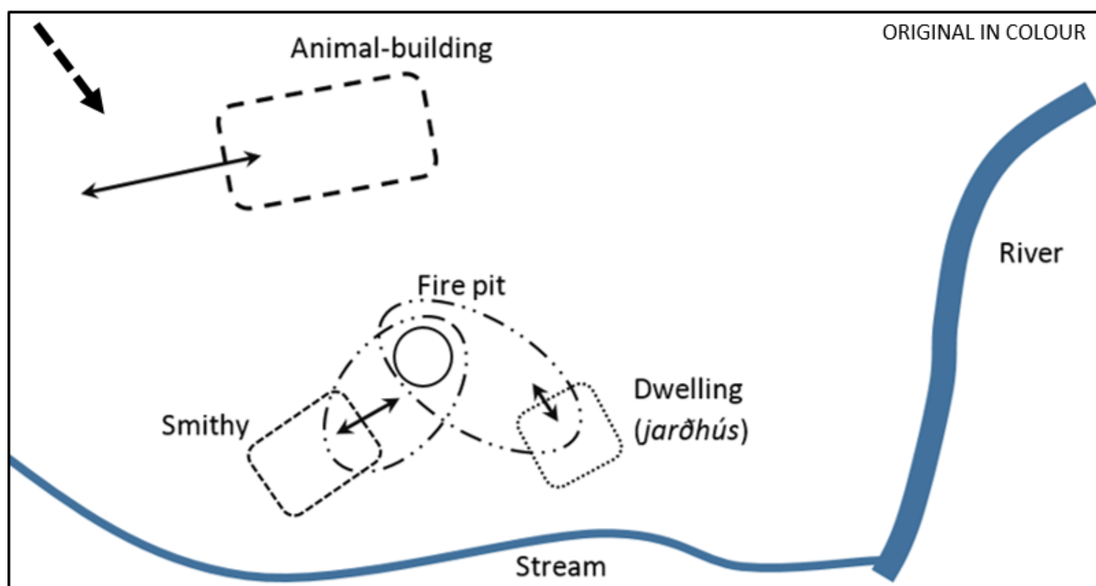
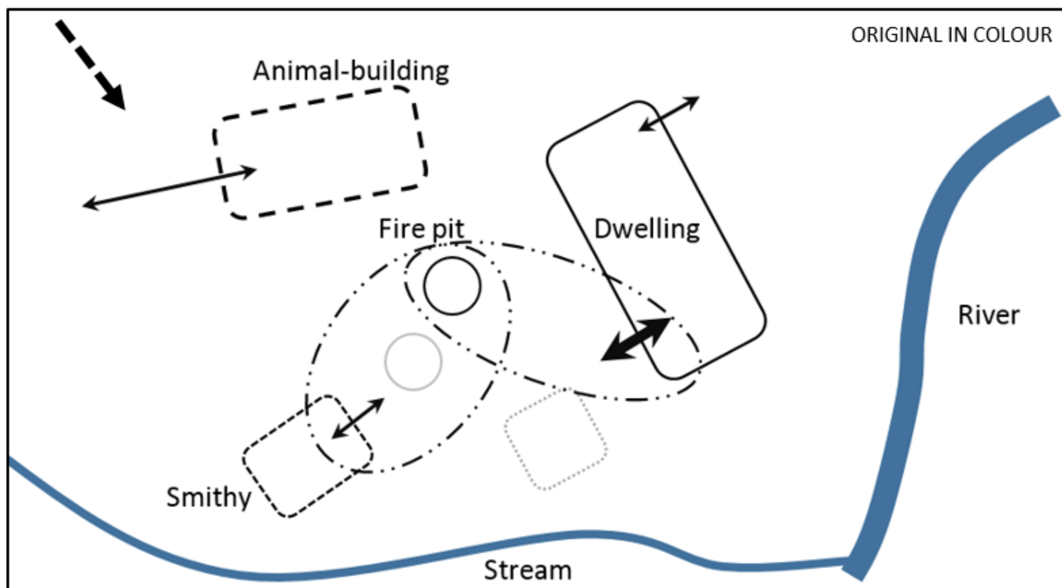


Figure 10 Example spatial-functional diagram. Phase 1.

organisation accordingly. The site consists of multiple structures, including dwellings, fire-pits, and animal-buildings; however, the traditional "longhouse" style dwelling is not built until Phase 2, and the location of the fire-pit moves over time. Thresholds are indicated by arrows, and the enlarged arrow protruding from the animal-building suggests an elongated threshold in the form of a paved path. The thick arrow in the southern doorway of the dwelling in Figure 11 indicates a porch-type structure, which emphasises that doorway in contrast to the northern doorway. Doorways and thresholds are a necessary consideration in examining the organisation of space, and the location and orientation of doorways within the structures discussed in this chapter can be considered as structuring the experience of the site as a whole, as well as the individual buildings



ORIGINAL IN COLOUR

Figure 11 Example spatial-functional diagram. Phase 2.

Feature:	How represented:	Feature:	How represented:
Dwellings		Elaborated threshold	
Animal-building		Abandoned threshold	
Outside activity area / fire pit		Abandoned structure/ruin	
Smithy		Midden (within structure)	
Threshold		Sporadic use of structure	
Possible threshold		Areas of association	
River / stream		Fjord	
Irregular depressions		Direction of slope	

(Aslan, 2006, p. 135; Unwin, 2012, pp. 1, 4). As thresholds to enclosed spaces, doorways are places through which conflict and identity are negotiated through ideas of inclusion and exclusion (Edmonds, 1999, p. 95; Unwin, 2012, p. 155).

The dashed ovals around certain structures and their thresholds are used to indicate associations. In Figure 10 we can see that both the dwelling and the smithy may have been associated with the fire-pit structure, and therefore relational experiences at both these sites may have overlapped at the fire-pit. When these associations are highlighted (in Figure 10), the animal-building appears to be relatively isolated from the other buildings of the central farm area. This is less apparent in the second phase of the site, as the new dwelling extends the "human" space of the settlement further towards the animal-building.

As the positions of the dwelling and the fire-pit change, we can see the evolution of spatial-functional organisation at the site. The fire-pit moves further from the smithy, and movement between the two may have been shaped by the ruins of the previous fire-pit, perhaps reflecting a decrease in smithing activity. The fire-pit becomes more central, and further spatially associated with the animal-building. However, in this second phase of occupation no threshold of the dwelling faces the animal-building, and although the animal-building is upslope of the other structures, its threshold faces outwards, upslope (as we will also see at Vatnsfjörður). The presence of ruins at the site is also significant, as the dwelling and fire pit from the previous phase at the site were features that would have influenced subsequent experiences of the farm.

As discussed above, the research questions of past excavations of Viking Age sites in Iceland were focussed on a particular aspect of the past, often on the search for the homes of figures from the sagas, or pre-Christian graves or temples (Friðriksson, 1994; Vésteinsson, 2004a). The research agenda of Icelandic archaeology has more recently widened, moving beyond the search for a religious or saga-influenced past, and, in some cases, towards excavations that sought to escape what had been perceived as the misleading influence of textual sources. In part, this was a result of the greater suitability and availability of scientific methods for excavations in Iceland, enabling different and more wide-ranging questions to be asked of sites. However, this complete denial of textual sources has led to a different set of biases in archaeological interpretations, and more recently, Zori has argued for an inclusive approach to Icelandic archaeology, in which the full-range of methods and data from archaeology and related disciplines are utilised (Byock and Zori, 2013; Walker et al., 2012; Zori, 2016). In support of this proposed wide-ranging approach, this study embraces particularism and attempts to make my diagrams, though symbolic, informed by all available data on the organisation and use of the places in question. This study attempts to reconnect archaeological reports and site plans with the experience of working with these structures and the animals that dwelt within and around them, by analysing the spatial-functional organisation of farms with reference to intervisual and tactile relationships between animals and humans (Hamilton et al., 2006, pp. 51–52).

Roofed animal-buildings in Iceland

The most extensive survey of animal-buildings in medieval Iceland was published by Bruno Berson (2002). This article reviews the excavated or surveyed byres that up until that point had been uncovered in Iceland, and proposes a rigorous scheme of research to further increase our knowledge of animal-buildings at these sites. The determination at Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot to survey and excavate all archaeological structures can be seen in part as a response to such a challenge. Due to their assumed placement on slopes at a distance from the main farmhouse building (often the most prominent archaeological remains), these animal-buildings are relatively difficult to locate, having been at a substantial risk of destruction or covering by subsequent building or farming activity, or erosion as seen with Structure 8 at Vatnsfjörður discussed below. This is suggested by Berson as the likely fate of the animal-buildings at Hofstaðir that are presumed to have once existed (2002, p. 59).

Nonetheless, Berson identifies three structural features common to all medieval byres in Iceland: a three-aisled structure, sloping central pavements towards a door in the gable end, and a rectangular shape often 3.5-4m wide (2002, p. 59). Examples of such are shown in Figure 12 and demonstrate the attributes that we might expect to see when looking for animal-buildings in an Icelandic context. However, Berson's study is limited in its scope, looking specifically for cattle-byres; and to date, very little attention has been paid to alternate structures that may have been required, particularly those associated with pig-keeping (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2004, p. 20; McGovern, 2003). This is attempted, albeit briefly, later in this chapter. When found, Berson suggests these byres are often located within the homefield, at a distance from the main farmhouse, upslope and overlooking the other buildings (Berson, 2002, p. 60); however, the study conducted in this chapter complicates Berson's conclusions, as neither the animal-buildings at Sveigakot or Vatnsfjörður fit wholly into this model, if at all. As we shall see in this chapter, Berson's criteria for assessing medieval byres do not always apply, and cannot be extended universally into the Viking Age.

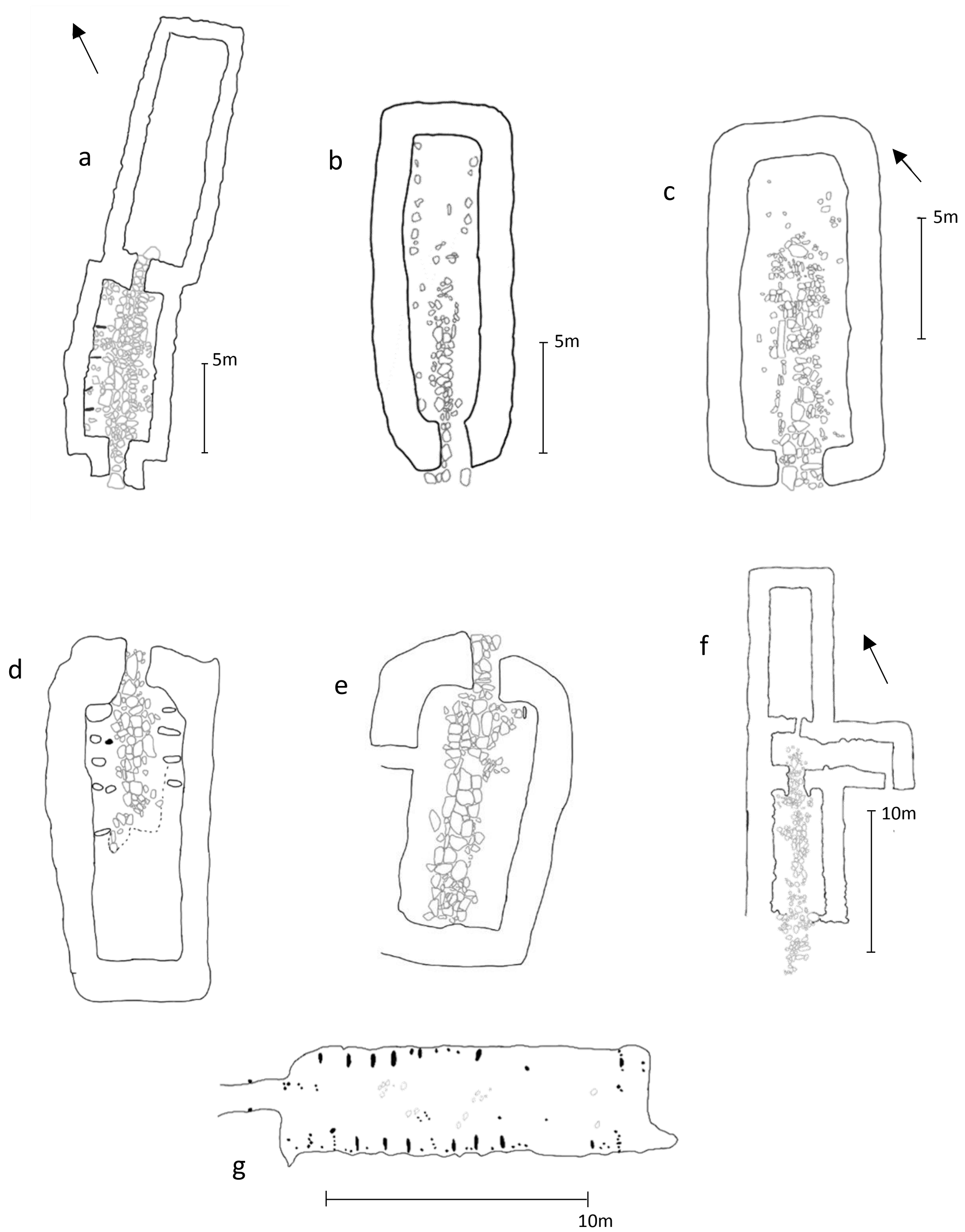


Figure 12 The “medieval” byres at Grof (a), Gjáskógar (b), Goðatættur (c), Herjólfsdalur VIII (d) and IV (e), Lundur (f), and Bergþórshvoll (g). Adapted from Berson (2002). Where arrows are not shown, the buildings are aligned north-south.

In addition to the byres surveyed by Berson, a second type of animal-structure has been identified at Viking Age sites in Iceland, most often referred to as an enclosure or animal-pen. This is a term given to a semi-circular or fully enclosed structure, without evidence for a roof or hearth, often at a distance from the other buildings in the settlement area. Examples of this type of structure have so far been identified at three sites dating from the Viking Age: Hofstaðir, Pálstóftir, and Granastaðir (see Figure 13), and they are often interpreted as structures associated with dairying; though evidence of the location of dairying is difficult to discern archaeologically (Lucas, 2008). The enclosure at Hofstaðir is treated minimally in the monograph on the site (Lucas et al., 2009), and has not been subject to analysis beyond a formal comparison with these two other structures. In contrast, the Pálstóftir report pays greater attention to the structure as a key feature of the animal management required by a shieling site, and the study of Pálstóftir has shown how useful phosphate analysis can be in interpreting such structures (Lucas, 2008).

Structure III at Pálstóftir, shown in Figure 13, is a large structure without postholes interpreted as an open-air animal-pen. Here phosphate mapping was conducted on the interior of the pen, which was judged to be heavily influenced by organic phosphates suggesting the presence of animal dung. Just north of the structure, highly concentrated levels of phosphates were identified, which have been interpreted as indicating a dung heap formed by the repeated clearing out of the structure. Such methods

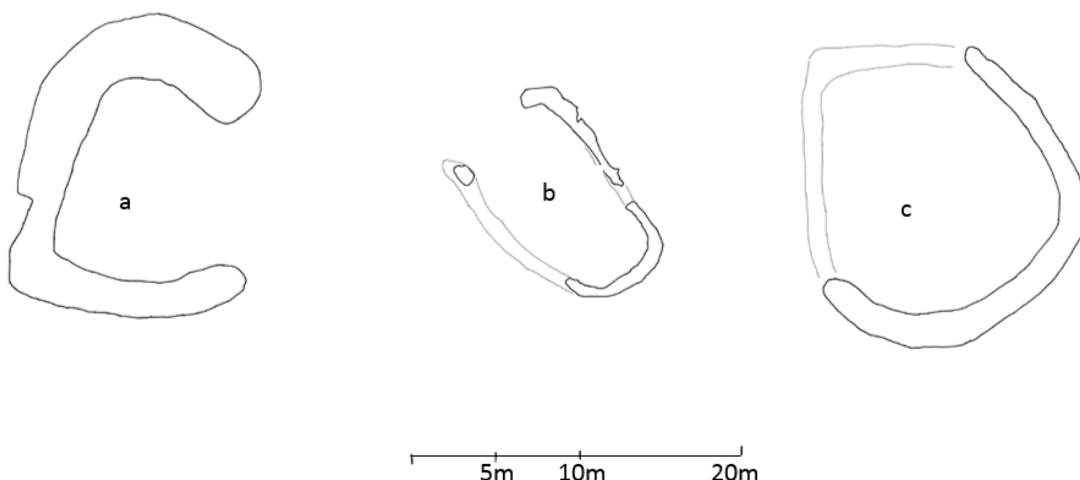


Figure 13 The enclosures at Granastaðir (a), Pálstóftir (b), and Hofstaðir (c). The light grey lines are assumed walls reconstructed by the excavators. After Fig. 3.42 (Lucas et al., 2009).

would be useful in future analysis of assumed animal-structures. Whatever the purpose of these enclosures, they indicate the requirement to gather large numbers of animals together, without the benefit of shelter provided by roofed buildings, and show that the organisation of animals on the farm could be varied depending on the animals involved, and the purposes of such management. The evidence for such structures at both main farms (Hofstaðir and Granastaðir) and shielings (Pálstóftir), suggests that this is a type of animal-structure that should be investigated further, and subjected to as comprehensive a survey as Berson provides for the roofed buildings.

While many medieval byres have been surveyed, these supposed animal-buildings are discussed in isolation to the other buildings of the farm, rely on old illustrations and reports, and have not been subsequently excavated or surveyed with modern technological methods (Berson, 2002). In addition, discussion of animal-places in Icelandic archaeology has often seemed neglected in favour of analyses of zooarchaeological remains, which can offer suggestions about herding strategies or ritual activity, but such discussions only provide a partial impression of animal-human relations on the household-farm.

A place in the homefield

As outlined in the Introduction to this chapter, this project attempts to analyse the organisation of space on Viking Age and medieval farms in Iceland, and consider how animal-human relations may have been experienced at select farm sites. Agents both shape and are shaped by the experience of dwelling within acculturated structures, and the social spaces of the household-farm were not only formed through activities undertaken by humans and animals, but memories of previous activities at these places that would have sustained future human and animal interactions at the site (Barrett, 1997, p. 91, 1988, p. 9; Bourdieu, 1977, p. 89; Giddens, 1995, p. 54). Decisions to build and use farm spaces in a certain way would have been a key aspect of dwelling in the Icelandic landscape, reflecting power relations, cosmological beliefs, and awareness of environmental conditions. The management of the landscape was a vital part of the agro-pastoral way of life in Viking Age and medieval Iceland, and the organisation of spaces in this landscape would have had meaning for those who developed and abided by the methods of management employed.

Each farm can be considered as a microcosm of society; and the structure of the farm, like the structure of society discussed in Chapter 2, shaped the daily lives of the household.

The act of enclosing land near, or around the farmhouse, in order to create a separate space from the surrounding environment, is now assumed to have taken place from the earliest stages of settlement in Iceland (Kupiec and Milek, 2015, p. 104). These walls would not only have been designed to enclose, or restrict access to certain areas by animals and humans, but also to establish control over certain spaces through regulation of access and visual imposition. The perception of space in Viking Age and medieval Iceland has been much discussed by Kirsten Hastrup, especially in relation to the perceived presence of an *innangarðs – útangarðs* (inside the fence – outside the fence) dichotomy in Old Norse cosmology, society, and literature that structures space as either safe and inside, or unsafe and outside (Hastrup, 1985). This theory is developed by Kristina Jennbert, who emphasises the importance of everyday life on farms in shaping the cosmological view of pre-Christian Scandinavians, in what she terms a "Midgard mentality" (Jennbert, 2011, p. 53). However, interpretations of the outfield as a dangerous place, and the homefield as safe, relies on a structural binary (Hastrup, 1985), and this interpretation has been criticised (Kupiec and Milek, 2015; Loumand, 2006, p. 132; Vikstrand, 2006, pp. 354–356). While saga and legal texts from medieval Iceland suggest a demarcation between homefield and outfield areas, the physical material remains suggest a closer integration between the central farm and outfield areas such as shielings (Kupiec and Milek, 2015, p. 102). Nonetheless, the materiality of turf walls in the wider Icelandic landscape, and their visual impact on closer approach to the farm, may have made suggestions about the concept of "home," and, I would argue, about who was permitted access (Kupiec and Milek, 2015, p. 105). In addition, although Hastrup's assumption of the outfield as a wild and dangerous place has been refuted on account of the culturally-moulded landscape beyond the homefield wall, it has been suggested that the homefield boundary was a significant marker nonetheless, and the act of crossing to beyond-the-homefield may have had psychological connotations, if not physical dangers (Kupiec and Milek, 2015, p. 105).

The homefield has been identified as the primary social area of the farm, and the location of a diverse range of activity spaces (Milek, 2012, p. 85). It is important to bear in mind that homefield activities would have taken place both inside buildings and in the

spaces between them (Milek, 2012, p. 85), and that spaces could serve multiple purposes and host multiple stages of activity. For Ingold, tasks shape and are shaped by the environment in which they are undertaken, and together the task and the place are combined in the experience of dwelling (Ingold, 2000, p. 195, 1993, p. 158). The Icelandic household-farm was a taskscape in which domestic animals and humans worked together in the business of settling and subsisting in the Icelandic environment.

This chapter considers the homefield as a series of bordered spaces connected by multiple thresholds. I propose that the relationship between the safe, central areas, and the further afield areas often perceived as periphery is not a binary but a continuum, in which there are graduated stages of controlled and uncontrolled space. As shall be seen from the analysis and discussion below, the positioning of domestic animals within this continuum is significant. Different animals would be placed variably along such a continuum, with cattle placed in the strictly controlled human spaces, and sheep and pigs potentially placed on the wilder end; although both sheep and pigs would be required to travel along the spectrum, requiring close human care and interaction in certain seasons or at specific stages of life.

Case study: Vatnsfjörður

The first case study for this chapter is the farm excavated at Vatnsfjörður between 2003-2011. This site might seem like an odd choice for a study of domestic animal-human relations, given that the traditional archaeological approach for such a study is to analyse the faunal remains found in the middens of the settlement, and at Vatnsfjörður the preservation of animal bones is poor with a high level of fragmentation (Pálsdóttir et al., 2008). In addition, subsistence at the site has historically tended towards the manipulation of marine resources given the site's proximity to the fjord, as seen in Figure 14 (Pálsdóttir et al., 2008). However, despite these factors, the presence of two structures at the site interpreted as animal-buildings prompts us to consider the domestic animals at Viking Age Vatnsfjörður, and the detailed excavation of the structural remains at the site makes it particularly suited to my alternative method of analysis that focusses on the structural

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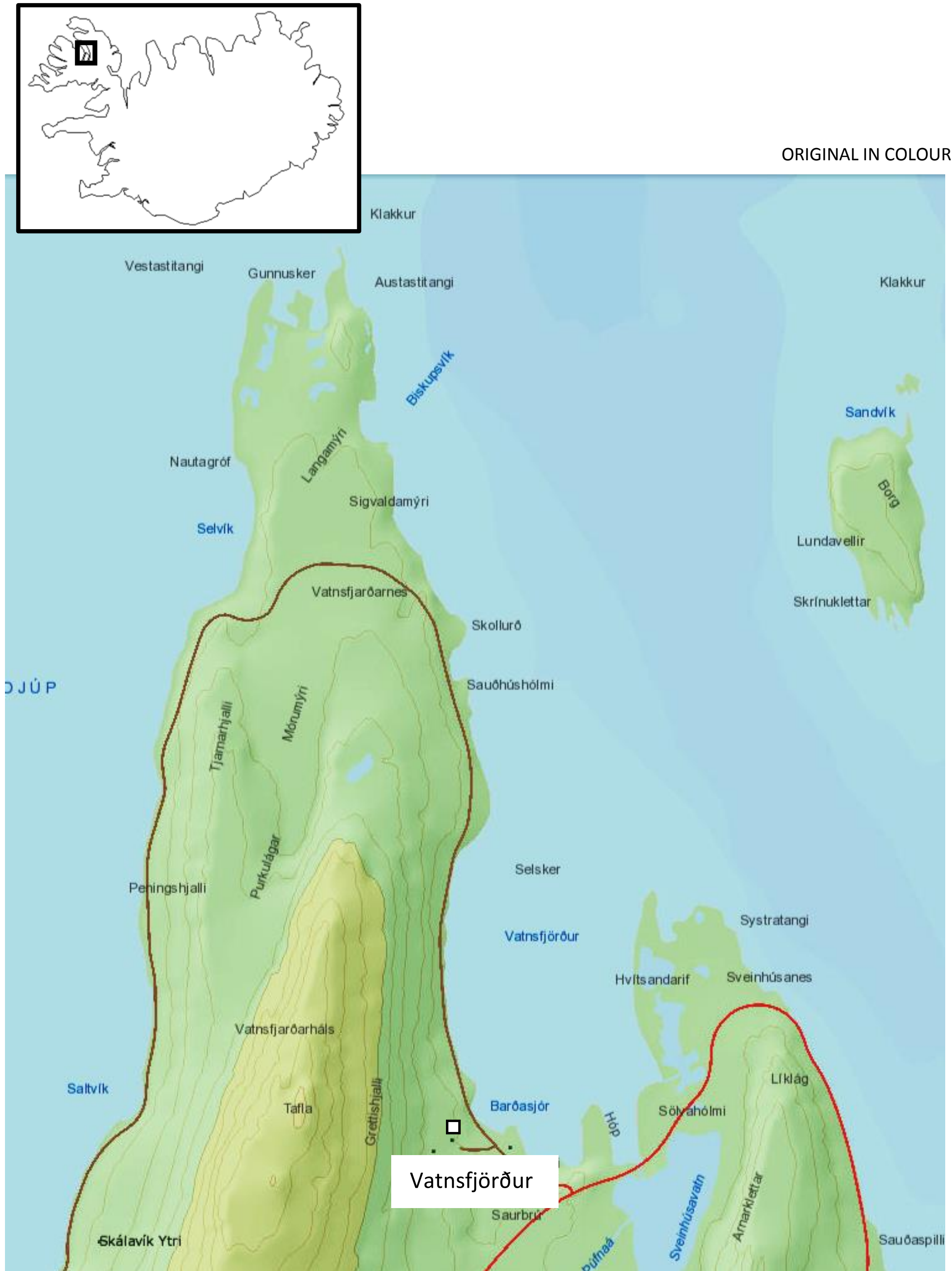

Figure 14 The location of the Vatnsfjörður site with the steep slope to the west of the site (“Kortasjá,” n.d.). The single road around the headland can also be seen.

organisation of the farm rather than faunal remains as a way of engaging with past animal-human relations.

This section will first examine the dwelling at the site in relation to the Viking Age houses discussed in Chapter 1, at which evidence for internal animal-stalling has been identified. The multiple animal-buildings will then be discussed in detail, initially considering the pit-house on which the first of these animal-buildings was (re)constructed, before discussing each potential byre in turn. Finally, the chapter analyses the spatial-functional organisation of the homefield area in its two occupation phases.

Table 2: The buildings from the Viking Age area at Vatnsfjörður

Number	Type	Notes	Dating Phase
S1	House	Cow mandible. Carbon-dated 890-1030 AD (95% probability).	1 + 2
S2	House	Shortened Structure 1	2
S3	Smithy		1 + 2
S4	Storehouse		1 + 2
S5	Storehouse		1 + 2
S6	Storehouse		1 + 2
S7	Animal-building	Re-built/built over Structure 9	2
S8	Animal-building		1 + 2
S9	Animal-building	Built over Structure 10	1b
S10	Pit house		1a

Table 3: Dating phases for Vatnsfjörður. Data from Edvardsson (2005a, p. 37) and Milek (2005, pp. 47–51)

Phase	Date	Identifiable changes
1	c.900-950	Early 10th-century house built (S1). S9 built over S10.
2	c.950-1000	S1 shortened (S2). S7 built over S9.
3	c.1000-1050	S2 abandoned and collapses.
4	11th-17th century	Little activity except temporary outside hearths between collapse and deposition of Hekla-1693 or Katla-1721 tephra layer.

Dating of the site

The Vatnsfjörður project spanned several summers between 2003 and 2011, and focussed on forming an interpretation of how the site evolved from initial settlement to the modern day. Two main areas of excavation were identified, the so-called "Viking Age area," and a farm mound that contained mostly early modern remains (see Figure 15). This neat chronological division of space is methodologically convenient for archaeologists, but it likely misrepresents the past use of the site. With regards to Viking Age or medieval involvement in the site south of the stream, so far the only evidence of this has been from a pre-1693 sheet-midden beneath the twentieth-century farmhouse in which a gaming piece was found, dated from the twelfth or thirteenth century (Isaksen, 2012, pp. 39–40). The results of the tests on these midden remains are ongoing and in early stages (Dupont-Hébert, 2016, pers. comm.), and it is not unlikely that further medieval remains lie beneath the early modern area, as the Viking Age area was abandoned in the eleventh century (see Table 3).

All the structures in area (A) in Figure 15, are considered contemporary with each other. The dwelling (S1) has been carbon-dated at 95% probability to 890-1030 AD, from a cattle bone deposited in the floor (Milek, 2007a, p. 9), and although the other buildings on the site are stratigraphically isolated from this structure, the turf used in their construction is cut from the same type of podsol soil that underlies the construction of the dwellings (Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 73; Milek, 2010a, p. 52; see Table 2 for details of the

buildings on the site). A notable feature of construction shared by the dwelling, S8 and S9 that may be another indicator of contemporary building is that all three contain gravel between turf layers instead of foundation stones (Milek, 2010b, p. 16). This suggests rapid building at the time of settlement, or prior to the area being properly explored, as there are suitable stones in the area that could have been used for a stone wall instead of these gravel-reinforced turf walls (Edvardsson, 2005a, p. 37). Consequently, both S8 and S9, interpreted as animal-buildings of some kind (and discussed in detail below), may show evidence of having been built very soon after settlement, if not at settlement, alongside S1, though it should be emphasised that S10 is earlier than S9, and so S9 cannot have been built in the very earliest stages of settlement.

In contrast with the other buildings on the site, S2 and S7 are constructed of a turf cut from "red and black" aeolian (wind-blown) soil associated with Phase 2 of the site

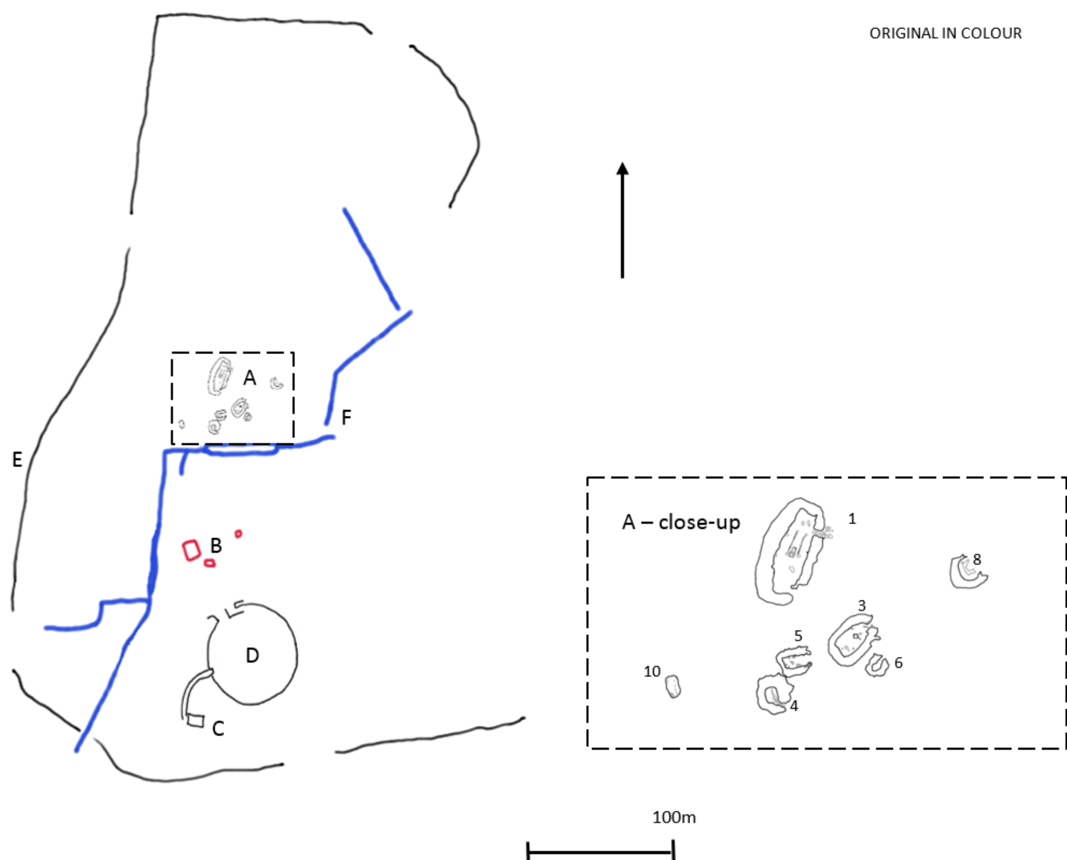

Figure 15 The Viking Age buildings (A) in relation to more recent structures at Vatnsfjörður: early modern farm mound (B), church (C), churchyard (D), homefield wall (E), and stream (F). Adapted from Fig. 8 (Milek, 2008a, p. 10). On the western side, the topography rises sharply, placing the farm buildings in a hollow that slopes down to the fjord in the east.

(Milek, 2010a, pp. 51, 52). Unfortunately, no images of turf samples are included in the reports for comparison. The buildings are universally covered with aeolian andosol soils after their abandonment, suggesting a similar period of abandonment for each, and they are therefore considered contemporary both in use and disuse (Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 674).

Structures 1 and 2

As shown in Figure 16, the Vatnsfjörður site contains a dwelling (S1), similar in structure to other Viking Age houses excavated in Iceland, especially the house at Aðalstræti 14-18 (see Chapter 1). Like the Aðalstræti house, S1 has curved long walls and two doorways, one at either end of the building. One of these thresholds is paved, and therefore may be considered as having a differing function and purpose from the second doorway. The *trog* (trough) below the centre of the northern gable end of the house (see Figure 16) is an intriguing feature, largely ignored in the published reports on the site and to my knowledge, unique in Icelandic excavations.[14] Edvardsson implies that the inside of the trough contained *mjög lífræn* (richly organic) layers of deposits, and that samples from these layers were sent off for analysis (Edvardsson, 2004, pp. 7, 10), but no further information on these test results has been published.

This small stone structure is placed in such a way as to confront those using the northern doorway, as well as those using the northern gable end and the main room of the house. As can be seen in Figure 16, the boundary of the northern gable room intersects with the stone trough, and the trough is also aligned with the central hearth. Therefore, there may be some association between the stone paving of the northern threshold, the central hearth, and the trough in the northern gable room boundary. It has been suggested that the northern end of the house was used for storage, however this interpretation seems to have been based on lack of evidence for any other function, rather than positive evidence for use as a storage area (Edvardsson, 2005a, p. 38). Although the trough may have served

[14] Similar structures may have been found on previously excavated sites but been disregarded by publications.

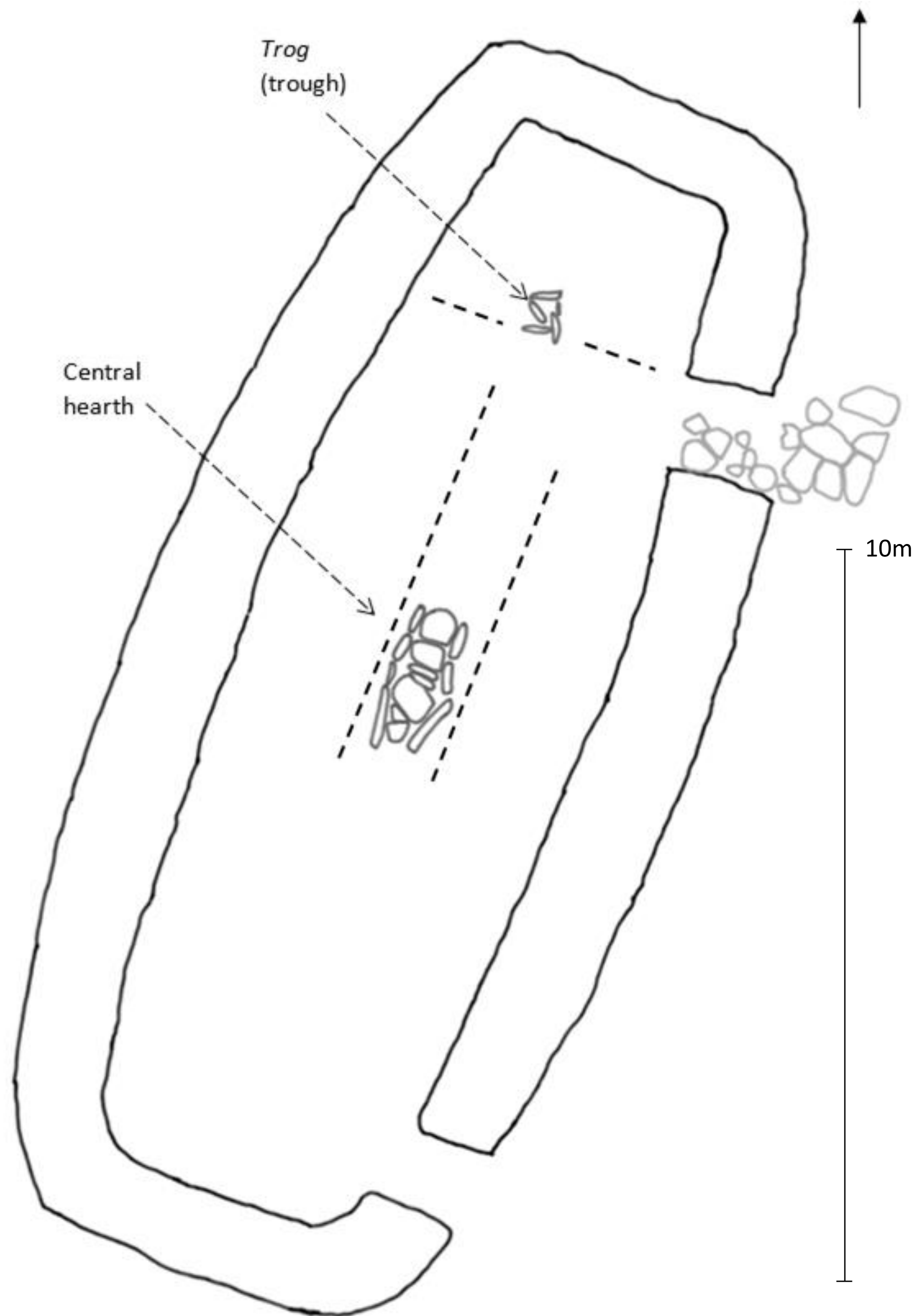

Figure 16 The division of internal space in Structure 1, the earliest dwelling at Vatnsfjörður. Adapted from: Fig. 2 (Edvardsson, 2005, p.38) and Fig. 5 (Edvardsson, 2004, p.9).

as a storage place for organic materials such as food, this could have been for either human or animal consumption.

At the excavated house at Aðalstræti 14-18 discussed in Chapter 1, the northern gable end of the house showed evidence of having been used to stall animals, and the potential animal-stalling area was located next to the paved threshold. Likewise, the one end of the house at Hrísbrú has also been proposed as an animal-stalling area, though at Hrísbrú it is the gable end opposite from the elaborated entrance that has been interpreted as a space used for stalling animals, in contrast to the house at Aðalstræti. It is tempting to suggest that the northern gable end at Vatnsfjörður, therefore, may have been used for stalling animals. An interpretation that suggests an animal-related function for the northern end of the house, although difficult to make with the evidence provided, would impact significantly on readings of animal-human relations at the site. The proximity of certain domestic animals in the house, and the distancing of others in the Viking Age animal-buildings, could indicate a narrative of variation in the perception and care of different animals, perhaps depending on their species or their stage of life. Such an

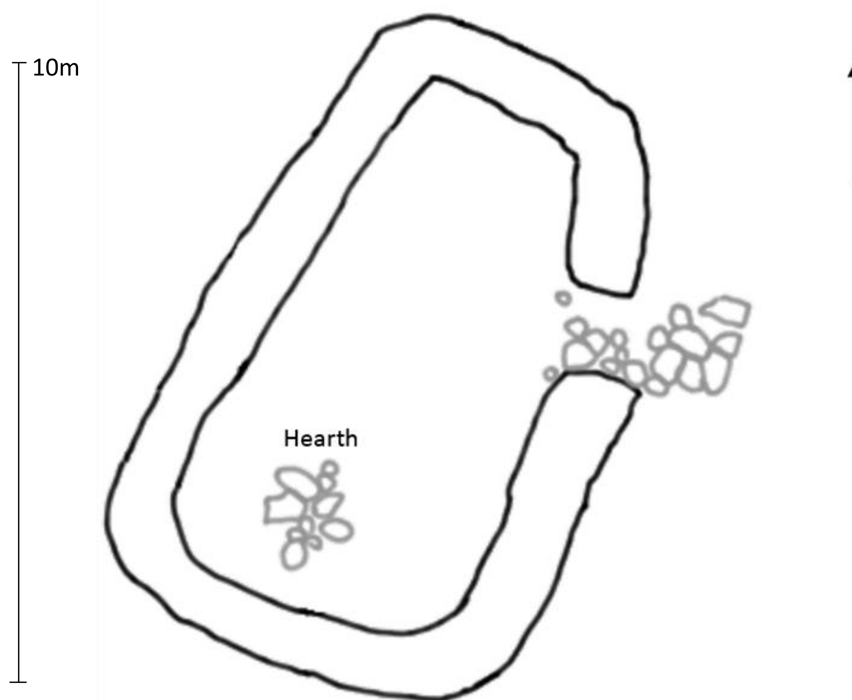

Figure 17 Structure 2, the later stage of the house at Vatnsfjörður. Adapted from Fig. 2 (Edvardsson, 2004, p.15).

interpretation could also indicate a changing relationship to animals over time, as it could be suggested that the stalling of animals in the gable end was associated with the earliest phase of settlement, followed by the two Viking Age animal-buildings (S8 and S9 discussed below), and then the rebuilding of S9 into S7 in Phase 2 of the settlement. However, without micromorphological analysis of the *trog* and surrounding floor layers, the purpose of the area and the trough at Vatnsfjörður will remain a mystery.

Although the presence of animals in S1 remains a matter of speculation, the later rebuilding of this dwelling (S2, shown in Figure 17) almost certainly did not house domestic animals alongside its human occupants. This rebuilding deviated from the boat-shaped form adopted by S1, which is the building style most often associated with Icelandic farms in this period, and S2 is shorter and more rectangular in outline. As we can see from Figure 17, although the paving from the northern entrance is still apparent, the trough of S1 is no longer associated with the occupation layers, and the decreased space makes it unlikely that the northern gable end could have been used for animal-stalling in this phase of occupation.

Structure 10

S10, a *jarðhús* (pit-house, pit-houses) in the west of the homefield area, belongs to the earliest stage of settlement on the site, and is subsequently built over with the animal-buildings S9 and S7. *Jarðhús* are a common feature of Viking Age settlements in Iceland, often belonging to the earliest phases of settlement. They have been well-studied by Milek as part of her work on Viking Age housing culture in Iceland, and have been put forward as evidence for Slavic influence on the settlement of the island (Milek, 2006, 2012; Urbańczyk, 2002a). However, while small, sunken-featured buildings are common in early Slavic contexts, they are also evident elsewhere in Europe and Scandinavia prior to Icelandic settlement (Milek, 2006, pp. 244–255).

Unlike pit-houses elsewhere in Europe, such buildings in Iceland appear to have a consistent style of oven covered by a lintel stone, and a specialised craft function associated with textile production (Milek, 2012). In contrast, Slavic pit houses do not have the same style of oven, nor do they show evidence for wooden seating platforms often found in

Icelandic examples (Milek, 2012). Slavic pit-houses were also used as dwellings, rather than, as Milek proposes for Icelandic *jardhús*, craft spaces (Milek, 2012, 2006, p. 243). Elsewhere in north-western Europe the function of these houses seems variable, compared with the apparent consistency of the Icelandic examples (Milek, 2006, p. 244; Schmidt, 1994, p. 20). However, regardless of any potential influence from Slavic areas or *grubenhäuser* elsewhere in Europe, pit-houses were evident in Scandinavia by the time Iceland was settled, and so it is most likely that these pit-houses were influenced by Scandinavian practice (Christensen, 1988; Fallgren, 1994; Meier and Reichstein, 1984; Mortensen, 1997; Rieck, 1982). Many of the farms excavated so far from the settlement period in Iceland show signs of having had at least one *jarðhús* constructed at the site; however, unlike mainland Scandinavian examples, it is most common to find only one or two together, rather than substantial collections (see Table 5.1 in Milek, 2006, pp. 212–213). As such, although Icelandic *jarðhús* may be similar in form to Scandinavian examples, the function of such buildings is unlikely to be the same.

Icelandic *jarðhús* are often close to the main farmhouse, of rectangular shape with a sunken floor and an oven in one corner, and S10 at Vatnsfjörður (Figure 18) conforms to this pattern (Milek, 2012, p. 85, 2011, p. 34, 2006). The structure would have had timber walls, and a pitched roof covered with turf (Milek, 2012, p. 94), and while the method of accessing the structure is often undetermined, it is likely that a door at ground level would have been followed by a wooden ladder or steps, as shown in Figure 19 (Milek, 2012, p. 94). Three loom weights and an iron punch used in leather working were also uncovered in the floor layers, which would fit with Milek's interpretation of these structures as places associated with textile production (Milek, 2012). Material culture from the Viking Age areas at Vatnsfjörður is limited, and the only other evidence of textile production at the site is a spindle whorl, dated typologically from the Viking Age, but found mixed in with the collapse debris associated with S7, the later animal-building constructed over the remains of S9 and S10, as shown in Table 2 (Milek, 2008b, p. 68).

However, while seemingly common in the first century or two of Icelandic settlement, the *jarðhús* were abandoned by the twelfth century (Milek, 2012, p. 86). While it is common to find *jarðhús* backfilled on abandonment in Iceland, it is unusual to find multiple buildings then constructed over them. Only in two cases have *jarðhús* been built

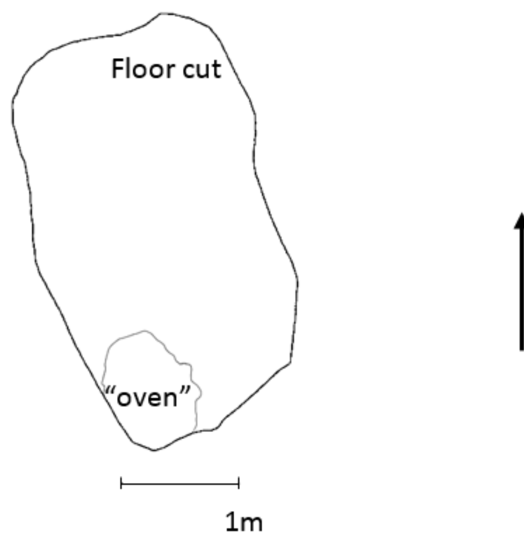

Figure 18 Outline of the pit cut for Structure 10, the *jarðhús*, at Vatnsfjörður with the stone oven outlined in the corner. Adapted from Fig. 6 (Milek, 2011, p.34).

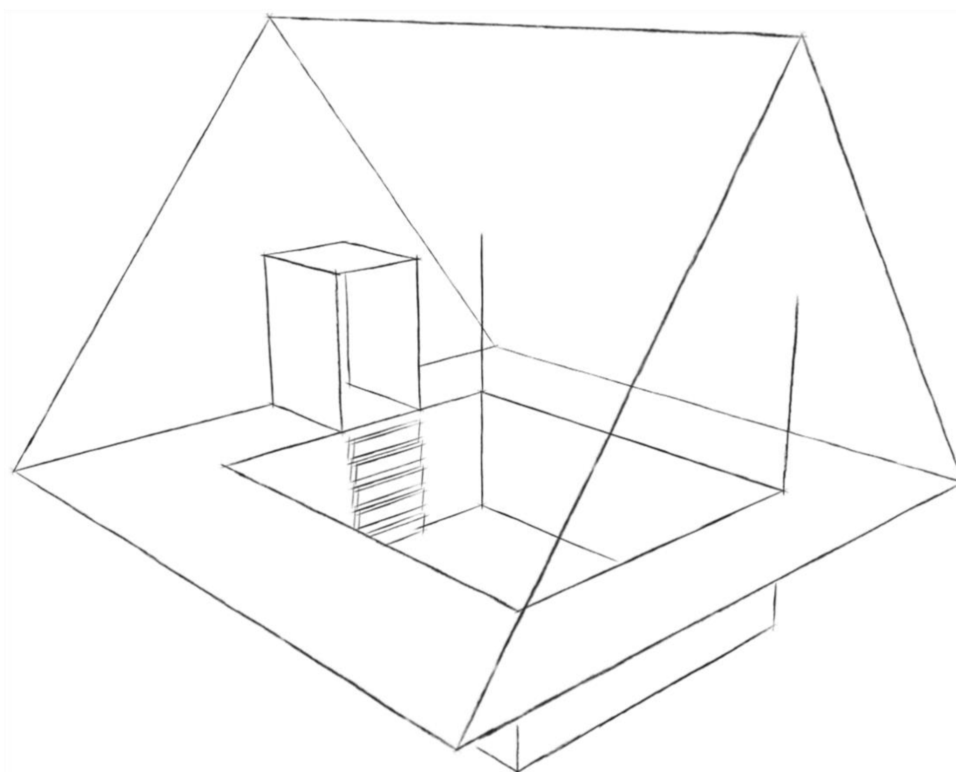

Figure 19 Sketch of a turf-covered *jarðhús*. The sunken-floor of the *jarðhús* would have been accessible via a ladder or wooden steps set into the wall. Author's own.

over with a different type of building: here at Vatnsfjörður, and at Stóraborg where the *jarðhús* (Hús 36) lies directly beneath the Viking Age farmhouse (Buckland et al., 2004; Milek, 2011, p. 32). In no instances are *jarðhús* associated with animal-keeping, though they may have served a purpose in storing fodder. Therefore, although S10 was originally used for a specialised function, it was not the same as the function attributed to the later buildings constructed in its place. The transformation of a structure from one type of space to another is a meaningful act and signals a significant reclaiming on the part of those doing the (re)building (Mullin, 2011, p. 7; Thomas, 1996, p. 89). Although turf buildings would have required repairing on a regular basis to remain in a usable condition, a distinction can be made between significant rebuilding and everyday maintenance. While both are meaningful actions, one is involved with transformation and the other with continuity.

The limited deposits associated with the collapse or abandonment of S10 suggests that the *jarðhús* may have been quickly closed and built over in an urgent redevelopment of the space (Milek, 2011, p. 32). This rapid redesign of supposed craft space for the purposes of animal-keeping is important for considering what may be a relatively swift redevelopment of the animal-human relations at this site. A need to re-appropriate space for the purposes of stalling animals might indicate either increasing animals being kept at the site, changing herding strategies, or an increasingly fluctuating climate and subsequent need for animal-shelters. Such transformation of space might also be linked to the specific location of this animal-building: Milek has argued that the abandonment of the *jarðhús* at Icelandic sites coincided with changing views of women's work and pre-Christian practice (Milek, 2012, pp. 120–121), and it may be that as these textile crafts are brought into the house, animals that might previously have been stalled inside the human house were brought outside in an attempt to enforce greater distance between animals and humans and abide by a more Christian spatial organisation, emphasised by the placement of the animal-building over a space previously associated with pre-Christian activities.

A notable find associated with the change from craft space to animal-building was the apparent deposition of ten iron cakes beneath the eastern wall of S9 (Figure 20). These seem to have been placed deliberately as part of the building-over of S10, and may be considered as foundation deposits, as the substantial amount of iron was placed in a

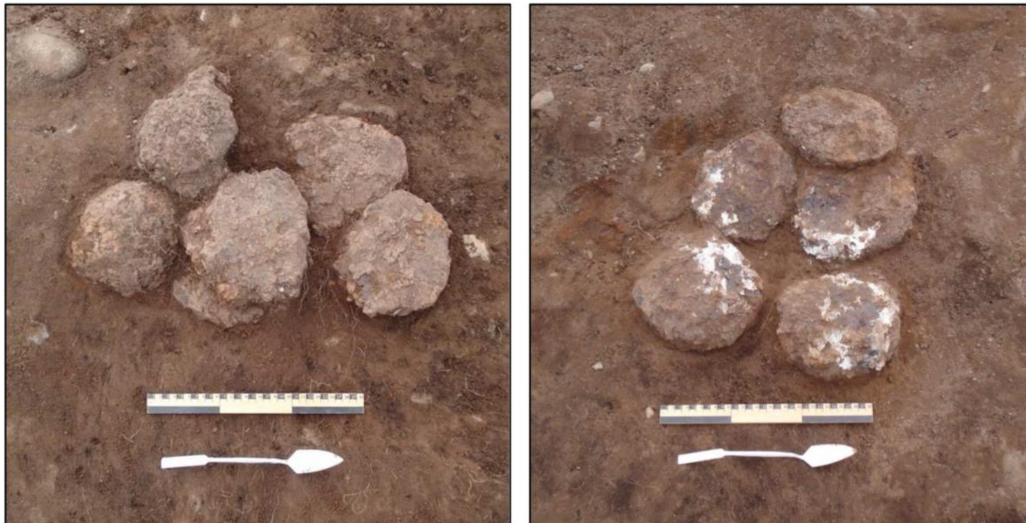

Figure 20 Ten blocks of iron found beneath the eastern wall of Structure 9 at Vatnsfjörður (Milek, 2010a, p. 57, fig. 5). The image on the left shows the blocks stacked on top of each other as they were found, and the right image shows the bottom layer after the removal of the top five.

position that would not have facilitated future use. Iron objects are elsewhere interpreted as foundation deposits at a number of Viking Age sites in Iceland, and this may be linked to the perceived association of smelting with transformation in past European societies (Fogelin, 2007, pp. 60–61; Jónsson, 2013, p. 58; Walsh et al., 2006, p. 450). The symbolism of foundation deposits is discussed in greater detail below, as the rebuilding of S9 into S7 is associated with the deposition of a cow mandible.

Structure 9

Figure 21 shows S9, the animal-building that was constructed over S10. The southern wall is absent, although the extent of the organic floor layer as well as the limit of the paving suggests where it may have existed. Figure 22 shows the north-south alignment of the central paving in the Viking Age structure, which is seen in greater detail in the remains of the later S7 (discussed below). The floor level in S9 is raised across the centre of the building, perpendicular to the north-south depression, suggesting a raised walkway led from the western doorway. The central paving seen in Figure 21 and Figure 22 is one of the main reasons for this having been interpreted as an animal-building, along with the thick organic floor layer indicative of animal dung and the lack of a hearth. The paving is reused in S7, marking a level of continuity between the two buildings.

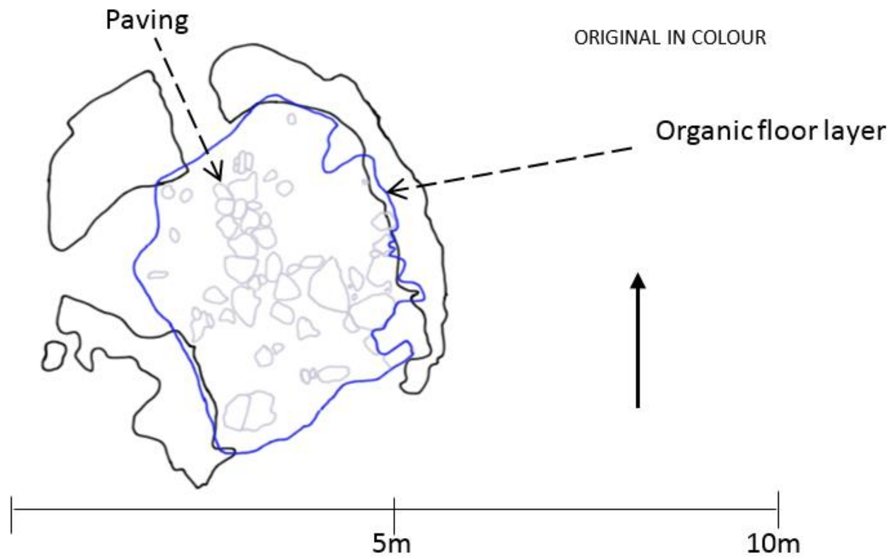

Figure 21 Structure 9 at Vatnsfjörður. Adapted from Fig. 6 (Milek, 2010a, p.58).

Figure 22 Showing Vatnsfjörður Structure 9 from the north, facing south. The dashed line is along the raised floor level, while the solid line shows the depression interpreted as a drain. Adapted from Fig. 7 (Milek, 2010a, p.59).

A mandible from an adult cow was found beneath the wall of the later S7, and it has been suggested this bone was placed as part of the rebuilding of S9 into S7 (Milek, 2010a, pp. 55–56). Although the excavation revealed signs of rubbish-dumping on the walls of S9 before the building of S7, the preservation of bone in such deposits is generally poor, and for this reason the well-preserved mandible is disassociated from these rubbish deposits (Milek, 2010a, p. 56). The collapse and disuse phase of S9, prior to the building of S7, suggests that the decision to rebuild on this specific spot was a meaningful choice, influenced by the prior existence of S9 in this location. As mentioned above, the building of a new structure, or rebuilding of a current one, is a transformation of space. This act of alteration or creation can be marked by the placing of a foundation deposit under walls, in post-holes, and beneath floors or hearths (Carlie, 2006). The placement of a cattle mandible beneath the wall of a building interpreted as an animal-building may negotiate a transformation from one sort of animal-shelter to another, or re-affirm the desire for good health in the cattle. Timothy Carlisle has suggested that using animal bones as foundation deposits was a distinctly Icelandic ritual activity and a method of establishing the home-place in a newly settled land (Carlisle, 2017). However, unlike all other Icelandic examples of animal bone special deposits, the cattle mandible and iron cakes are notable for not being incorporated into the human house, and are more like the Scandinavian examples of special deposits in the (re)building of outbuildings (Carlisle, 2017). The inclusion of these deposits in the animal-building may then indicate the desire for the inclusion of this building within the conceptual sphere of the Icelandic home, or represent a continuation of the Scandinavian tradition of establishing new buildings on the farm through foundational deposits.

Structure 7

S7 is depicted in Figure 23. This building is the later phase of S9, and was constructed over its remains after a period of disuse. Although the timescale is not clear, S7 was constructed from the same turf as S2 (as discussed above) and therefore belongs to the second phase of occupation at the site (see Table 3). The motive behind the rebuilding is not clear. It may reflect a need to extensively repair the older building, or a desire to change the structure

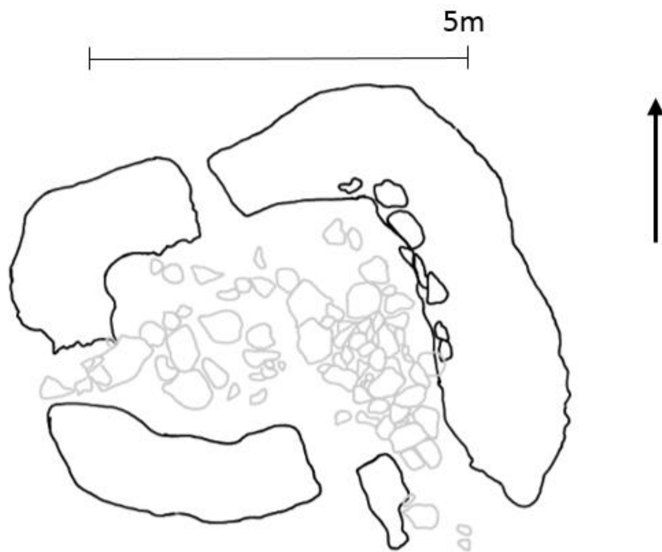

Figure 23 The final occupation phase of Structure 7 at Vatnsfjörður. After Fig. 3 (Milek, 2010a, p.58).

Figure 24 Structure 7 at Vatnsfjörður as seen from the north-west. The central drain is shown with a dashed line. Adapted from Fig. 2 (Milek, 2010a, p.53).

to incorporate a different function. While S7 is still interpreted as an animal-building, the structure is not an exact replica of S9.

A number of features support the interpretation of this structure as an animal-building: the paving sloping towards a central channel, the floor-level holes in the walls, the rich organic deposits (grass or dung) in the occupation layers, the evidence for ash dumps (to keep floors dry) and the absence of a hearth (Daxböck *et al.* 2009; Milek 2010a). Looking at Figure 23 and Figure 24, the extent of the internal paving in the structure can clearly be seen, as well as the north-south cuts in the walls interpreted as a central drain. The sloping of the paving towards the central line that cuts across the building can be seen in Figure 24, although unlike S9, there does not seem to be a raised walkway associated with the floor layer. According to Milek, the building showed evidence of several layers of paving with turf placed between stones, which may have been laid at the same time to ensure a more secure floor layer, or been laid over a longer timeframe, perhaps reflecting an extended period of use for this phase of the building (Milek, 2010a, p. 54). This building has two thresholds, one on the south-eastern side, and the other on the south-western gable end, as seen in Figure 24 (Milek, 2009, p. 54). The pavement on the eastern side extends through the south-eastern doorway, elongating the threshold (Milek, 2010a, p. 54), and was designed perhaps to reduce the trampling of the threshold into mud by the frequent movement of animals through this doorway. It is important to consider the size and orientation of this building to reconstruct the accessibility of the structure and its intervisual relationships with other places on the site, and such details enable suggestions to be made about the relative closeness of animals and humans on the farm and the nature of their interactions.

Contrary to farmhouse buildings and *jarðhús* that appear to show great similarities from site to site in Viking Age Iceland, it has been suggested that outbuildings such as byres and smithies show little homogeneity of form (Milek, 2007b, p. 42), though, as discussed above, Berson has claimed that a high level of similarity is found in both the form and features of medieval byres in Iceland (Berson, 2002). At Vatnsfjörður, S9 and S7 can be compared to an additional structure identified as an animal-building (S8) built on a slope east of the farmhouse (Milek, 2011, p. 30), and the use of this potential animal-

building in the same phase of occupation as S9 adds another dimension to the animal-human interactions at the site (Daxböck *et al.* 2009, 74).

Structure 8

S8 is an animal-building from the Viking Age period of the site, and is the easternmost building in the homefield complex (Daxböck et al., 2009, pp. 74–75). As can be seen in Figure 25, the building itself is different in shape and structure from S9 and S7, and remains of the western wall are the only substantial structural feature to survive. However, the detection of a northwest-southeast central drain supports the interpretation of the building as an animal-building (Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 77), although frustratingly, this depression is not shown in any of the photographs in the excavation reports.

Like the animal-building(s) on the south-west of the site, S8 is constructed on a slope and lacks a hearth: both attributes that Berson ascribes to medieval byres (Berson, 2002, p. 38). The positioning of such buildings on slopes is considered advantageous, as it facilitates the easy removal of manure and therefore fertilization of the homefield downslope (Berson, 2002, p. 60; Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 77). Paving stones associated with this structure were also found, which may provide further evidence for the claim of this

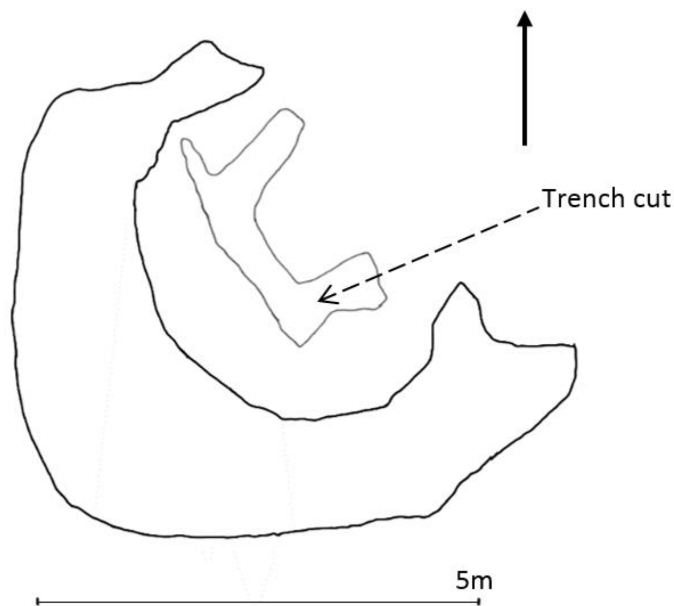

Figure 25 Structure 8 at Vatnsfjörður. Adapted from Fig. 7 (Daxböck et al., 2009, p.75).

being an animal-building; however, the whole structure has suffered from erosion and slippage down the slope, which has removed many features that may have helped in more effectively interpreting the space (Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 77). In particular, the lack of evident postholes means that the internal arrangement of space in the building cannot be reconstructed, although it has been postulated that "paving" stones associated with the occupation layer may be post-pads rather than threshold paving (Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 77). It is impossible to reconstruct what the roof may have looked like, or even if the structure had one at all, although it seems unlikely that a potentially paved area with a drain would have been open to the elements. The north-east wall has been eroded away, but Figure 26 shows how the building could have looked, with an estimated doorway on the east wall, and the central drain. This reconstruction is, however, a speculation based on the extent of the potential floor layer. Alternatively, if we consider the form of byres proposed by Berson, this remaining wall could represent the western gable end of a much larger building.

The organic floor-layer associated with occupation of the structure and shown in Figure 26, has been postulated both as the decayed remains of a wooden floor, and as churned up soil from the trampling of animals and humans (Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 75).

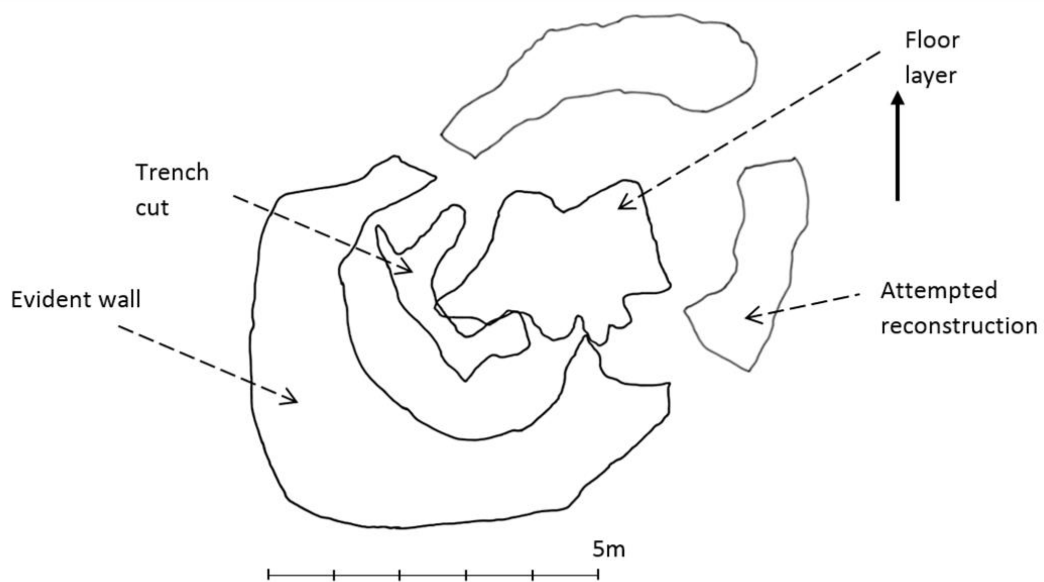

Figure 26 Showing Vatnsfjörður Structure 8 with the associated organic floor layer and the cut for the slot trench. The structure is reconstructed to show a potential shape for the complete building. Adapted from Fig. 8 (Daxböck et al., 2009, p.76), but the reconstruction is my own speculation.

As yet the results of micro-morphological tests on this layer have not been published, and the interpretation of the presence of a wooden floor is based on the trench cut seen in Figure 25 and Figure 26. The presence of a wooden floor in a building on such a pronounced slope is unique in Iceland, and perhaps complicates the interpretation of this building (Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 78). It has been suggested that the wooden floor supported by sills entrenched in this cut could have constituted a $5m^2$ floor space (Daxböck et al., 2009, p. 77), but the use of wooden floors in animal-buildings needs to be investigated further. If this structure represents the gable end of a larger building, then the slot trench and proposed wooden floor would match a similar feature in the animal-building at Sveigakot, as discussed below.

The Vatnsfjörður homefield: a spatial-functional analysis

The above survey of the potential animal-places on the Vatnsfjörður farm, demonstrates that the construction and maintenance of two distinct animal-buildings is a deliberate choice for the household. Applying the methods outlined earlier in this chapter, this section will analyse the spatial positioning of the animal-buildings at Vatnsfjörður in relation to the other structures on the site. From these diagrams, several suggestions can be made about the animal-human relations on the Viking Age farm.

Figure 27 and Figure 28 represent the spatial-functional relationships in the homefield area and provide the reader with a way of visualising the different spaces of the homefield. Firstly, the main house of the site becomes less accessible over time, as the number of access points to the space reduces from two to one. Secondly, the animal buildings may be perceived as the most accessible structures on the site, along with the Phase 1 house, as they potentially had two entrances each. The smithy and associated store-building are semi-intervisually connected to the fire pits and outside activity area, while the building closest to the western animal-building faces away from it. The shortening of the house (S2) in the Phase 2 diagram (Figure 28) further increases the distance between the western animal-building and the house. As seen in Figure 27 and Figure 28, the closest feature that can be associated with S9/7 is the stream, while the dwelling and smithy might have both been associated with the fire pits. This latter association seems to demarcate a human interaction area that excludes the animal-places

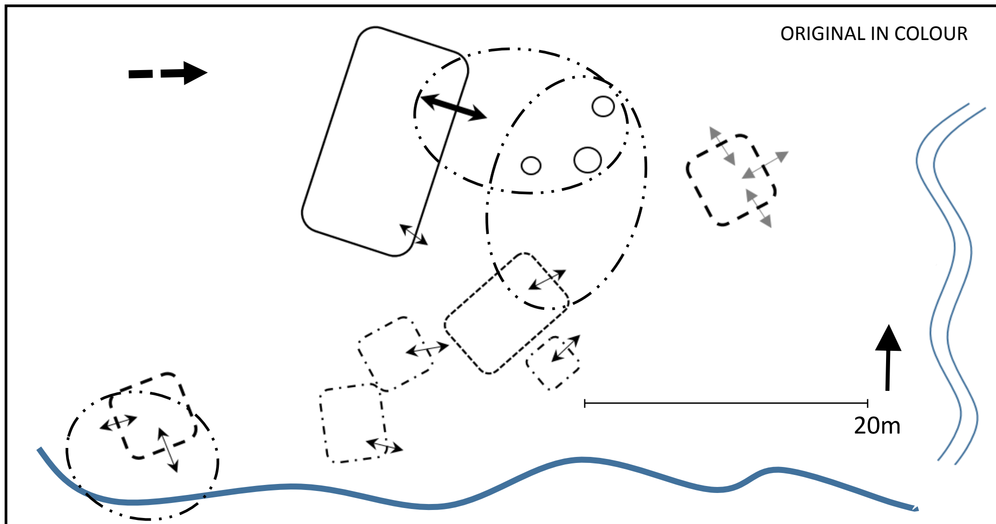

Figure 27 Spatial relationships between areas of functional variation on the Vatnsfjörður Viking Age site (phase 1). Author's own.

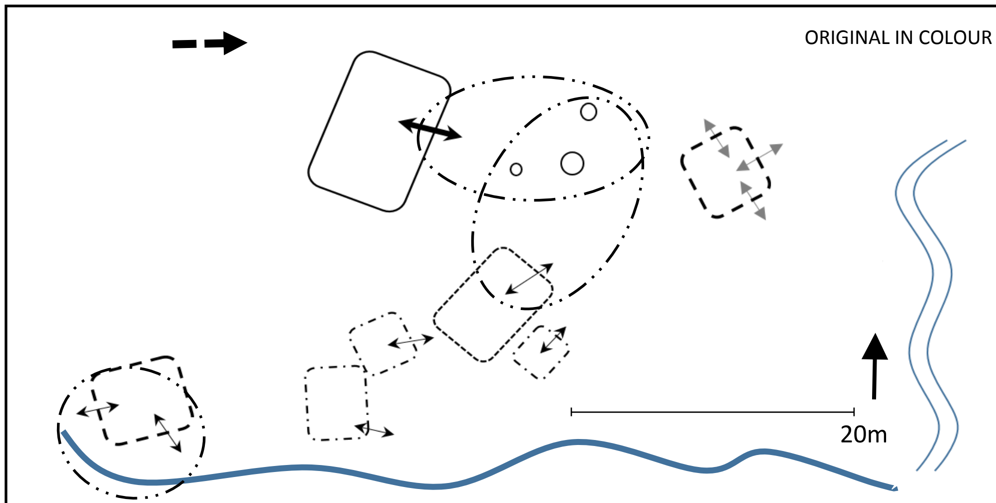

Figure 28 Spatial relationships between areas of functional variation on the Vatnsfjörður Viking Age site (phase 2). Author's own.

ORIGINAL IN COLOUR

Feature:	How represented:	Feature:	How represented:
Dwellings		Elaborated threshold	
Animal-building		Abandoned threshold	
Outside activity area / fire pit		Abandoned structure/ruin	
Smithy		Midden (within structure)	
Threshold		Sporadic use of structure	
Possible threshold		Areas of association	
River / stream		Fjord	
Irregular depressions		Direction of slope	

of S9/7 in the west and S8 in the east. However, the thresholds of all structures at the site (except S9/7) face directly or indirectly towards S8. This might indicate that different animals were kept at the site, towards which the household held different attitudes. S8 can be interpreted as a place to which it was valuable for the rest of the buildings to be visually connected, whereas S9/7 is visually disconnected from the rest of the settlement complex. While the associations shown in Figure 27 and Figure 28 indicate that the central complex of buildings at this site is a human-place, this farm looks towards a specific animal-place (S8), and the fjord beyond, as its focus.

Despite their difference in intervisual connections with other buildings on the site, the animal-buildings are a linked pair of structures. In both phase diagrams these buildings, though standing on opposite ends of the occupation area, exhibit similarity of placement and orientation. They are almost equidistant from the main farmhouse, and have complete, uncut walls facing the inside of the main human activity area and thresholds facing outwards. If we consider these structures in terms of the inter-visibility analysis approach adopted by Aldred, it can be suggested that it may not have been important for human figures to see the entrances of either animal-building from the human-spaces of the homefield (Aldred, 2009, p. 28). As can be seen in Figure 14, the farm at Vatnsfjörður was bordered on the one side by the highlands, and the other by the fjord, and the entrances to the animal-buildings are aligned away from the human-spaces, and instead face out onto upland and shore. Although the entranceways to S8 cannot be known for certain, it seems clear from the structural remains excavated that the threshold was not facing into the main farm area.

There are multiple ways in which the opposing placement and orientation of the animal-buildings may be interpreted. The management of human- and animal-places on the site can be linked to relations of power, and care and dependence, as well as the negotiation of an ideological landscape. One interpretation of the orientation of the buildings is that the animal-buildings were designed to display the animals to people approaching the farm (an extension of the possible display connotations of keeping animals next to the elaborated doorway in the house at Aðalstræti 14-18; as discussed in Chapter 1). Such animals would have acted as expressions of power or wealth, though this interpretation relies on human-human networks of relations and ignores the effect of this

arrangement on the animals inhabiting these buildings and the resultant animal-human relationships. From a care perspective, by placing the animal-buildings on opposite far edges of the homefield, this arrangement of space distances the animals from the potentially dangerous activities of the smithy, and the cooking-pits in the centre of the Viking Age area. Viewed in this way, the organisation of the animal-places on the farm might have reflected management of the risks associated with certain activities, and a recognition of the duty of care towards animals and hay, which was necessary to animal and human survival and needed to be protected.

However, this distance would also have restricted the contact between the livestock kept in these buildings and the members of the household, and only the specific household figures with prescribed responsibility for these animals would have had cause to move out of the human dwelling-place to explicitly visit these buildings – though routes to and from the fjord for fishing and communication may have passed alongside S8, suggesting this structure, as indicated above, may have held animals more prominent to the identity of the household than S9/7. The placing of these animal-buildings on the outskirts of the homefield area creates an animal-place on the edges of the human-occupation area that mediates between the human centre of the homefield and the places beyond. In this way, the arrangement of space positions the human-centre within an encircling domestic animal-place. Although the places beyond the homefield walls (the fjord and the outfield activity areas) were undoubtedly the location of many necessary farm activities organised by humans, they were also undisputedly wilder spaces, and less controlled than the central place of the farm buildings. In contrast, as the second case study will demonstrate, the animal-building at Sveigakot seems to have been much more closely incorporated within the human spaces of the farm.

Case-study: Sveigakot

Sveigakot in Mývatnsveit (see Figure 29) lies approximately 80km from the coast and 285m above sea level (Perdikaris and McGovern, 2008, p. 205; Tinsley, 2001, p. 36).[15] Like Vatnsfjörður, it is the site of a Viking Age farm; and it has been suggested it was built in a poor location for long-term farming success. Nonetheless, the proportions of animal bones excavated from the middens conform to what researchers expect from a higher status, well-connected farm in this period (Tinsley, 2001, p. 36). As a result, interpretations generally suggest that Sveigakot was a tenant or outpost farm, closely linked with a higher status farm elsewhere in Mývatnsveit (McGovern, 2003, p. 36). However, the make-up of

Figure 29 The location of the Sveigakot site (ArcGIS, n.d.).

[15] Sveigakot means "minor settlement of the swathes of grass," but this is not a name recorded in medieval sources (Vésteinsson, 2001, p. 5).

a midden cannot in isolation demonstrate the character of the economic, social, or political relationships on and beyond the farm.

The site at Sveigakot is complex, and significantly different from the Viking Age farm at Vatnsfjörður, and from other sites across Iceland. In many ways, Sveigakot exhibits similar features to these other sites: for example, there is a curved-wall farmhouse, evidence for outside cooking pits, and a rectangular, three-aisled cattle byre of the form discussed by Berson (2002). However, these features are not manifested in a manner that we might have expected, and the dating sequences present a complex lifecycle for the site, its structures, and subsequently the practice and interactions that would have been experienced in these places. The animal-building is early (pre-AD 940), unlike Berson's medieval examples with which it may formally conform; and the long farmhouse with curved-walls and central hearth is a later addition to the site (post-AD 940), and not contemporary with the byre. However, the curved-wall farmhouse is built adjacent to the disused animal-building, so it seems likely that the history of the animal-building may have played a role in the location of the dwelling. This will be discussed further below in the section on the spatial-functional analysis of the Sveigakot homefield, along with the nature and orientation of the structures contemporary with and constructed immediately after the animal-building. As is undertaken with the Vatnsfjörður site above, this case study will attempt to understand the spatial organisation and re-organisation of the Sveigakot home-place, and consider the influence animal-human relations may have had on the use and demarcation of space, and the influence of these demarcations on animal-human interactions.

Terminology

Several points should be noted before commencing this case study. Firstly, the term "sunken" could be used to describe almost all the buildings and structures excavated at Sveigakot. This contrasts with the excavations at Vatnsfjörður, which draw a neat distinction between Structure 10 as a *jarðhús*, and the other buildings on the site. At Sveigakot it is not so easy to make this distinction (Vésteinsson, 2008a, p. 68). I use the term "sunken" as an appropriate adjective only, and not as an indicator of a certain type of building. Where a building may be substantially sunken, or contain features conforming

to the current views of Icelandic *jarðhús* as outlined above, this is highlighted. In addition, I will use the term "dwelling" to indicate a place in which humans lived, as opposed to "farmhouse," as this latter term does not adequately express the diverse nature of the multiple human-occupation structures on the Sveigakot site.

Dating of the site

The farm at Sveigakot has several incarnations. However, modifications across the site appear to be more than repairs or improvements. Instead, occupation and use of the site appears to shift between defined areas, although it should not be assumed that use of a structure ended with its collapse or primary abandonment. The animal-building (S7) was a varied and multi-purpose space throughout the lifecycle of the building and its ruins.

Table 4: The structures at Sveigakot

Structure	Type	Details
S1	Dwelling	Overlies S4
S2	Small feature (2m x 3m), uncertain function	Associated with S1
S3	Paved outdoor area	Overlies S6
S4	Dwelling	Overlies previous anthropogenic activity
S5	Attached to the north wall of S1	Multiple functions, including pantry and kitchen; barrel pit
Sub-S6	Outside activity area	Series of pits and hearths
S6	Domestic structure attached to the eastern gable of S4	Associated hearths
S7	Animal-building	Beneath S4
P1	Dwelling	Various construction and occupation phases and multiple hearths

P2	Outside activity area	Connected to P1 via covered corridor; elaborate fireplaces
P3	Elongated manmade pit of uncertain function	One of the earliest features at Sveigakot
MP1	Dwelling	Overlain by sheet midden (M)
MP2	Either domestic annexe to MP1 or outside activity area	Overlain by sheet midden (M)
MP3	Small, tent-like structure	Pre-MP1
T1	Sunken-featured building	Overlain by sheet midden (M) Alternatively called Sunken House I, MT1, or T
MT	Sunken-featured building,	Alternatively called Sunken House II, or MT2
SP	Pavement associated with S7	
N	Pavement associated with S7	
T2	Used for storage, and temporary and permanent dwelling.	Southernmost feature of the site. Alternatively called House II

Table 5 (overleaf) shows the complex phasing of the site as indicated by tephra layers, stratigraphy, and radiocarbon dating. This dating is taken from the information provided in the published site reports, apart from the construction, use, and disuse phases of MP1, MP2, P1, and P2, which have been revised in post-excavation analysis (Vésteinsson and Gestsdóttir, 2016, p. 138; Vésteinsson, 2017, pers. comm.). Work on the site is currently ongoing, and so these sequences may change as the datings are refined. The focus of this study will be phases 1-3, as these are the main phases of occupation associated with S7 which will form the centre point of this analysis. As seen in Table 4, the structures at the site were assigned initials and numbers depending on their location and the sequence of their excavation. I shall refer to the buildings and structures by these

identifying codes throughout this chapter.[16] I also add an identifier of my own: Sub-S6, which refers to the depressions excavated beneath the remains of the S6 structure.

Using data from sediment cores taken from Lake Mývatn and soil accumulation rates in samples from the farm site itself, the most prevalent tephra at the site has been dated to AD 940 (Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 7). Given the short time between the deposition of the *Landnám* tephra and this deposition, the rate of change between structural organisation at the site is remarkable. The dating of individual structures is discussed further in the appropriate sections, and Figure 30 and Figure 31 depict the spatial relationships between structures in the first four phases of the site, both those in use and disuse.

Table 5: Phases of occupation/use at Sveigakot

Phase	Sub-phase	Events
Phase 1 (c. AD 870 - 940)		
	A	MP3 in use S7 built P1 and P2 built N (pavement) built SP (pavement) built T2 built Sub-S6 depressions and hearths form (uncertain) P3 cut
	B	S7 abandoned P1 and P2 in use Lower midden (M) begins to accumulate Trenches cut into the ruins of Structure 7 Sub-S6 depressions and hearths form (uncertain)

[16] I am grateful to Orri Vésteinsson for clarifying the labelling of these structures, specifically those in Area T, which are inconsistently labelled in the reports (2016, pers. comm.).

	C	P1 and P2 abandoned T1 (T, MT1, House 1) and MT (MT2, or House II) built Upper midden (M) begins to accumulate T2 abandoned MP1 and MP2 in use
Phase 2 (AD 940 - 1050)		
	A	MP1 and MP2 abandoned. MT (MT2 or House II) rebuilt (larger) T1 abandoned Upper midden (M) continues to accumulate Midden in T1 begins to accumulate Midden dump on P3 Midden forms on N Smithy built in ruined east end of Structure 7
	B	MT abandoned Upper midden (M) ceases to accumulate S4 built S6 (activity area) in use
Phase 3 (AD 1050)		Structure 4: abandonment and collapse
Phase 4 (AD 1050-1090)		Sporadic use of collapsed dwelling S4 for shelter
Phase 5 (AD 1090-1190)		Structures 1, 2, 3 and 5 constructed and used
Phase 6 (AD 1190)		Abandonment and collapse of dwelling complex and associated structures
Phase 7 (AD 1190-present day)		Aeolian accumulation and wind/water erosion of the site

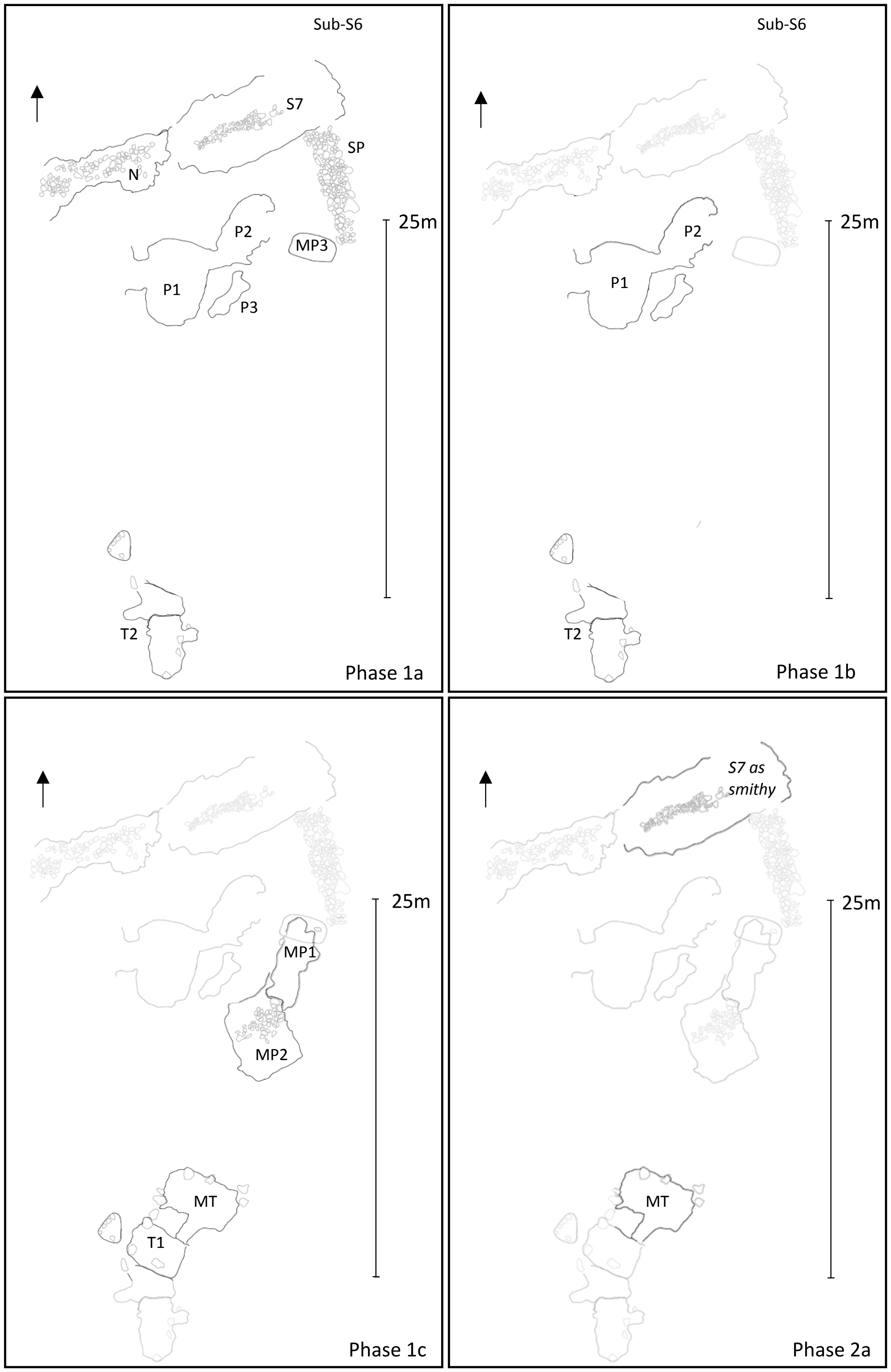

Figure 30 Sveigakot dating phases 1a, 1b, 1c, and 2a. Adapted from Fig. 8 (Batt et al., 2015, p. 170). Grey outlines indicate disuse and abandonment.

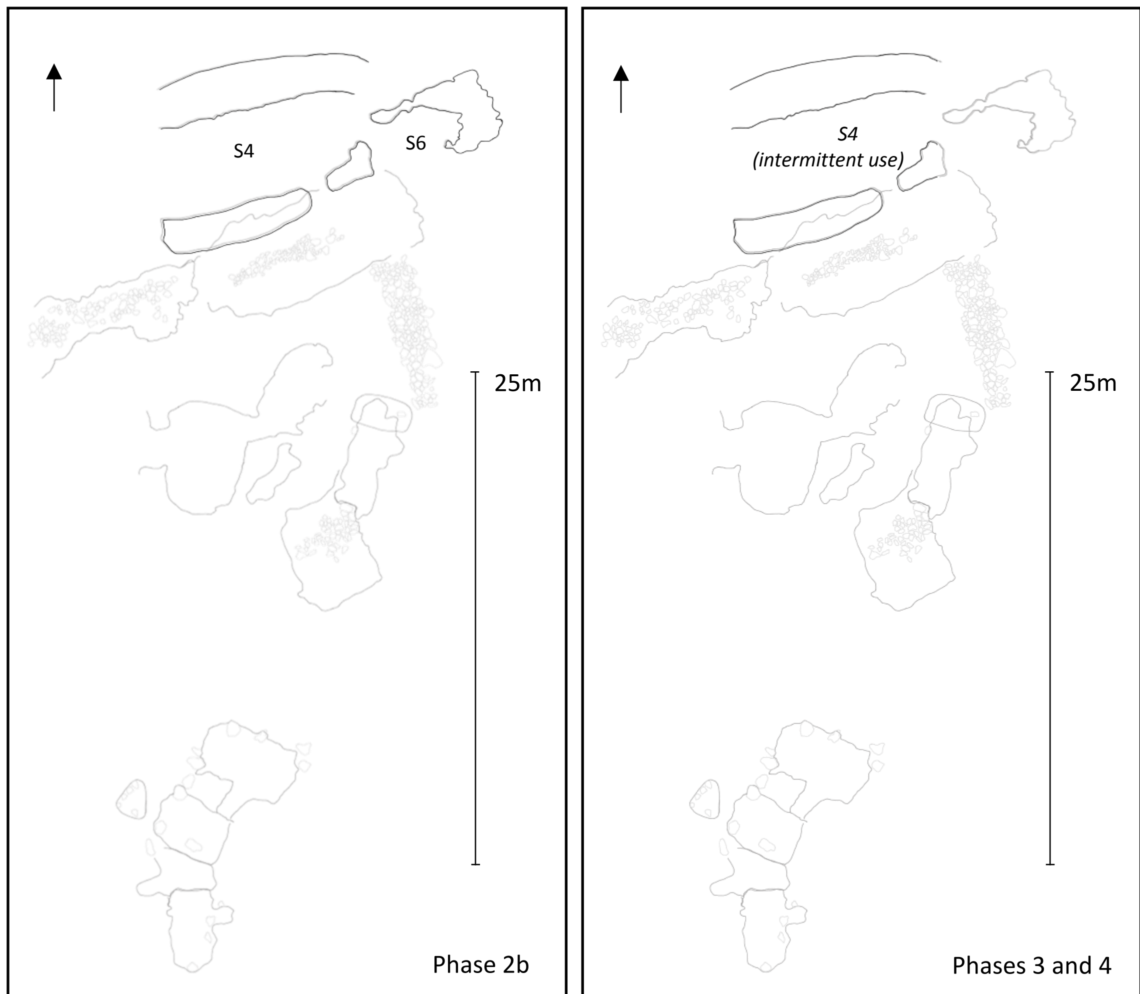

Figure 31 Sveigakot dating phases 2b, 3 and 4. Adapted from Fig. 8 (Batt et al., 2015, p. 170). Grey outlines indicate disuse and abandonment.

Structure 7: the animal-building

This case study will begin with a discussion of the animal-building identified at Sveigakot: S7. This structure was one of the first buildings constructed at the site, and represents the materialisation of the relationships between animals and humans at this period of occupation. As can be seen in Figure 32, at 11x4.4m this structure is substantially larger than all human dwellings on the site during its use, and it is not until the erection of S4 (as seen in Phase 2b, Figure 31 above), making use of the north wall of S7, that a larger structure is built (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 8).

The animal-building at Sveigakot has several significant features. Firstly, despite its size this building belongs to one of the earliest phases of activity at the site, showing evidence of ruin before the deposition of the V~940 tephra. The structure had turf-walls, a three-aisled construction with a central pavement, multiple entrances, and a further three-part division of internal space (Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 6). As shown in Figure 33, the soft, highly organic floor layer associated with the byre stage of the building is perforated with a multitude of holes, interpreted as post holes (both posts to support the structure of the building, and around which to tether animals; Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, pp. 11, 15). Animal management through tethering, rather than the animal-stalling Berson suggests for later medieval byres is more flexible than rigid stall divisions, and suggests that this was a multi-purpose space (Berson, 2002; Vésteinsson, 2008c, pp. 10, 14). It may have been open to relatively easy transformation of function with adaptable internal divisions. Many holes were also uncovered beneath this organic floor layer, suggesting the excavated layer was only the last in a series of organic layers that had been removed by regular clearing out of dung and bedding from the building. The size of the building and the apparent evidence for tethering indicates that rather different organisation of animal-places operated at Viking Age Sveigakot than at Vatnsfjörður, as discussed at the end of this chapter.

There is evidence for a number of developments in the architectural fabric of the building, as shown in Table 6, though it is likely that the three doorways, pavement, and three-part division of internal space as seen in Figure 34 belonged to the earliest phase of use. The evidence for the abandonment of the structure before the deposition of the V~940 tephra is represented by a large trench that crosscuts the north wall of the building and was cut shortly prior to the tephra deposition (seen in Figure 41 and discussed further in the section on Sub-S6). This trench cuts into the organic floor layer and has been interpreted as marking the end of the structure's use as an animal-building (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 8). However, this trench is not considered as part of the smithing activity in the north-east end of the building that took place in Phase 2a of the site (see Table 6). Therefore, after initial abandonment, but before the collapse of the roof a number of occupation layers represent stages of limited activity in the building (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, pp. 8, 11). Charcoal and iron slag deposits were found beneath the

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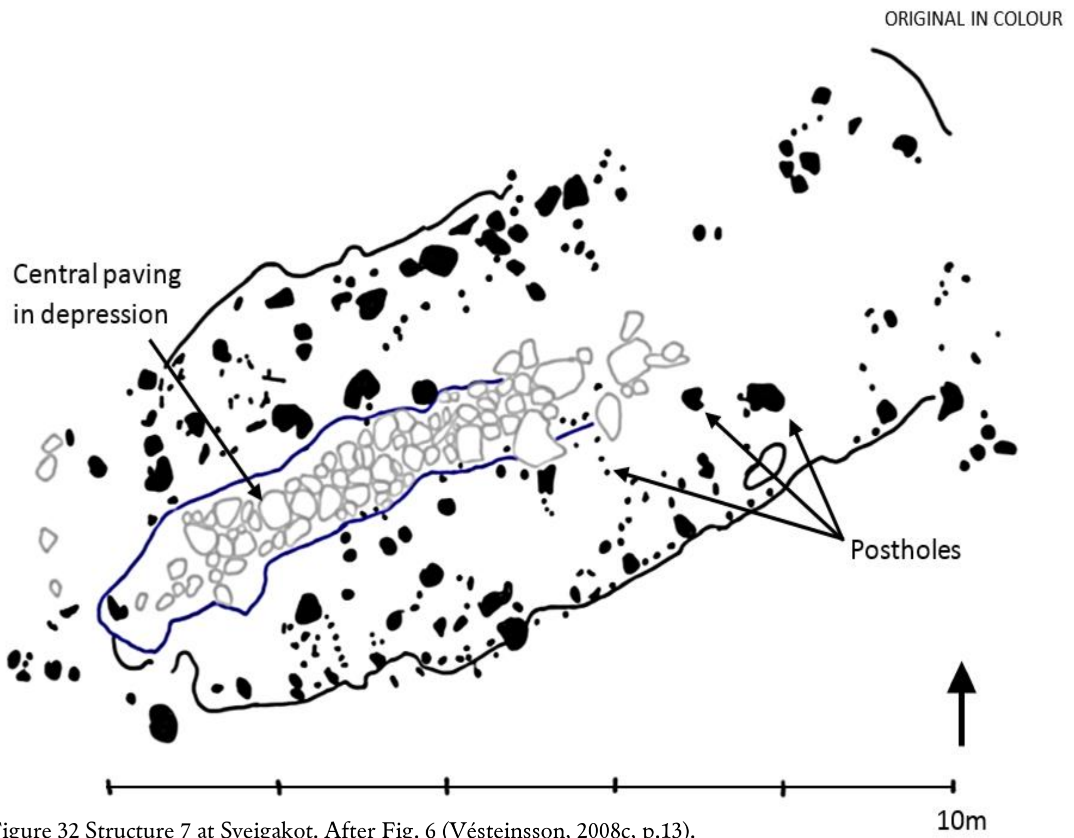

Figure 32 Structure 7 at Sveigakot. After Fig. 6 (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p.13).

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Figure 33: Sveigakot Structure 7 in its animal-building phase with a 2m scale post (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 11, fig. 4).

organic animal-building occupation layer, suggesting that a range of activities were hosted in this building even during its earliest phases (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 15). This evidence may represent seasonal activity, for example different activities taking place in the summer, when livestock were able to graze out in pasture (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 15). This suggests that S7 was a multi-purpose building throughout its lifecycle, an interpretation that contrasts with the perceived single-function of the animal-buildings at Vatnsfjörður.

Table 6: The use of Structure 7 at Sveigakot

Phase 1a	Constructed; primarily for use as an animal-building
Phase 1b	Building abandoned and trench cut into northern wall
Phase 1b-1c	Period of limited or non-existent use
Phase 2a	Smithy in the eastern gable
Phase 2b onwards	Final abandonment and collapse

This animal-building has played a large role in the interpretation of the site as a tenant farm, given its apparently oversized nature in contrast to the small dwellings (see Figure 30). However, while at first glance, it may seem an oversized structure for the dwellings with which it is contemporary, its suggested multi-purpose nature suggests we should not place too much emphasis on the oversized nature of the structure in terms of its apparently large carrying capacity for animals. It should be noted, though, that the decision to build a large, multi-purpose building incorporating an animal-keeping function, rather than several smaller buildings with separate functions, is a deliberate choice of the household at the site. The preponderance of other smaller structures at Sveigakot shows that the builders were not opposed to constructing smaller buildings, therefore the size of S7 is meaningful, and was meant to dominate the site, but does not necessarily indicate a poorer household keeping the animals of a higher status landlord.

Of the internal divisions in the building, the eastern section is the longest (c.5m), and the middle and westernmost sections of the structure measure 3.2m and 3m

respectively (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 10). The easternmost section is poorly preserved with the most fragmented floor layers, but it is suggested that the central pavement cannot have extended the full 5m length, and so this section may have been divided into two parts, one of which was paved (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 10). The organic floor layer seems to extend the full length of the building, and so perhaps the unpaved section of the building was for storing manure or hay, but not for animal tethering. The poor preservation of the easternmost section of the structure is perhaps as a result of the subsequent use of this end of the ruins for smithing activity, though it has been suggested that this could also reflect alternate activities taking part in this end of the house prior to the collapse of the building (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, pp. 15–16). However, such suggestions should carefully consider the various access points to the space, and the experience of directing animals through each. As can be seen from Figure 34, it is suggested that S7 had three doorways contemporary with its use as an animal-building. Not only does this make the structure the most accessible on the site, but it may also suggest a tripartite practice of access accompanying these different doorways. Given the internal divisions discussed

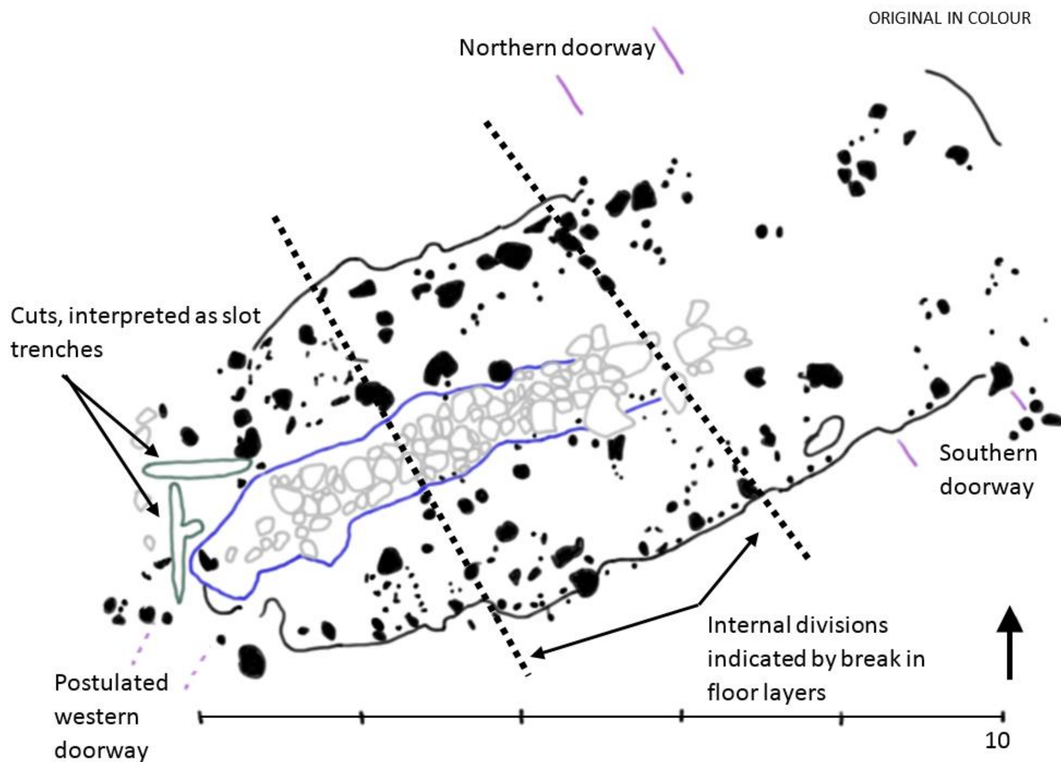

Figure 34 Sveigakot Structure 7 in its animal occupation phase. After Fig. 6 (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 13).

above, and absence or presence of paving, it should be considered which doorway may have most likely been the primary method of animals accessing the building.

Both the northern and southern doorways are clearly marked by a threshold. At the northern doorway, this is marked by the remains of wooden planks, and on the southern doorway by doubled-up paving at the threshold to pavement SP. The doorway on the westernmost gable may be considered as the doorway through which the dung and hay was cleared out, as it may have been the easiest route, faced downslope, and no deposit is immediately associated with a step or sill in this end of the building. Nor does this doorway face another building, unlike the southern doorway. However, there are two slot trenches in the western gable that, while not aligned with the paving and the presumed doorway, may have supported a wooden platform or a threshold marker of some kind associated with passage in and out of the building. These two slot trenches in the gable end (seen in Figure 34 and Figure 35) may offer an alternate view of the internal structuring of the building if these trenches are evidence for wooden floors, as suggested for Vatnsfjörður S8 (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 14; as discussed above). This western doorway may have been the one used to move animals to and from the building, based on the

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Figure 35: Slot trenches in the western gable end of Structure 7 at Sveigakot (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 12, fig. 5).

evidence for animal dung among the stones of pavement N (discussed further below). If this were the case, then the potential for wooden platforms or flooring at this point requires further investigation.

The western end of S7 also shows signs of having been redesigned and rebuilt on an alternate alignment to the rest of the structure post-construction and prior to the deposition of the V~940 tephra (Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 6). The structure is otherwise a straight-walled, rectangular building, while the western gable shows signs of curving to the south, and the central paving also curves to the south instead of continuing its approximate east-west alignment, suggesting that the walls were redesigned before the paving was laid. However, the pavement (N), which is discussed further below (see Figure 36), does not neatly match up with the postulated western entrance to the building, suggesting that this redesign took place after the formation of this outside pavement, but still before the deposition of the V~940 tephra (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 14). Such details indicate that S7 is a structure that had been constructed, adapted, and used in various ways in a relatively short period.

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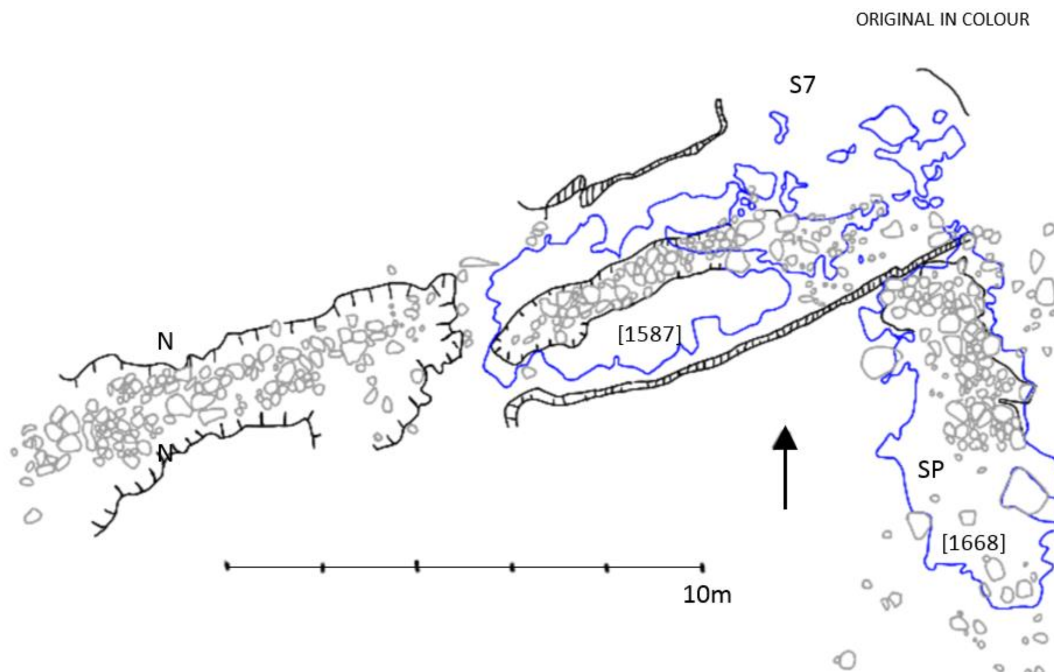

Figure 36 Structure 7 and associated pavements SP and N at Sveigakot. After Fig. 5 (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 12).

Pavements

To better understand the use and position of S7 at Sveigakot, it is vital to examine the paved areas at the site, two of which are associated with use of the animal-building (see Figure 36). One of these (N) has a more complex formation than the other (SP); however, both are worth discussing in further detail. Paved areas are important in the consideration of meaningful spatial organisation, as these areas elongate or enhance thresholds, and ease and direct access to and from certain places.

SP

Pavement SP extends from the south-eastern doorway of S7, stretching 7.6m to the south and making a substantial 2m-wide pathway to the animal-building (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 15). Its use corresponds to the use of S7 as an animal-building, as the soft organic floor layer within S7 [1587], as shown in Figure 36, matches a layer [1668] covering the outside paving and the surrounding soil, indicating a significant amount of activity in this area associated with passage to and from the animal-building (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 16). This surface layer is not cut into by the construction of S7, and instead runs into the building at this phase, further suggesting a contemporaneous use of both areas (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 16). The paving of SP seems well-laid, with the stones pressed into non-anthropogenic soils, suggesting it may be an original part of the building from the earliest stage of settlement at the site (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 17; Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 15).

While pavement SP was at first considered to be an outside feature of the site, the close similarity between the two surface layers suggests that the walkway may have been covered, facilitating similar conditions of deposition to those in the interior of the building (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 16). A number of possible postholes and post-pads have been excavated from around the pavement, and these are particularly concentrated on the north-eastern side, close to the doorway of the building, as seen in Figure 37 (Vésteinsson, 2008c, pp. 15–16). A tentative interpretation has been proposed that includes either a wooden superstructure for the length of the paved area, and to the south and west of the paving (the extent of the surface layer), or perhaps an elaboration of the doorway, given the tight

Figure 37 S7 and associated pavements in relation to P2, MP1 and MP3 at Sveigakot. Adapted from Fig 2 (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 8).

cluster of holes on the north-eastern corner (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 15). However, there are only two holes on the south-western side of the threshold into S7, so this interpretation is uncertain (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 15). Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, the pavement contains a double layer of paving closest to the doorway into the building (Vésteinsson, 2008c, p. 15). It was not necessary to create a step up to the building for ease of access, and the raising of the threshold would have made mucking out the animal-building more difficult. This suggests that it was important to distinguish the threshold in some way, even though this would have impacted negatively on the practical utility of the structure.

N

The apparently carefully-laid and well-tended paving at SP stands in contrast to the second pavement associated with S7, which has been interpreted as a hastily laid path to ease

traffic to the structure (see Figure 36), though both were apparently in use within S7's animal-building phase (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 18). Narrower than SP, the pavement (N) is approximately 1m in width, extending 9m or so downslope to a stream or body of water to the west of the buildings (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 19). It has been suggested that this pavement formed over a long period of use, providing a record of practice and route-making at the site between the animal-building and the wet environment to the west of the site (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 18).

The depression in which the pavement sits is both a natural and manmade feature: a path carved out either by foot traffic, or by deliberate cutting, which was then eroded by hydrological activity (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 20). It is plausible that an initial path, susceptible to being churned up by weather and use, would have then been laid with paving to improve the surface for passage by both humans and animals over time. This interpretation is supported both by the varied nature of the paving, and the detection of organic deposits (hay, or dung) beneath the paving stones (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 20). However, while this pathway seems as though it would have greatly benefitted from being under cover, given its apparent tendency towards disturbance, no postholes have been uncovered alongside the path, and it may have been too narrow for an effective covering structure that would not have hindered the passage of animals and humans together. The fact that the path does not seem to connect two built spaces may also have been a reason for its un-covered status.

In later occupation phases of the site, N is covered with midden layers suggesting its disuse once the human dwelling S4 had been constructed and S7 fallen out of use (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 20). However, the site would still have needed to access the water from the bottom of the slope, so it is perhaps significant that this path was neglected when the destination was presumably still frequented. Why was this substantial, and extensively constructed pathway ignored in favour of another route? It should be investigated by future studies whether there was any other source of water at Sveigakot, or whether this watercourse had dried up or changed route by this later phase of occupation.

Outdoor activity areas

At Sveigakot we find an outdoor activity area (P2) that is clearly constructed as a distinct space in relation to both S7, the depression P3, and the dwelling P1 (discussed below). It is important to consider such spaces, as the presence of substantial outside hearths and an oven may indicate an external identification of the household. The placement of certain household activities outside of roofed structures is one step closer to the external animal-places of the farm. As outlined above, when studying animal-human relations, I believe it is important not just to consider the suggested animal-buildings and their associated structures, but the whole farm site. How humans choose to organise their space does not just tell us about their relations with each other, but also with the land and their animals, which stood between the human and the wild. The outside activity areas at Sveigakot have been more closely analysed than those to the east of the dwelling at Vatnsfjörður, and there are three main outdoor areas (P2, P3, and Sub-S6) associated with activities undertaken during the pre-AD 940 phases of occupation at the site (Vésteinsson, 2008a, p. 70). Postholes on the north-east side of the cooking pits suggest that some of these areas may have been covered, as well as, in the case of P2, potentially demarcated by either a fence or wooden superstructure (Urbańczyk and Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 37).

P2

P2, shown in Figure 38, was an activity area connected to the earliest permanent dwelling, P1, by a partially-covered walkway, and was potentially associated with the less permanent structure MP3 (Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 4). The southern side of the corridor shows evidence of two large postholes, which may indicate the area was covered with a porch-like structure, though it is suggested that this could only have extended 1.5m from the house. Thus, while the corridor may have been covered, it is unlikely that the whole of P2 was sheltered in this way (Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 21).

P2 represents some of the earliest evidence for structure-building at the site, and contains an elaborate sunken cooking pit, outside oven, and multiple less elaborate hearths with a long period of use (Urbańczyk and Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 37; Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 4). There is a marked contrast between the permanent and substantial hearths in this

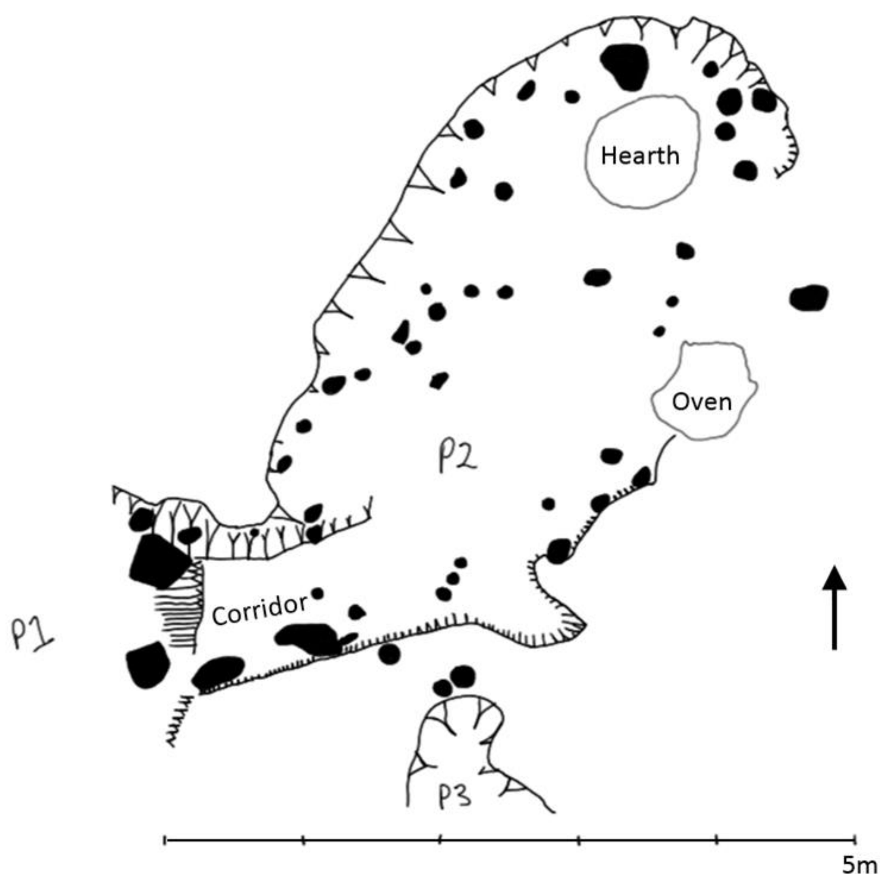

Figure 38 Outside activity area P2 at Sveigakot, with outside hearth and oven. Adapted from Fig. 20 (Urbańczyk and Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 37).

outside area, and the transitory hearths within P1 (discussed below), and it may be suggested that the permanent hearths associated with P1 exist here outside of the building (Vésteinsson, 2008a, pp. 70–71). The orientation of these pits suggests that they were accessed and used from P1, and therefore faced north-east towards S7, SP, and MP3 (Urbańczyk and Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 37), as seen on Figure 37.

P3

P3 is interpreted as a manmade depression, and one of the earliest features of the site (Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 18). It is one of several negative and irregular features at the site the explanation of which has so far eluded investigators (Vésteinsson, 2017, pers. comm.). This elongated cut, like P1 and P2, pre-dates the V~940 tephra deposition, although it is dated earlier than these two structures on stratigraphic grounds (Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 18). The stratigraphy also suggests that the temporary dwelling MP3 (discussed below, and

shown in Figure 37 and Figure 42) is contemporary with the cut (Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 18). The postholes considered in association with the feature have been interpreted as supporting either a fence around the structure, or a wooden frame of some kind; perhaps a tent-like frame, as is postulated for MP3 (Urbańczyk and Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 39). It has also been suggested, however, that these “postholes” are simply depressions left from the removal of boulders from the area, but in this case it may be asked for what reason the boulders could have been removed, and whether the alignment with P3 is coincidental or designed (Urbańczyk and Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 39). The holes from the removal of boulders, shown in Figure 39, may have acted as convenient natural postholes for the raising of some sort of structure.

Concerning the function of this feature, it is difficult to suggest that the depression was used for the storage of fodder, due to the proximity to the hearths in P2, although it should be noted that the nearest pit to P3 is the pit oven, and this covered feature may have decreased the risk of sparks catching whatever was stored in this depression. However, it seems unlikely that this area was used to store fodder, as the traditional method of storing hay in Iceland was to stack it against a wall and cover it with turf (McCooey, 2017a, p. 67). It may be possible that this space was used to store fuel for the

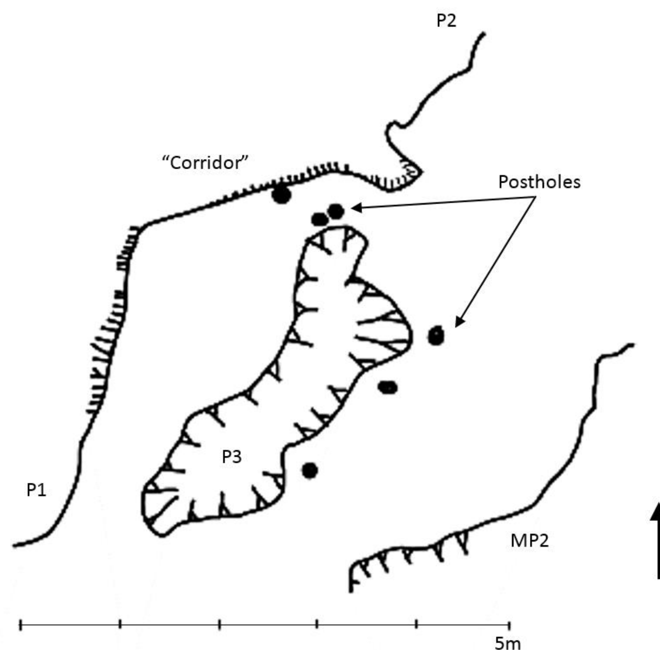

Figure 39 P3 between MP2 and P1/P1-P2 corridor at Sveigakot. Adapted from Fig. 22 (Urbańczyk and Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 38).

operation of the outside hearths and oven, but given the requirement of keeping fuel dry, this would have been more effectively stored inside a proper building as storing anything in a depression is not an effective way of keeping it from becoming waterlogged.

Alternatively, this depression may have been used for keeping pigs, or formed by the activities of pigs. These animals may have required a less structured shelter than a full animal-building, and may have only made use of such a structure at certain times of year or in particularly harsh weather. In addition, the location of the depression between P1, P2 and the MP buildings may have also afforded shelter from adverse weather conditions. It has been suggested that pigs played an important role in establishing the domestic economy in early Iceland, and the faunal remains found at Sveigakot do not undermine this (Amorosi et al., 1997; Arnalds, 1987; Buckland et al., 1994, 1994; Dugmore and Erskine, 1994; McGovern, 2003; Sveinbjarnardóttir, 1992; Tinsley, 2001, p. 33). The presence of pigs at the site is well-attested from the faunal remains, and it has been proposed that the tethering of pigs may have caused the formation of the depressions in the Sub-S6 area (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2004, p. 20).

Sub-S6

The area north-east of S7, below S6 (and below the wall of S4; labelled in Figure 30) shows evidence of several elongated pits and various smaller depressions that were filled with turf before the construction of S4 and S6 (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2004, p. 19). This area is depicted as "Sub-S6" in Figure 30, and is mentioned, but not labelled, in the excavation reports. These pits had the V~940 tephra in their base, as seen in Figure 40, so were constructed or formed before the deposition of this tephra (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2004, p. 18). This dating places them in the first phase of settlement at the site, alongside S7, the nearest structure to them. However, deposit [1187], an orange or pink layer found in the largest of these pits, is also found in the trench cut into S7 (seen in Figure 41), so the pits may post-date the disuse of the animal-building, or at least belong to a period of limited use associated with this trench (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 8). Alternatively, the same use may apply to both the pits and the trench cuts, although chronologically separated. One interpretation of these pits is as "pig wallows" created by the keeping of tethered pigs (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2004, p. 20), although this may

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Figure 40 Pit at Sveigakot lined with the V~940 tephra (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2004, p. 19, fig. 13).

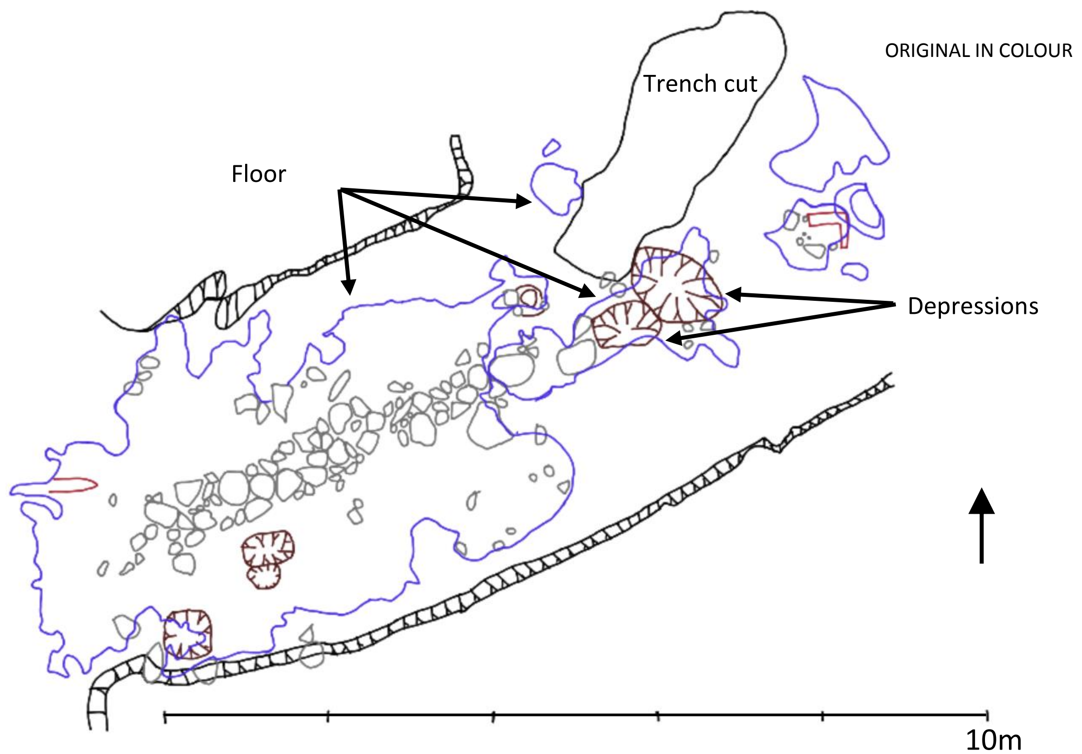

Figure 41: Features of Structure 7 at Sveigakot between its use as an animal-building and the iron-working activity in the eastern end. Adapted from Fig. 2 (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 9).

contrast with McGovern's depiction of pigs roaming semi-wild across the landscape as part of early herding strategies at Sveigakot (McGovern, 2003, p. 57; discussed further below).

Human dwelling(s)

The site at Sveigakot contains several buildings apparently used for human habitation throughout its multiple phases of occupation. Contrary to the traditional picture of the Viking Age farmstead, the long, curved-wall farmhouse with a central hearth appears to be a relatively late addition to the farm organisation. Many of the early dwellings are sunken to some degree, and show a mix of permanent turf-walled buildings and more temporary wooden structures. There are four areas of dwellings at the site: S, P, MP, and MT/T (as shown on Figure 30 and Figure 31), and all dwellings (apart from S4 and S1) are interpreted as temporary or transitory dwellings (that is, structures that have been used as dwellings periodically with other uses, and often with changeable internal organisation). It is not until S4 was built that a permanent dwelling with a fixed interior was constructed at the site.

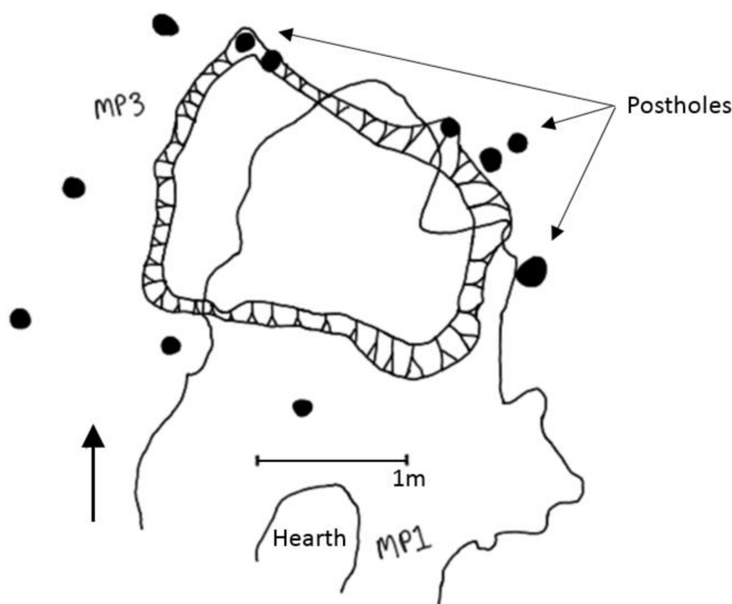

Figure 42 Showing Sveigakot MP3 in detail. Adapted from Fig. 32 (Gísladóttir and Ævarsson, 2008, p. 51).

Pre-AD 940

Below layers of sheet midden lie the remains of two structures, one of which overlies the other: MP3 and MP1. The single floor layer of MP3, as shown in Figure 42, is surrounded by postholes in a rectangular shape, and has been interpreted as a small tent-like structure, or wooden-framed hut, measuring only c.3x2m (Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 4). However, this structure can only have been used for a short period, as it is capped by a thick, dark floor layer, associated with structure MP1. It is suggested that MP3 is contemporary with the cut P3 and the first stages of activity in P2, and this would make the first occupation of Sveigakot very different from the traditional view of the Viking Age farm (Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 18). In contrast, MP1, shown in Figure 43, is a sunken feature interpreted as the floor of a dwelling with only timber walls and a small hearth in the centre of the floor

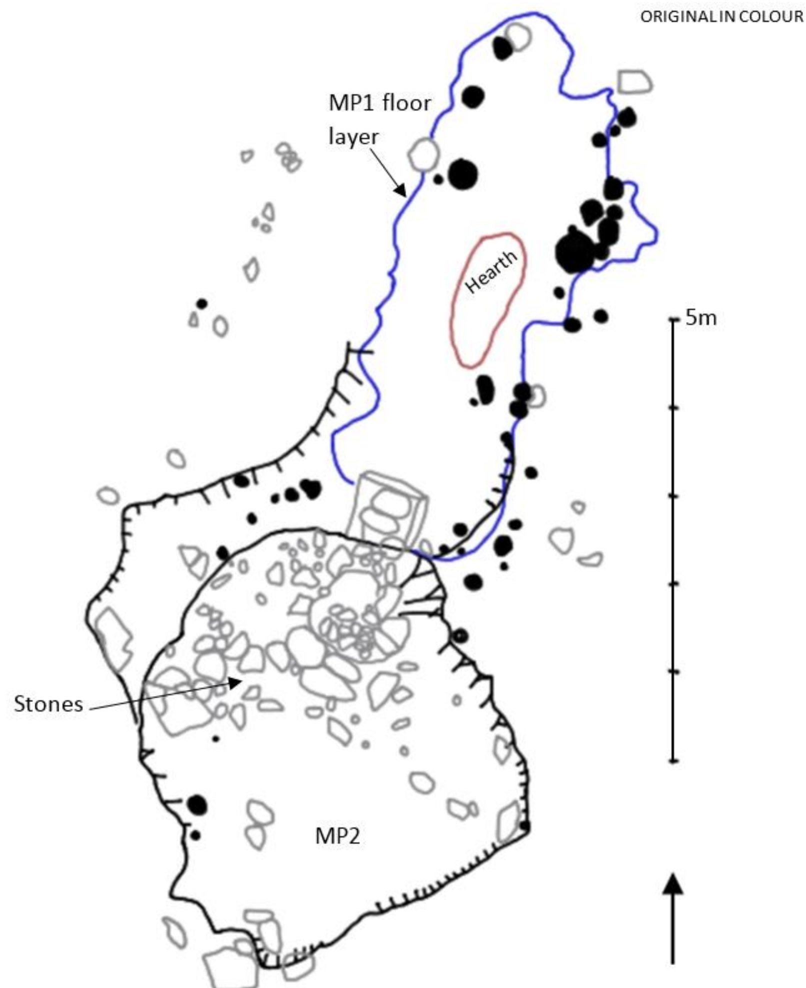

Figure 43 Showing MP2 and MP1 at Sveigakot. Adapted from Fig. 23 (Gísladóttir and Ævarsson, 2008, p. 40).

(Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 30; Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 4). MP1 is more reminiscent of the rectangular wooden buildings constructed at Hedeby or Dublin, than the turf-walled buildings most often uncovered in Iceland (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 30; Schmidt, 1990, 1994, Vésteinsson, 2006a, p. 5, 2008a, p. 69). In addition, it is connected to a sunken-feature, MP2, which may be either another building or an outside activity space (Vésteinsson and McGovern, 2012a).

The most complex of the pre-AD 940 dwellings at Sveigakot is the significantly sunken-featured structure labelled P1, which had a sequence of eight stages before its abandonment (Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 4). As shown in Figure 44, almost every one of the floor layers in P1 contains evidence of a hearth (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 27; Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 4). However, unlike the fixed, central hearth of the traditional Viking Age farmhouse, these hearths are relocated with each floor layer, and represent therefore a changeable and transitory feature of the house. Considering the perceived importance of the hearth in Viking Age Norse culture, this may indicate a rather different household presence than assumed at sites such as Vatnsfjörður, or at the stage of Sveigakot's occupation associated with S4 (Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 31; Gísladóttir and Ævarsson, 2008; Vésteinsson, 2006b, pp. 57, 58). In its final stage of use, shown in Figure 45, P1 has been interpreted as a storage room, given the excavation of a large barrel pit that crosscut hearth debris in the layer beneath (Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 18).

In addition to the relocation of the hearth, in the sixty years between the deposition of the *Landnám* tephra (877±1) and the V~940 tephra, P1, like S7 discussed above, was structurally reorganised. While the first detectable threshold at P1 was in the western wall, this was closed up and replaced with an eastern doorway and construction of the covered corridor or walkway to P2 (Gísladóttir, 2008, pp. 24, 28, 30–31). This later access-route is shown in Figure 45, and shows the walkway connecting P1 and P2 with its associated sunken fire pits and later hearths; though the outdoor activity area P2 is also associated with MP3 that predates P1 (Vésteinsson, 2008b, p. 4), and P2 seems to have been a prominent part of the site before the re-organisation of P1 to connect with it.

In addition to areas P and MP, the structures at area MT/T as shown in Figure 46, also predate the V~940 tephra layer, although MT, is thought to have been enlarged

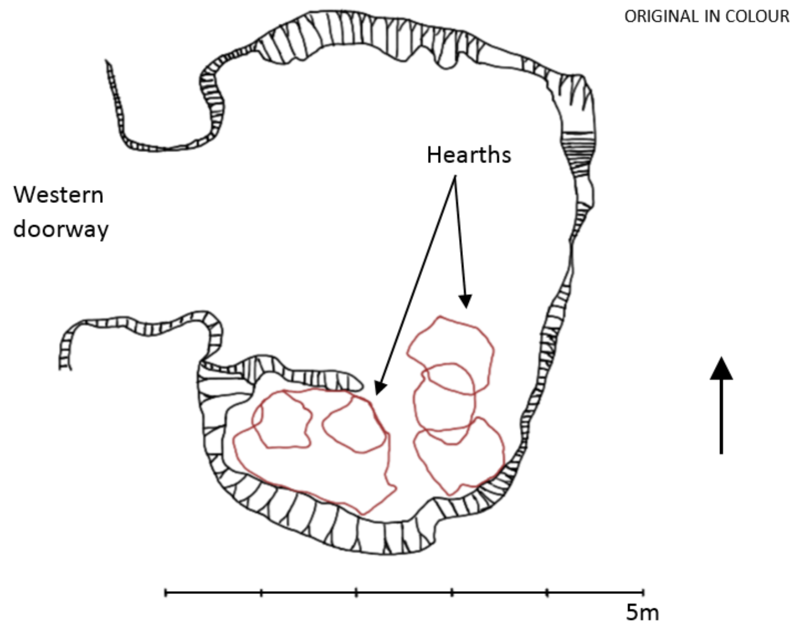

Figure 44 The earlier phases of P1 at Sveigakot. Adapted from Fig. 13 (Gísladóttir, 2008, p. 26).

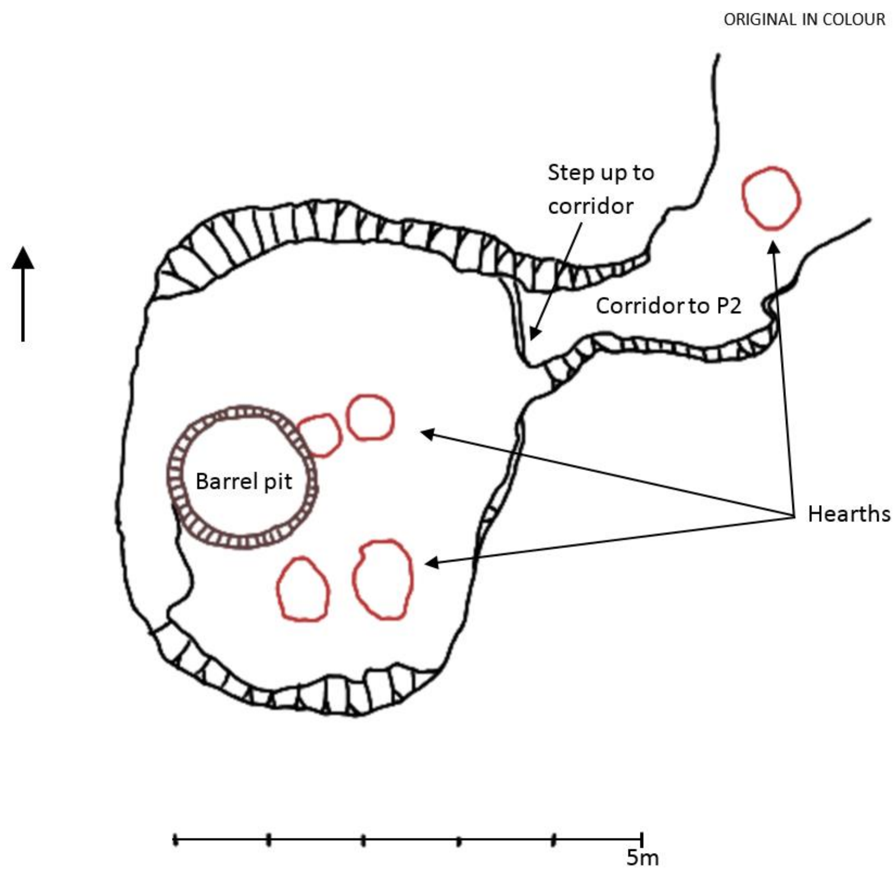

Figure 45 The later stage of P1 at Sveigakot. Adapted from Fig. 14 (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2006, p. 24).

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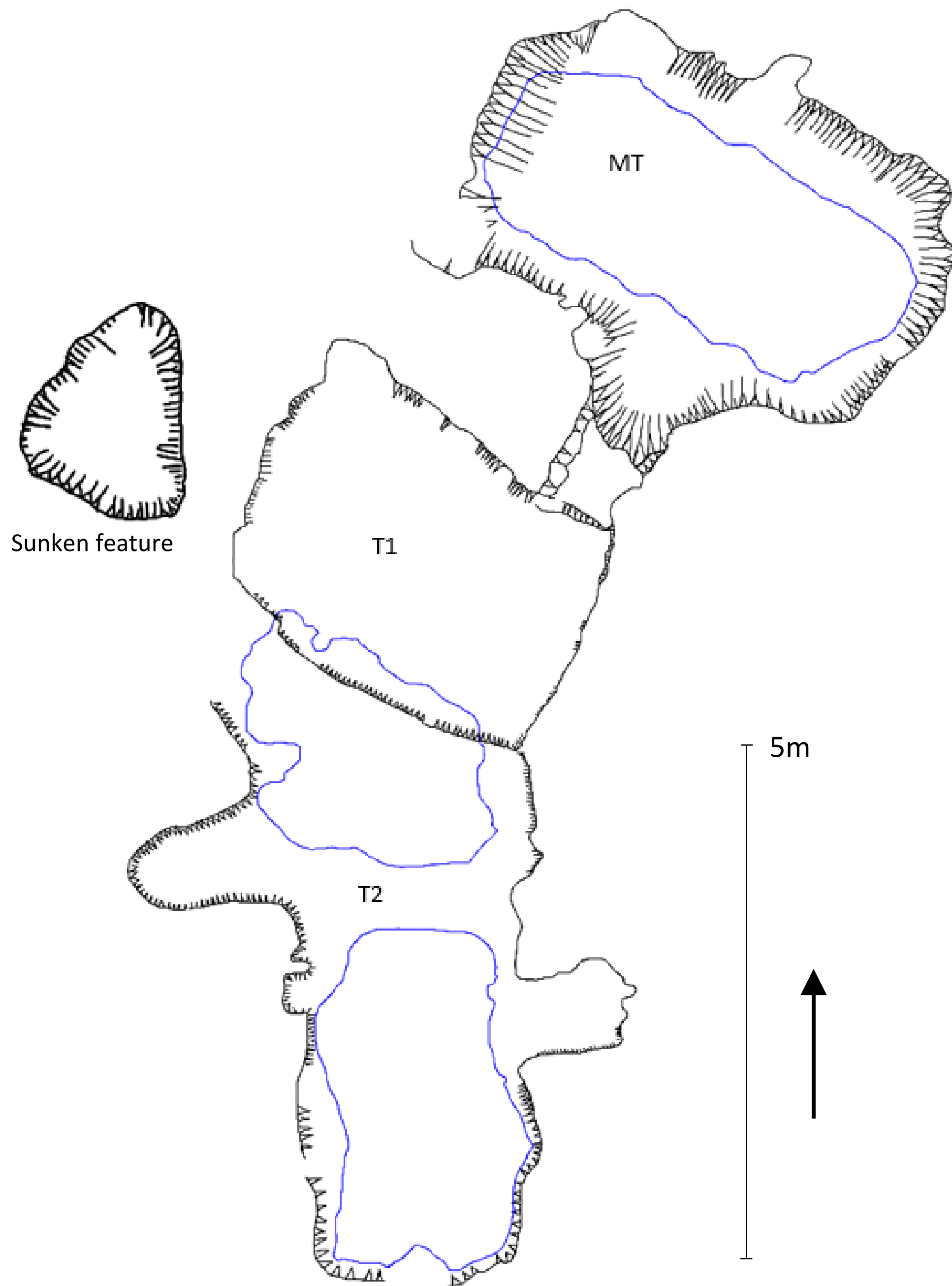


Figure 46 The MT/T structures and irregular depression at Sveigakot. Adapted from Fig. 8 (Batt et al., 2015).

and used post-940 AD. These structures seem to have had both dwelling and storage functions periodically, and after the collapse of P1 prior to the V~940 tephra deposition, MT is considered the most likely dwelling to bridge the occupational phase between the collapse of P1 and the building of S4 (Vésteinsson, 2006b, p. 56). Like P1, MT has multiple occupation layers involving the reorganisation of internal structure and hearth location, which may further strengthen potential links between these buildings and the outside hearths in the P2 activity area, although the substantial distance of MT from the northern part of the site is remarkable (c.25m), and may reflect changing attitudes towards this initial central place.

A second building, T1, was connected by a 1.2m long corridor to MT (Urbańczyk, 2006, p. 37, 2002b, p. 38). In its later phase, evidence of textile working was found in a row of loom weights that suggest a standing loom would have been present in the building, and this fits with the prevailing view of *jarðhús* in Viking Age Iceland (Milek, 2012; Urbańczyk, 2006, p. 46). However, this sunken building had many incarnations before this point, with a similar process of formation as seen with P1 and MT (Urbańczyk, 2006, p. 46). An additional sunken-featured building was found beneath T1, referred to as T2 in this thesis. This two-roomed structure extended to the south of T1, and may belong to the earliest stage of dwelling at the site, along with some of the structures in MP and P. Clearly, the site at Sveigakot was complex from its earliest settlement phases. T2 is the furthest point from S7 with which it may have been contemporaneous, and both dwelling and storage functions have been proposed for T2, primarily the storage of organic matter, such as hay (Urbańczyk, 2006, p. 37, 2003, p. 34). However, the conditions in Area T make it difficult to reconstruct the spatial organization around these structures, and the area has particularly suffered from wind erosion after local deforestation (Urbańczyk, 2003, p. 34). If T2 and S7 are contemporaneous, then it is significant that a dwelling and fodder storage are placed at such a distance from the animal-building. An alternative interpretation is that this dwelling is associated with a phase of the site prior to the construction of S7, but given the proposed function of at least one of the rooms of T2 with the storage of fodder, it would be likely associated with some form of animal-structure. The depression to the west of the building, shown in Figure 46, is only mentioned briefly in the excavation reports of the site and its interior has not been analysed. It may be significant that both areas S and

P contain similar depressions, which I have postulated here may be the result of pig-keeping at the site.

Post-AD 940

After AD 940, S7 is no longer used as an animal-building. It remains, however, a significant feature of the Sveigakot site, most particularly in its proximity to and inclusion within S4. S4 (shown in Figure 47) is the most recognisable of the structures excavated at Sveigakot, adhering to the curved-wall longhouse-style of building most often associated with Viking Age farms in Iceland (Milek, 2003, pp. 20, 23). The structural remains indicate a measurement of 12m by 4.8m, although it has been suggested that 1-3m may have been lost to erosion on the western end, making the dwelling between 15-13m long (Milek, 2003, p. 18). It is not known whether the building had a doorway on this western gable end.

As previously mentioned, this dwelling has no associated animal-building, despite the faunal remains showing that the agro-pastoral way of life continued through all phases of occupation at Sveigakot (McGovern et al., 2006). S6, indicated also on Figure 47, is interpreted as an annexe to the main building, but is not associated with zoogenic indicators. It is possible that an animal-building associated with this phase has since been eroded, as it seems unlikely that climatic conditions in this occupation phase were such

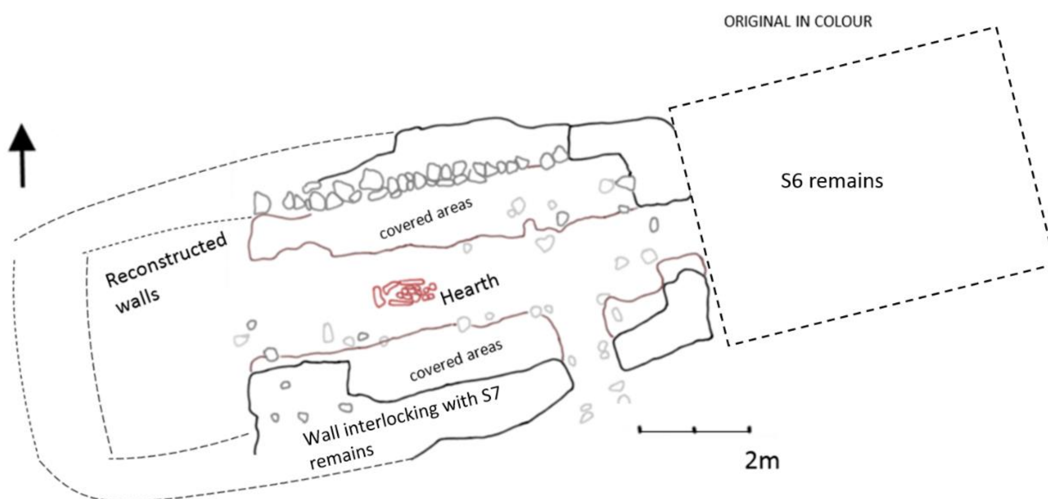


Figure 47 Sveigakot Structure 4 and the area of annexe S6. Adapted from Fig. 3 (Milek, 2003, p. 17).

that animals did not need to be sheltered during the winter (Vésteinsson, 2017, pers. comm.). Unfortunately the remains of the dwelling are too damaged by erosion and the building of S1 to facilitate analysis of the interior in such a way that may indicate whether animals were stalled under the dwelling roof (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2005, p. 10). However, at this period of occupation at Sveigakot, as is discussed further below, the proportion of sheep kept or processed at the site steadily increased. Perhaps it is this emphasis on sheep, which may not have required such a substantial shelter close to the human-places, which has dictated the way the structural remains of the site are preserved, for example, the distancing of an animal-building associated with this phase.

S4 respects the earlier space of S7, with the long south wall of the later dwelling constructed so as not to intrude into the floor-cut made for the earlier animal-building, though part of the S4 wall overlapped with wall remains of S7 (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2005, p. 10). In addition, one of the thresholds of S4 is located within the southern wall, intersecting almost perfectly with the doorway in the northern wall of S7 (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2004, pp. 9, 11). While these structures are not contemporary in their main periods of use, evidently care was taken to ensure that S4 interlocked and worked alongside the ruin of S7, rather than imposing itself on these remains.

The fluctuation in dwellings constructed, used, and abandoned at Sveigakot shows a site constantly subject to adaptation and transition. S4 was abandoned in the eleventh century, and left standing as a partially collapsed ruin experiencing sporadic occupation, before the space was rearticulated by the building of S1 in the late eleventh century (Milek, 2003, p. 7). S1, shown in Figure 48, comprises a rectangular dwelling with an additional room attached to the northern wall (S5), used as a store room, pantry, and kitchen during its lifecycle, and an unroofed area (S3). While S1 itself is smaller than S4, the addition of S3 and S5 provides the dwelling with additional space, and the structures in this dwelling complex are the main components of the site constructed and used in the late 11th-12th century (Milek, 2003, p. 23). Continuity between S4 and S1 is demonstrated by a shared north wall, and both structures were built on an east-west orientation (Milek, 2003, p. 18). However, by building the south wall further north than its predecessor, S1 is distanced from the remains of S7 (Milek, 2003, p. 18).

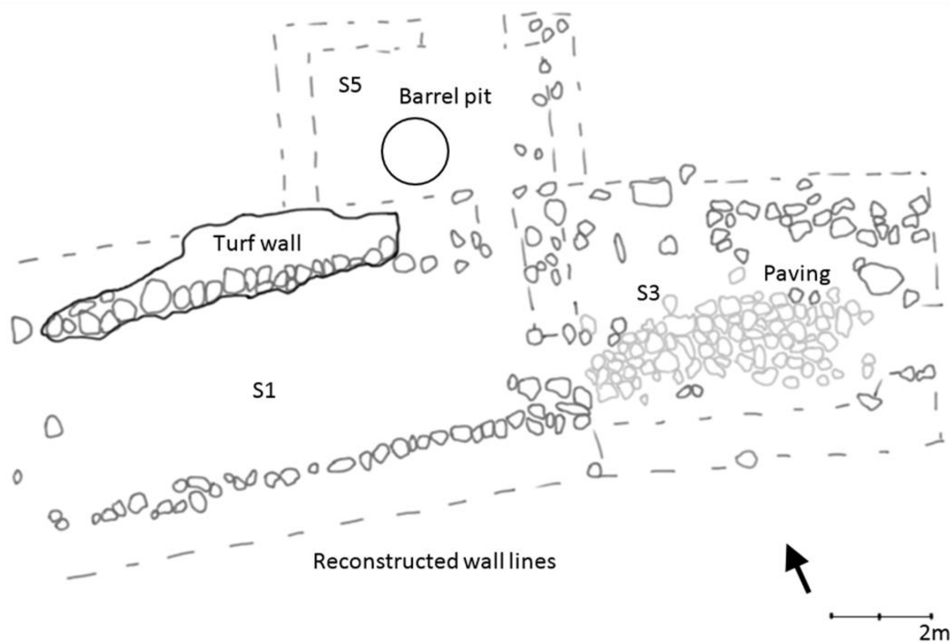


Figure 48 The later dwelling complex at Sveigakot, including Structures 1, 3, and 5. Adapted from Fig. 1 (Milek, 2003, p. 10).

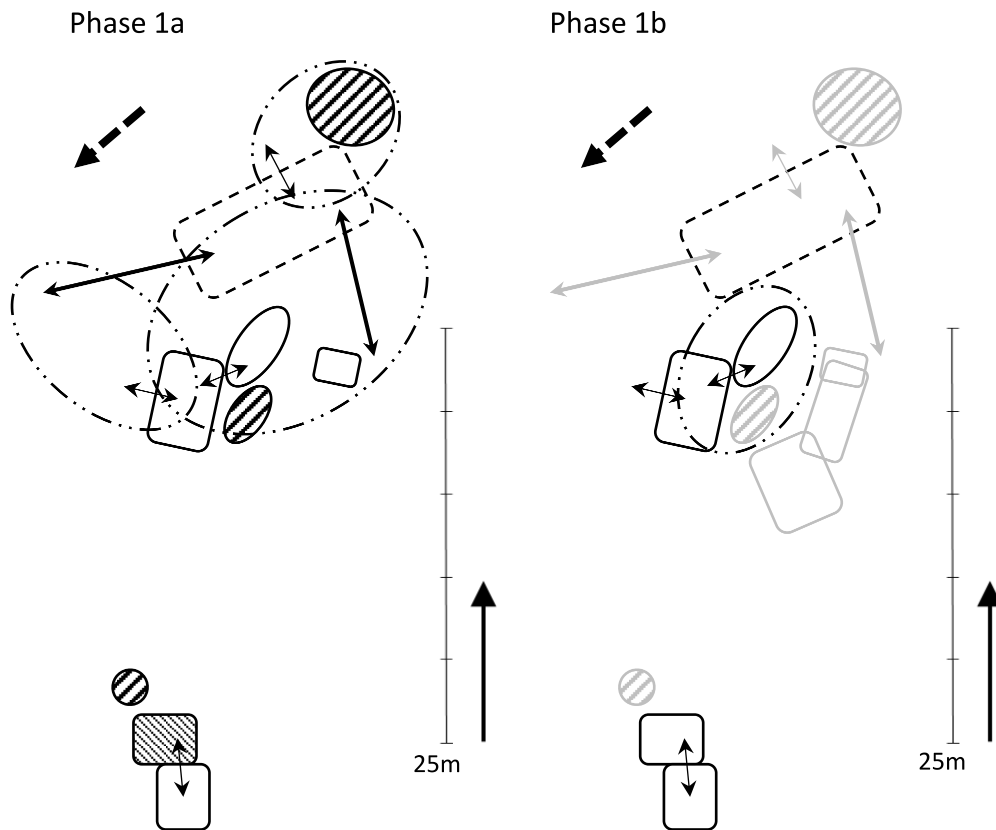
The pavement seen in Figure 48 within area S3, is an unevenly paved path laid over a pre-existing depression, similar to pavement N discussed above (Gísladóttir and Vésteinsson, 2004, pp. 15–16). Although S3 appears to re-use the walls of the earlier S6 for shelter, the pavement seems to contribute to a re-orientation of the site, as both the postulated thresholds for S1, as shown on Figure 48, face away from the rest of the structures. This dwelling therefore appears, as far as the current evidence can show, to suggest a rejection of the older site, and perhaps the husbandry practices associated with that site.

The Sveigakot settlement: a spatial-functional analysis

Sveigakot is a highland site. The buildings are placed on a slight slope downwards to the south, with the animal-building S7, and latterly the dwellings S4 and S1, placed at the head of this slope. Unfortunately, we have no wall remains from a central enclosure, although it is very likely that such a structure existed given the evidence for homefield walls at other sites from the Commonwealth period. Several diagrams are required to map the chronological shifts at this site, and subsequent experiences of the site will have been influenced by the organisation of multiple "past" Sveigakots.

In Figures 49-51, we see several dwellings linked by outside or partially-covered activity areas and paved paths, and it is evident that different parts of the site were in use at different times. The initial occupation of the Sveigakot site (Phase 1a, shown in Figure 49) the phase to which the animal-building belongs, is very different from the traditional view of the Viking Age Icelandic farm, including a small, sunken-floored building, and a wooden tent-like structure. The space of the farm is predominantly taken up with animal-places: the cattle byre, buildings for fodder storage, and potentially multiple pig wallows, and S7 is the most prominent, most accessible, and most elaborated building in this initial stage of settlement; although the distance between the northern and southern parts of the site is remarkable, with roughly 25m between S7 and the MT/T structures (Batt et al., 2015, p. 170).

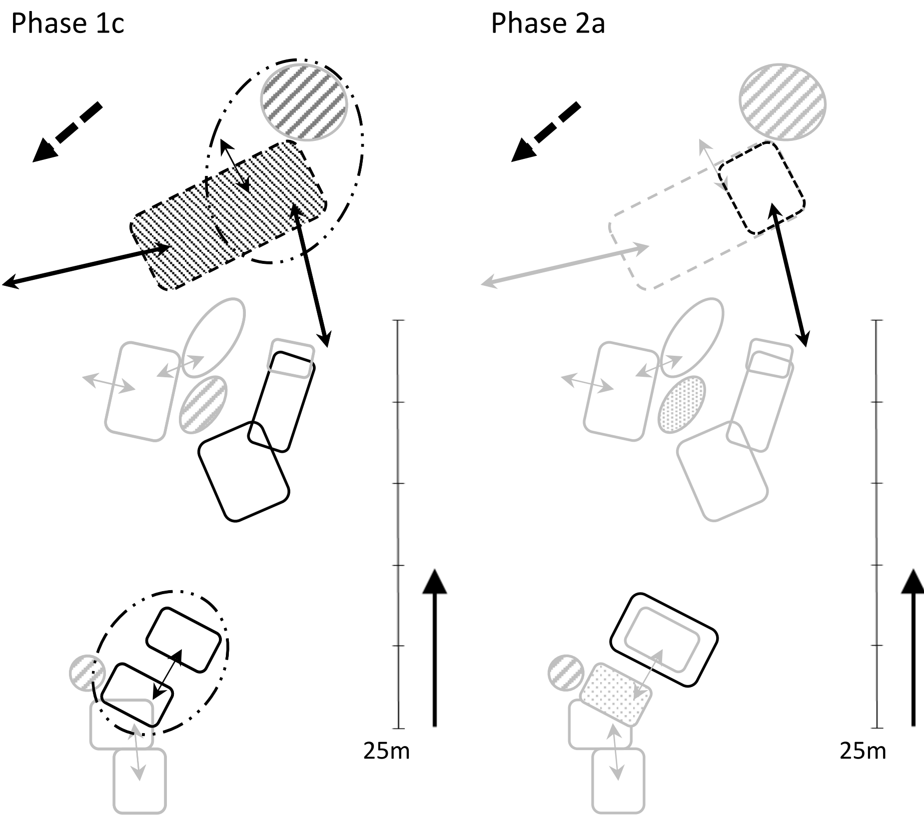
It has been difficult to discern thresholds at many of the Sveigakot buildings due to their sunken nature. However, the thresholds in S7 are clearly emphasised. These can be seen on Figure 49, phase 1a, with extended paving elongating access to the animal-building and marking it out in contrast to the indistinct thresholds of the smaller buildings on the site. The suggestion that pavement SP may have been covered presents it as a comparable feature to the covered, or partially-covered corridor between dwelling P1 and outdoor area P2. While the covering of a route between a human dwelling and the outside hearths that mark out P2 as a significant area may not be surprising, the existence of a paved, potentially-covered walkway leading to and from S7 while it was in use as an animal-building is remarkable. However, it is unlikely that pavement SP was used by animals; rather, the northern doorway seems a plausible option. The northern threshold has no extended paving, and leads out into Sub-S6 and its possible pig wallows. It may therefore join two animal-places, and is isolated from the human-places on the south side of S7. As such, it would be a suitable point from which to lead out animals to further enclosures to the north of the site, or grazing in the pastures or highlands beyond. However, the remains of animal dung found amongst the paving at pavement N indicates



ORIGINAL IN COLOUR

Feature:	How represented:	Feature:	How represented:
Dwellings		Elaborated threshold	
Animal-building		Abandoned threshold	
Outside activity area / fire pit		Abandoned structure/ruin	
Smithy		Midden (within structure)	
Threshold		Sporadic use of structure	
Possible threshold		Areas of association	
River / stream		Fjord	
Irregular depressions		Direction of slope	

Figure 49 Spatial-functional analysis diagrams for Sveigakot, phases 1a-1b. Author's own.



ORIGINAL IN COLOUR

Feature:	How represented:	Feature:	How represented:
Dwellings		Elaborated threshold	
Animal-building		Abandoned threshold	
Outside activity area / fire pit		Abandoned structure/ruin	
Smithy		Midden (within structure)	
Threshold		Sporadic use of structure	
Possible threshold		Areas of association	
River / stream		Fjord	
Irregular depressions		Direction of slope	

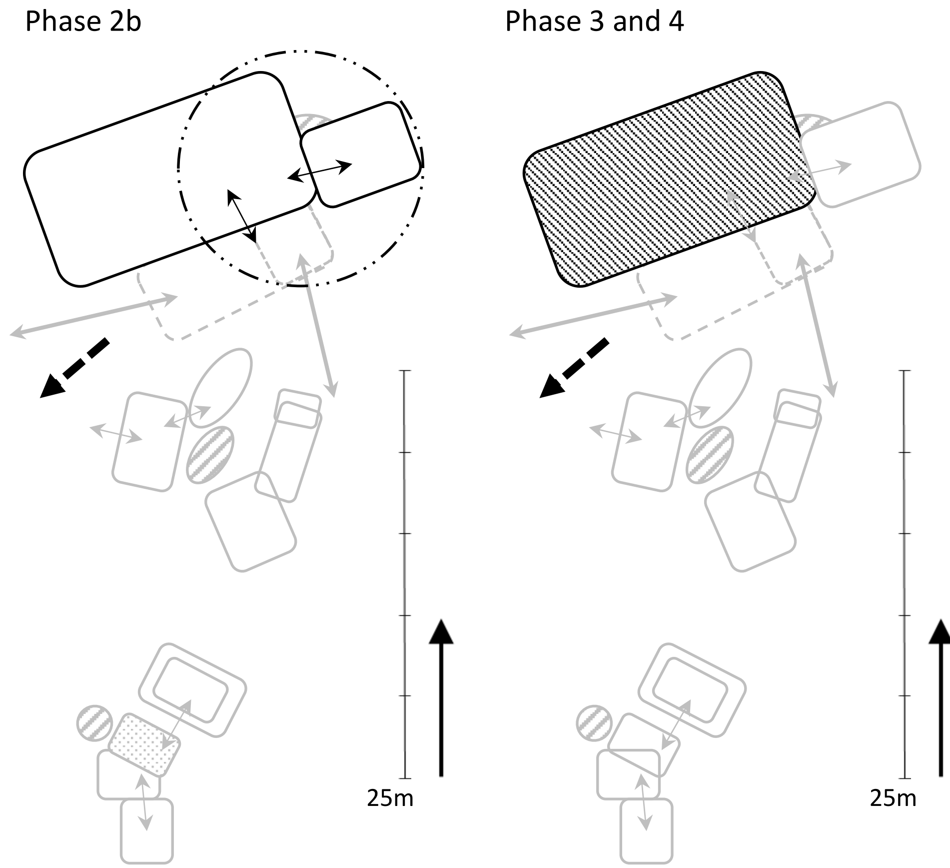
Figure 50 Spatial-functional diagrams for Sveigakot, phases 1c-2a. Author's own.

that the western doorway might also have been used by animals at the site.

In phase 1a, use of the site appears to revolve around the central structures P1, P2, P3, and MP3, which were closely associated with S7 by their proximity to the building and the direction of their thresholds facing towards it, or towards pavement N. Although the P structures seem to remain in use later than S7 and MP3 (phase 1b), they would still have been intervisually connected to the disused S7. While the dwelling and storage building (T2) appears to have been in use in both phases, it remains disassociated from the northern cluster of structures. In phase 1c, MP1 and MP2 replace the P structures in mediating between the northern and southern buildings, and in this phase, the animal-building is used only intermittently. Phase 2a is the point of lowest use at the site, with only the eastern end of S7 used for smithing activity, and MT as a dwelling. However, the enlargement of MT in this period suggests some investment in the site.

In phase 2b (Figure 51), the site is re-formed around the large dwelling built adjacent to the old animal-building, however, the rest of the structures analysed here are abandoned at this point, and it is likely that further structures associated with this stage have been lost through erosion. The area immediately east of the site has been particularly damaged, but substantial gatherings of stones suggest this is the likely location of further structures (Vésteinsson, 2017, pers. comm.). Nonetheless, even if an animal building associated with this dwelling was existent and has since been lost, it is meaningful that it was not built within the initial settlement complex, and that S4 is built adjacent to, and incorporated with the ruin of S7. In all phases, the building, or ruin of S7 dominates the area, not only by being the largest structure until phase 2b but also by its elevated position relative to the other structures that meant it would have impacted visually on the experience of those dwelling at the site. Several factors might have influenced the construction of S4 adjacent to S7, including the high visibility of the place, the ability or need to reuse the ruined north wall of S7, and a desire to rebuild close to the earliest focus of the site. Building in this place may have been perceived as a usurpation, an assumption, or incorporation of an animal-focussed past.

Sveigakot is a difficult site to interpret, having suffered from significant levels of erosion between deposition and excavation (Vésteinsson, 2017, pers. comm.). However,



ORIGINAL IN COLOUR

Feature:	How represented:	Feature:	How represented:
Dwellings		Elaborated threshold	
Animal-building		Abandoned threshold	
Outside activity area / fire pit		Abandoned structure/ruin	
Smithy		Midden (within structure)	
Threshold		Sporadic use of structure	
Possible threshold		Areas of association	
River / stream		Fjord	
Irregular depressions		Direction of slope	

Figure 51 Spatial-functional diagrams for Sveigakot, phases 2b-4. Author's own.

the aspects of the site that have been excavated show that the organisation of space at Sveigakot is different from other farms excavated from Iceland's *Landnámsöld.* It has been proposed as a low status farm, where the small dwellings contrast with the large animal-building; yet the remains uncovered from the site, both material culture and midden deposits, are consistent with what we might expect to find at a "normal" Viking Age farm (Vésteinsson, 2006b, p. 57). Simplistic explanations should therefore be avoided. Sveigakot may have been a lower status or tenant farm in the Viking Age, or it may have been a farm of similar status to Vatnsfjörður. What is clear is that the organisation of space is different.

It can be suggested that the household at this site attempted to project a high-status image. In the Viking Age and medieval period, domestic animals, especially cattle, were indicators of wealth. Therefore, a large animal-building, regardless of the unseen number of cattle within the building, would immediately provide a marker of prosperity for those passing or visiting the farm, and display a specific identity to the community. Small dwellings should not be assumed to indicate low status or a limitation of resources, but rather an active decision to build in a certain way. It may be argued that the large animal-building not only expressed the desired identity of the farm, but also demonstrated how the household wished to display their economic potential to their society. This may explain why this conspicuous and elaborated building was constructed, and then used as a multi-purpose space in the same period as sheltering animals. Such a display could suggest that the household at Sveigakot was building defensively to establish their place in a society that valued *fé* (cattle, sheep, wealth, or property) and in an area that was densely settled from the earliest time of settlement (Vésteinsson and McGovern, 2012a). S7 at Sveigakot is an architectural manifestation of the concept of *fé* discussed in Chapter 2. It represents at once livestock, wealth, and physical property. However, it also reinforces the prominence of animal-human relations at this site. The multiple-purpose S7 would have been visually and interactively prominent at the site, with access to the building for a variety of uses and by a variety of household members greatly increasing the contact and interactions between tethered animals and humans conducting a variety of activities.

Two places, two sets of animal-human relations

At Sveigakot, the large building associated with animals is the focus of the farm site, not only for its size, but its visibility upslope from the human dwellings. If we contrast this with Vatnsfjörður, we see a different organisation of space, and a different relation expressed to animal-places. Although in both cases, the buildings are physically constructed on the edges of the settlement, at Sveigakot the animal-building has three doorways, and both faces away from, and towards the human dwellings; and the human dwellings and outdoor areas appear to face the animal building in many cases (where thresholds can be discerned), in contrast to the apparent exclusion of Structure 9/7 at Vatnsfjörður. While S9/7 at Vatnsfjörður is constructed on a slope above the human buildings, like S7 at Sveigakot, this is unlikely to indicate a similar meaning in the spatial organisation of the site, given that no buildings face towards S9/7 at Vatnsfjörður.

It is important to consider what purpose such buildings might fulfil beyond shelter. At Sveigakot the animal-building may have represented the importance of a tenant relationship, if this farm was a tenant small-holding in association with a more prominent farm in the district, acting as a reminder of lower status or of the duty of care towards the animals it sheltered: a visual indicator that the cattle they worked with had a higher status than the humans on the site. However, S7 at Sveigakot may alternatively have acted as a projection of real, aspirational, or imagined wealth, constructed by an independent household struggling to assert their identity in a fragile frontier society. In contrast, the animal buildings at Vatnsfjörður are smaller than the human dwelling at every stage of its occupation. While the Vatnsfjörður animal-buildings have the same amount of space available for shelter as Sveigakot, this space is divided into two, with a building on either side of the settlement. This organisation of space may reflect the stalling of different animals in the Vatnsfjörður homefield, or the adoption of different herding practices than those adopted at Sveigakot. Having multiple animal-buildings at the site may also have had practical or meaningful advantages, such as the ability to more effectively manure a large homefield area, or to invest the structures with a specific visual or aural impact for display purposes.

The changing of spatial organisation over time can be seen at both Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot, and reinforce that the dynamic nature of relations with the animals at these sites should not be viewed in isolation from other developments on the farm. At Vatnsfjörður one of the first recorded animal-places is constructed over the remains of S10, and it can be assumed that the function of the *jarðhús* was incorporated into the main dwelling at the same time as animals are established in this outer, and visually-distanced place; while at Sveigakot the animal-space is most likely moved eastwards away from the central building area, after the abandonment of S7. This movement of animal-place at Sveigakot may have been the result of a desire to re-appropriate the space previously occupied by S7 for the large dwelling S4, as discussed above.

In general, the animal-buildings at Vatnsfjörður are more isolated from the human dwelling than at Sveigakot. This distance between animals and humans may reflect the herding strategies at Vatnsfjörður requiring less close relationships between environments, animals, and humans. Alternatively, or concurrently, prestige and identity at Vatnsfjörður might have been mediated through the presence of animals, but also through other factors, such as sea-fishing, the collection of drift-wood, and iron-working, given its proximity to the fjord and prominent smithy at the site. The most distinctive structure at early Vatnsfjörður was the human dwelling, while at Sveigakot it was S7. This suggests a marked difference in how the farm would have been perceived, from a distance, in approaching the place, and when standing among the buildings. Unlike Sveigakot, Vatnsfjörður is intervisually connected to other farms in the area, and played a central role in the politics of the fjord, and the splitting of the animal-buildings might have been designed to make the farm appear larger from these locations.

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that the Viking Age and medieval farm may have been conceived as a place at which safe, central, controlled space gave way in graduated stages to the uncontrolled spaces away from human interaction: an interpretation supported by recent studies of shielings (Kupiec and Milek, 2015). While this may have been the case, what is clear from this study is that the positioning of animals in this continuum is not fixed, and that domestic animals did not have a consistent expression of place on Viking Age farms in relation to non-animal spaces. The placement of the animal-buildings at Vatnsfjörður very clearly mark out places for the animals into

which only certain household members would have been required to venture, in contrast to the more connected, more accessible Sveigakot S7. In addition, the suggestion that Sub-S6 at Sveigakot may show evidence of pig-keeping, indicates that pigs may have been domestic animals able to traverse and permeate different spaces of the household-farm, and required at least partly to occupy places around the farm buildings. This may fit with the Old Norse term *túngǫltr* (homefield-boar) that suggests a link existed between pigs and the more controlled spaces of the farm (discussed further in Chapter 4). As analysed in Chapter 1, Old Icelandic settlement narratives do contain stories of semi-wild pigs in Iceland, but rather than simply being permitted to roam semi-wild in the Icelandic landscape, these stories always note the pigs turning away from their human owners, suggesting an unwelcome act (see Chapter 1). Indeed, the story of Beigaðr's rebellious refusal to submit to human control, particularly in the extended version of the story in *Vatnsdœla saga* (ch.15), suggests uncontrolled pigs were viewed negatively by the compilers of these narratives. As suggested by the *Grágás* laws, pigs were permitted to roam only with the appropriate apparel (rings in their snouts) and never over common pasture (see Chapter 2). This further suggests that we may consider pigs to be animals under greater human control than proposed by McGovern for Sveigakot (2003, p. 57).

No uniform animal-place

Part of the aim of this chapter was to evaluate the animal-buildings at Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot in relation to the existing work on animal-buildings in Iceland, and the above analysis demonstrates that certain key features of medieval byres as identified by Berson (2002) cannot be universally applied in the Viking Age. While the animal-building at Sveigakot appears to conform formally to the byres surveyed in Berson's report, it shows no evidence of stalls, and is evidently a multi-functional building rather than a consistent animal-place. It seems not to have been constructed to facilitate the easy removal of manure and is situated much closer to the main buildings of the central farm complex.

The animal-buildings at Vatnsfjörður do not share this three-aisled construction. They are far shorter than those surveyed by Berson (see Figure 12), capable of holding a very limited number of animals, and square rather than oblong-shaped in their floor plans. The buildings at Vatnsfjörður, like Sveigakot, are not aligned to facilitate the clearing of

manure, rather showing evidence of a central drain having been cut through the side walls. The animal-buildings at Sveigakot and Vatnsfjörður contrast with Berson's suggestion that the central paving in the byres sloped downwards towards the entrance, and the structure was drained in this way (2002, p. 59), except perhaps S8 at Vatnsfjörður. This indicates that the buildings were not orientated to manage run-off through one of the doors, but rather that the placement of the thresholds had a purpose beyond drainage. Though the animal-buildings at these sites were constructed on slopes, this cannot be said to assist in the drainage of the building, and did not mean that the building necessarily overlooked the farm. S8 at Vatnsfjörður, while downslope from the central farm buildings, appears to have had a greater presence in the intervisual relationships of the site, having been placed between these buildings and the fjord, and in direct line of sight from the house.

While the byres surveyed by Berson are medieval, where they can be dated, and located in the south-west of Iceland (2002, p. 59), they provide important points of comparison for these earlier examples of animal-buildings at Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot. There was clearly no one way in which animal-buildings were constructed and placed at Icelandic farms in the Viking Age, and if consistency developed in the medieval period, as suggested by Berson, this might reflect a codification of the animal's place on the farm, and of distinct animal-human relations at these sites. However, the possibility cannot be excluded that variation in the construction of byres depended on regional and topographical conditions, and that the "medieval" form outlined by Berson might apply to byres at Viking Age sites in south-west Iceland.

Conclusions

As outlined in the Introduction to this chapter, the purpose of this part of my thesis was to survey the sites of Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot and analyse the spatial organisation at these sites, considering the relationships between potential animal-places, and human activity and dwelling areas. I have attempted to re-construct how humans organised their spaces in relation to their animals, and to use this reconstruction as a way of approaching past animal-human relations.

From the analyses conducted in this chapter, several conclusions may be drawn, and a number of further questions proposed. Firstly, it is clear that the structures within the central farm enclosures at Viking Age and medieval farms in Iceland were not consistently organised, with variations occurring depending on date, location, and focus of site. Secondly, by approaching these places in a way that considers the everyday practice that shaped and was shaped by these structures, the intensity and nature of animal-human interactions at these sites can be re-constructed. Thirdly, conducting spatial-functional analysis of the farm alongside considerations of wider regional links can alter interpretations of the economic and political status of sites. While spatial analysis cannot solely identify animal-places or the nature of animal-human interactions on these sites, it highlights the need for potential animal-places to be given closer attention in future excavations, alongside zooarchaeological analysis, to more fully understand the internal networks and past experiencing of a site.

I propose that such spatial-functional analyses might be applied to Icelandic farm-sites excavated in the future to add depth to interpretations and lessen anthropocentric bias in such studies. For example, the Viking Age and medieval farm at Höfðagerði would be suitable for such a study, once further excavations have taken place at the site and this data is published (Aldred, 2004). However, a number of issues arise from my method as it currently stands. For example, future development of the method, outside of this thesis, may include topographical information and details of the farm locale, as well as including the locations of middens and rubbish disposal areas on the site. This method could also be developed further by attempting to map the aural and/or olfactory signatures of various activities onto a spatial-functional diagram, although such a diagram could be speculative only, given (for instance) the many variations in weather conditions that would affect such experiences.

Taking a spatial approach to the past arrangement and use of buildings on Viking Age and medieval farmsteads in Iceland has three advantages when added to previous approaches. Firstly, this approach enables us to better understand the nature of, and restrictions on the various activities and movements that may have taken place in the home-place of the Viking Age farm. Secondly, by better understanding the nature and restrictions of these activities, we can provide more plausible explanations for the status

or position of a farm in wider social, political, or economic relationships. Thirdly, and most importantly for this thesis, we can make more informed suggestions about the interactions between humans and animals on these sites. By being able to make more plausible suggestions about the interactions between humans and domestic animals, this research allows us to read written texts from medieval Iceland in a manner potentially more informed by the everyday practice of animal-human relations on Icelandic farms. Humans and animals experience place and each other through sensory interaction, and the texts discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 4 (below) have likewise developed through engagement with this entangled world (Gibson, 1966; Hartman et al., 2017, p. 134; Walter, 1988, p. 134). They enshrine a cultural memory of the agro-pastoral past perceived by thirteenth-century Icelanders to have developed into their medieval present, and reflect an image of formative relationships between animal, human, and place considered useful or interesting by medieval Icelandic society (Hartman et al., 2017, p. 136). The final chapter of this thesis will therefore examine examples of animal-human interaction in literary homefields, informed by the spatial awareness of physical home-places demonstrated above.

4. Animal-human relations in the *Íslendingasögur*

Introduction

This chapter investigates the representation of animal-human relations in the *Íslendingasögur*, and the intersection of these relationships with the home. The preceding chapters have demonstrated that domestic animals were important figures in both the material and narrative settlement of Iceland, and in the way in which the Icelandic home-place physically and legally developed. This importance, as can be seen in the settlement narratives, is interwoven into the stories that Icelanders told about their past. This chapter examines these narratives of the re-constructed past in greater detail, with a focus on animal-human relationships with each other, and the home-place.

It should not be assumed that the functional importance of domestic animals in Iceland automatically set them up for inclusion in the stories the Icelanders told about themselves and their ancestors. For example, despite their proposed importance to early Icelandic society, pigs occur rarely in the *Íslendingasögur*, often represented only as humans in illusionary disguise (Brewington et al., 2015; McGovern, 2003).[17] This chapter

[17] These episodes in which humans turn, or are turned into pigs are found in *Harðar saga,* ch.26; *Gull-Þóris saga,* ch.10; and *Eyrbyggja saga,* ch.20. Elsewhere in the *Íslendingasögur*, pigs appear six times:

first outlines the previous research on domestic animals in the Icelandic sagas before splitting its analysis into three parts: conceptions of "home" in medieval Icelandic society, including an overview of the meanings of *heimr/heima* and associated verbal phrases; close-readings of the animal in the home-place and fictive kinship in the sagas; and an analysis of Grettir's relationships with animals in *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*.

Previous research

It has been argued that an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to fully understand medieval Icelandic texts (Meulengracht Sørensen, 1993; Mortensen, 2014), although the requirement for synthesis with the physical world of Iceland has not so often been recognised, and this interdisciplinarity has only recently been extended to include archaeology (Vidal, 2014, 2013). Reading animal-human relations in the sagas with a perspective enhanced by the spatial-functional analysis in the preceding chapter, enables deeper understandings of these narratives in relation to the material world in which they were produced.

Considerations of animal-human relations in Iceland are practically non-existent in literary studies, bar two publications. Teuscher (1990) provides a discussion of animals and men in the *Íslendingasögur,* but uses the sagas as evidence for society with little linguistic or literary analysis. In contrast, Rohrbach's comprehensive study, *Der tierische Blick: Mensch-Tier-Relationen in der Sagaliteratur* (2009), uses literary analysis to access a wide range of animal-human relations in Old Norse-Icelandic texts. However, although Rohrbach combines both archaeological and literary data, she primarily considers the uses of animals as narrative features of the sagas, rather than analysing the relationships represented between animals and humans in these texts. Archaeological sources are used to provide context for her discussion of medieval Icelandic animal husbandry, and evidence for specific animals in an Icelandic setting, but this information is taken no further, and there is little discussion of the animal-human interactions experienced within such "real-

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Harðar saga, ch.29; *Gull-Þóris saga,* ch.17; *Vatnsdœla saga,* ch.15; *Víga-Glúms saga,* ch.18; *Valla-Ljóts saga,* ch.1; and *Flóamanna saga,* ch.20.

world" contexts. For example, Rohrbach highlights the central position of domesticates, such as oxen, and their function of providing markers against which figures in the *Íslendingasögur* and *samtíðarsögur* can measure their personal identities (2009, p. 270), but does not consider them as representations of real animals.

While it can be argued that animal-human relations are used in these texts to provide a foil against which human masculine behaviour is demonstrated and reinforced, and through which obligations between men are illustrated (Rohrbach, 2009, pp. 291, 294), animal-human relations in these texts are not exclusively placed within an elite masculine sphere of meaning. There is not one way of depicting animal-human relations that is followed consistently between the sagas, nor even within the same saga, and although male animals appear to dominate the *Íslendingasögur*, with male homosocial relations featuring heavily in many of the animal-human relationships in these texts, non-warrior identities and female or non-masculine aspects of these relations should not be ignored. Female animals, for example Kengála and Grettir's ewe, Mókolla, and castrated animals, such as Inni-Krákr in *Fljótsdæla saga*, Fleygir in *Heiðarvíga saga,* and personalised or named oxen in *Brandkrossa þáttr, Harðar saga, Laxdœla saga* and *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls,* are all depicted as involved in animal-human relationships and play significant roles in their narratives (Jóhannesson, 1950c, pp. 237–238, 254; Jónsson, 1936, pp. 39–41, 199–200; Nordal and Jónsson, 1938a, p. 270; Sveinsson, 1934, p. 84; Vigfússon and Unger, 1860, p. 419; Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, 1991b, pp. 75–76). I believe greater attention should be paid to female and castrated animals in these representations, and that the interactions between domestic animals and humans depicted in the *Íslendingasögur* are not primarily used to reinforce masculine human behaviour in comparison to an inferior animal figure. These animals are not simply used to mirror the attributes or characteristics of their human partner, and though commonalities in these partnerships are evident (discussed further below), this thesis considers the animals and humans in these partnerships as placed on a more equal ontological footing than in the conclusions proposed by previous studies.

Íslendingasögur: ontological uncertainty and social redefinition

Rohrbach provides a cross-genre study of animals in Old Norse-Icelandic literature, incorporating the *Íslendingasögur*, *samtíðarsögur* and *Konungasögur,* and placing the

Íslendingasögur into a system with these other saga genres based on their use and representation of animal-human relations. Unlike the *Íslendingasögur*, the other saga genres do not depict animals exercising agency, nor do they show so many occasions of humans interacting with individual animals (Rohrbach, 2009, p. 292). A particular contrast can be drawn, Rohrbach argues, between the *Íslendingasögur* and *Sturlunga saga*, which, having been recorded in similar periods, have nonetheless dissimilar representations of animal-human relations (2009, p. 293). However, the *Íslendingasögur* are set in a mythologised Viking Age past, in contrast to the contemporary or near-contemporary setting of *Sturlunga saga*, and it may be that the projection of a Viking Age past enables relationships and interactions to be portrayed that would otherwise be unsuitable for depiction.

Rohrbach suggests that the prominence of domestic animals in the sagas is a reflection of the stratification of Icelandic society at their time of writing, in particular the emphasis on masculine behaviour for membership of the elite (2009, pp. 294–295). She suggests that this elite masculine code of behaviour rested partly on appropriate distance from animals, and that the *Íslendingasögur* show the development of this narrative of distance, while *Sturlunga saga* and some *Konungasögur* show the pinnacle of this elite masculine identity (Rohrbach, 2009, p. 295). In this way, the *Íslendingasögur* may be interpreted as a collective biography of sorts: a representation of Iceland and Icelandic society becoming civilised – constructing and reinforcing distance from animals – preceding the emergence of the elite class depicted in *Sturlunga saga*. Rohrbach's interpretation fits the animal-human relations depicted in the sagas into the conceptualisation of a collective "saga-world," espoused by both Clunies Ross and Tulinius (Clunies Ross, 1998; Rohrbach, 2009, p. 295; Tulinius, 2003).

In 1998, Clunies Ross suggested that the saga genres are each part of the same narrative and conceptual system, and Tulinius has proposed that this shared continuum of meaning fits within a literary system in which the different saga genres interact (Clunies Ross, 1998, pp. 100–102; Tulinius, 2003, p. 526). Like Rohrbach, Tulinius considers the *Íslendingasögur* as occupying a particularly significant place within this continuum, placing "ontological uncertainty" at the centre of the *Íslendingasögur* on the basis of religious, supernatural, and social activity in the texts, and in relation to the contemporary

events of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (2003, p. 527). Tulinius suggests that thirteenth-century social redefinition, in which elite figures attempted to redefine their origins in relation to heroic, legendary, or royal Norwegian ancestors, may have triggered the recording and compilation of the *Íslendingasögur* (2003, pp. 527, 536). Tulinius also proposes that social anxiety existed towards the ideological basis for this social redefinition (2003, p. 536). It can be argued that an appropriate outlet for such social anxiety or tension would be the stories closest to the place and identity of the saga compilers, writers, readers, or listeners (Tulinius, 2003, p. 537). Like the stories of settlement discussed in Chapter 1, the tales in the *Íslendingasögur* can be interpreted as narratives produced by a set of people making sense of their society and their world, and the ancestors who formed them. However, such ancestors, and their descendants, were people for whom animal-human interactions were a vital and daily occurrence (Hartman et al., 2017, p. 134), and I suggest we should not simply look for social redefinition in the production of these texts, but awareness of the importance of, and risks around close animal-human relationships, particularly in light of changing economic and environmental conditions (Evans, 2016; Ingimundarson, 1995, 1992).

My aim in this chapter is to build on Rohrbach's work, taking her monograph as a starting point for a refocussed analysis of the domestic animal-human interactions in the *Íslendingasögur*. I do not need to survey all animal-human interactions in the sagas, as these are outlined in Rohrbach's Appendix 5 (2009, pp. 316–327). Nor is a list of all terms for animals in these texts required; for this, see Rohrbach's Appendix 8 (2009, pp. 334–348). What is provided in this chapter is a deeper analysis of episodes in selected *Íslendingasögur*, focussed on demonstrating what an approach centred on place and animal behaviour brings to the study of animal-human relations in these texts. I will suggest that rather than simply foils for masculinity or indicators of human-human relations, certain animals are represented as active players in the networks of exchange, honour, and kinship in these texts; they echo human social organisation and are attributed human characteristics, while expressing "real-world" animal behaviour. Such representations of certain animals echo the ambiguities found in the *Grágás* laws discussed in Chapter 2, in which pigs, horses, and dogs seem to occupy a legal space that cannot be called "human," but not entirely "animal." The interactions and relationships depicted in

the saga narratives analysed in this chapter may demonstrate not the difference between animals and humans, as Rohrbach suggests, but commonalities between the two.

Conceptions of home in medieval Iceland

In discussing the household-farm in the *Íslendingasögur*, this chapter focusses on *heimr*/*heima* and *garðr*, as the terms most often used to indicate movement towards and containment within a "home-place," in contrast to terms such as *bú* or *bœr* that are used to refer to farms, farmhouses, and households in a descriptive sense. While the term *garðr* has often been discussed in relation to cosmological principles, medieval literature, and everyday practice (Arge, 2005; Battles, 2007; Dunhof, 2005; Hastrup, 1990, 1985; Jennbert, 2011; Lindow, 1997; Øye, 2005; Steinsland, 2005), inclusion of the term *heimr* in scholarly discourse has most often focussed on its presence in place-names across the North Atlantic (Brink, 1995; Jesch, 2015, pp. 43–44). However, *heimr*, *heim*, *heima* and related words are used extensively in the *Íslendingasögur* to indicate the household-farm and a place of dwelling, as well as those figures associated with such places ("ONP," n.d.). In some cases, the significance of these terms has been neglected in modern translations, considered perhaps as merely part of the background representation of the sagas. This chapter also includes *tún(garðr)* in its discussions of the home. While *heim* can be considered as a conceptual and physical entity, the *tún(garðr)* seems to have indicated the homefield, physical enclosure, and buildings within it, in which the *heim* would be situated (but by which the *heim* is not necessarily constrained). However, a clear link between the *heim* and the *tún* is indicated by terms such as *heimataða*, a compound of *heima*- and -*taða* (hay from the manured field, from the *tún*) as discussed below.

The noun *heimr* has a number of meanings in Old Norse, but all are linked to the concept of dwelling in a particular place (see Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, pp. 249–252; and "ONP," n.d.). There is often a close link between *heimr* and *garðr*, particularly in Snorri's *Edda* in which both *Miðgarðr*, and *Niflheimr* and *Álfheimr* are names for general regions (Faulkes, 1982, pp. 13, 9, 19). Both *Miðgarðr* and *heimr* are used in Old Norse to refer to the human world, and although *heimr* is common to all Germanic languages, its meaning of "world" or "earth" is limited to Old Norse (Sturtevant, 1916, p. 255). This section will discuss the multiple facets of the home in Old Norse-Icelandic society with

references to the meanings and compounds formed from the base *heim-*. The *tún* is discussed in relation to certain domestic animals and the importance of the *túngarðr* to the household as demonstrated in Chapter 2.

Verbal phrases: home and being

The noun *heimr*, and the adverbs *heim* and *heima* are used with verbs to indicate the act of doing something relating to the home. The phrase *eiga heima* (to have a home) indicates the dwelling of someone at a certain place, but also refers to living in this world as opposed to death. *Heimr* is used to shape the beginning and ending of life: *koma í heiminn* (to come into the home-world, to be born) and *fara af heiminum* (to go from the home-world, to die).[18] Home then, was a place in which one lived, and from which one departed upon death (or not; as shall be discussed below, the dead are presented as unwilling to leave their homes). The phrase *liggja milli heims ok heljar* (to lie between home and hel) is used to suggest a state of uncertain placement, in which a figure lies on the border between life and death. The link between death and departure from home is extended in the concept of outlawry, in which the command to leave home is equated with closeness to death, or at least the prospect of being killed with impunity at any time (Miller, 2004, p. 133).

Other heim-compounds

As well as its use in verbal phrases, *heim-* is often compounded with other nouns. Several of these relate to the domestic arrangements of the home and household. *Heimafólk*, *heimalið*, *heimasveit*, and *heimkynni*, are all terms used to indicate the household, although of these *heimkynni* is by far the most popular, with *heimasveit* and *heimalið* appearing only in *Sturlunga saga* (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, pp. 249–250; "ONP," n.d.). These terms refer specifically to the people of the household, with a sense of kindred and supporting allies beyond blood-ties; and as seen in Chapter 2, a male servant who was hired to assist in the household is referred to as a *heimamaðr* (home-man). Although the *heimamaðr* may have only gained access to a household in the last *fardagar* (moving days),

[18] This phrase is rare, but found across all genres of Old Icelandic literature including *Grettis saga* (ch.37; "ONP," n.d.).

they were immediately included into the concept of *heimr* through such a title, and their obligation to maintain the *túngarðr*. With the threat of poor seasons and famine hanging constantly over the medieval Icelanders, the integrity of the household and domestic economy was particularly important (Hansen, 2008a, p. 41); and an immediate sense of inclusion may have contributed to the security of the household-farm. As well as between the human members of a household and the concept of the home, there is a close link between home and the best hayfields. The term *heim*(*a)hagi* (home-pasture) can be linked to *tún* (homefield), (*tún*)*garðr* (homefield-wall), and *garðr* (enclosure around the farm), which are more often used in the *Íslendingasögur* (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, pp. 249–250). The *heimataða* (home-hay from the manured field, from the homefield) is a valued and protected entity in both laws and the sagas and, as shall be demonstrated below, is often the home-entity under attack from animals (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 249). It is evident that the space and boundary of the *tún(garðr)* was a legally and socially important aspect of the medieval Icelandic conceptualisation of the home-place, as was the hay produced and stacked within it.

However, the compound *heimaelskr* (home-loving) suggests too much *heimr* is a bad thing, as it is used to indicate a figure who is too afraid to leave home to go out into the world (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 249). This may suggest that a distinction should be made between *heimr* as an individual dwelling-place, and *heimr* as the world in general, as in this above definition, the world and the home seem set at odds. However, perhaps this term could be translated as "one who is fearful to depart the *heimr*," as meaning both the fireside and the world; that is, one who is unprepared to take the risks to their life that travelling or raiding might include. Indeed, such dangers are encapsulated in the term used for encountering one's death while abroad: *missa heimkvámu* (to miss home-coming) and suggests that in *heimaelskr* we can see the combination of home and world meanings (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 250).[19] Although *heimaelskr* is a rare term in the *Íslendingasögur*, only appearing once in *Vatnsdœla saga*, its derivative

[19] *Heimkvámu* or *heimkváma* is more common in genres of Old Norse-Icelandic literature other than the *Íslendingasögur* ("ONP," n.d.).

heimskr, is a common adjective in the *Íslendingasögur*, meaning foolish or "homish" (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 251; "ONP," n.d.).

Earlier studies clearly demarcated between different meanings of *heimr* and its compounds. For example, Albert Sturtevant in the early twentieth century discusses the compound verb *heimsøkja* (to seek again, to return), as used in the *Eddas*, asserting that with regards to inanimate objects, the concept of *heim-* as home cannot apply (Sturtevant, 1916, p. 258). Although it is not within the remit of this chapter to discuss such compounds at length, I would suggest that this verb incorporates a sense of belonging to a certain place that can be linked to the home-concept discussed in this chapter. In *heim(r)* and its adverbial use as *heim(a)*, I believe we can perceive the binding together of place and being: a sense of a lifeworld in which human and animal figures experience their living in relation to each other and the physical places of their environment (Ingold, 2011, pp. 69–70, 2000).

Legal home

Heimili (domicile), originally a compound of *heima* and *óðal* (ancestral land) is the term primarily used for home in *Grágás* and *Jónsbók*, and roots this concept of home in inheritance and ancestral property (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 250). The association of the legal home with memory of, and attachment to place has social implications, and *óheimilt* (un-homed, without domicile) is a term for an *útilegumaðr* (outlying-man) that is, an outlaw (Halldórsson, 1959a, p. 123). Such terms reinforce the association of the home, place, and social and physical boundaries.

The home was legally important in medieval Iceland, and the laws reflect a necessary fixation with the productivity of the household economy and the need for each member of the community to be socially and economically useful in a harsh environment (Miller, 2004, pp. 125–126). Legally, the household was the place in which you belonged; and even if you were abroad, you counted as belonging to that Icelandic household in which you were last a resident (Hansen, 2008a, p. 42). Nonetheless, household membership was not automatic, but depended on the work and resources available (Hansen, 2008a, p. 42). Like animals slaughtered in the autumn to ensure there was enough hay for over the winter, *heimamenn* (home-men, hired workers) could be rejected

from the household on the *fardagar* to conserve the efficiency of the household and the continued prosperity of the home (Hansen, 2008a, p. 43). The medieval Icelandic household, then, would have been a unit of fluid structure depending on the time of year, and the productivity of the seasons. The re-placement of children seems to have been encouraged (this system of fosterage is discussed further below) and therefore Icelandic society would have been one in which people might be born, grow up, and work in multiple places throughout their lives. Attachment to home would have necessarily been different from our conceptions of the home, perhaps requiring more flexible understandings of such a place, and this must be borne in mind when assessing narratives involving *heimr* in these sagas.

What made a home?

While it may have been difficult to maintain a constant, holistic attachment to a home-place, the legal and social requirement to attach oneself to a household would have resulted in close ties to the idea of the home-farm, regardless of the fluid changing nature of the household (Hansen, 2008a, p. 41). The long Icelandic winters, in which households would have become more isolated as travel became difficult, would also have fostered intensity of feeling. For half the year, the home would have been a place in which the household spent a large amount of time indoors, or within the farm boundary, in close proximity to certain people, structures, and animals (Hansen, 2008a, p. 41). However, while the winter would have drawn the concept of home tightly around the homefield, in the summer this household, and perhaps then the concept of home, may have been split between the main farm and shielings (Hansen, 2008a, p. 42; Miller, 1988, p. 322). However, in the sagas we rarely find movement towards shielings expressed with *heima*.[20]

Many sagas reflect a strong sense of loyalty within the social unit of the home, and a figure is often identified by the farmstead which he or she owned, or on which they worked (Milek et al., 2014, p. 143; Sigurðsson, 2008, pp. 238, 239). As a place in the

[20] *Laxdœla saga* (ch.35) shows Auðr returning *heim* after her ride to injure her ex-husband, although while she explicitly sets out from the shieling, the text isn't clear as to whether she returns to the shieling or the main farm.

Íslendingasögur, the *heimr* can be defined primarily as the homefield and enclosed area of buildings, including the dwellings, haystacks, and certain animal-buildings. However, previous discussions of home in the sagas have disagreed on the role of the buildings of the farm. Miller sees turf buildings, which would have required frequent maintenance or rebuilding, as unable to foster attachment in the same way that a certain view or object might have done (Miller, 2004, p. 127). In contrast, Hansen suggests farm buildings could be considered as agents of connectedness, which would draw figures together and trigger interactions between humans; and I would suggest, between humans and animals (Hansen, 2008a, p. 41; Miller, 2004, p. 127). In addition, the repetitive nature of the care and attention required to maintain turf buildings would have created a bond between the builders and the structures. Like the care of animals and land, the structures on the farm required careful attention on a day by day or season by season basis. Routines and rituals of daily life bind together the concept of home (Pallasmaa, 1995, p. 133), and we see this in the representation of home in the *Íslendingasögur*.

Along with turf buildings and hay, the presence of domestic animals is another thing every farm would have had in common, and therefore it may not be surprising if animals appear to be encapsulated in the presentation of the home in the *Íslendingasögur*. The use of animals to conceptualise boundaries is indicated in an episode from *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, in which the hearing of a dog is given as the limit of the home-place.[21] In *Njáls saga* also, the howl of Sámr indicates to Gunnarr that the border of the home has been breached (Sveinsson, 1954, pp. 185–186). However, despite the association of dogs with the home and yard, *heim-* is never compounded with words for dog. In contrast, several other animal words are joined with *heim(a).* In this category we find *heimadýr* (home-animal, domestic animal); *heimagriðungr* (home-bull) found twice in *Þorsteins saga hvíta*; *heimanaut* (home-cattle) found in *Sturlunga saga,* and *heim*(*a*)*gás* (home-goose), found in *Kormaks saga*, *Grettis saga*, and *Sturlunga saga* (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, pp. 249–250; "ONP," n.d.). These terms may suggest that certain animals were more likely to

[21] In *Gísla saga* (ch.3) a group of men escape from a burning hall, and their moment of safety is described as *ok kómusk svá brott ór hunda hljóðum* (Þórólfsson and Jónsson, 1943a, p. 13; and so they came away out of the hearing of dogs).

become associated with, or incorporated into the concept of home than others: for example, no word for home-sheep is recorded, though a couple of sagas do provide descriptions of rams overly attached to the home-area (*Heiðarvíga saga*, ch.7 and *Grettis saga*, ch.74). Furthermore, pigs are associated with the *tún* (homefield) and *taða* (homefield hay) through *tǫðugǫltr* (homefield-hay-boar, *Flóamanna saga*, ch.20), *túngǫltr* (homefield-boar, *Víga-Glúms saga*, ch.18) and *túnsvín* in *Grágás* (Finsen, 1852a, p. 121; homefield-pig), although nowhere is a **heimasvín* recorded (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, pp. 621, 645). As mentioned in the preceding chapter, interpretations of pigs in Iceland have often focussed on their ability to self-forage and their preference for roaming, and yet these terms seem to suggest a closer relationship between pigs and humans than previously considered, particularly focussed around the central home-place of the *tún*.

Heimta: home, animals, and usefulness

The most important event in the Icelandic calendar was the *heimtur í haust* (claims in autumn, home-bringing in autumn): the annual round-up and bringing home of the sheep from the highlands at the end of summer (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 251). The opposite of *heimt* (homed, brought in) was *óheimt* (un-homed, un-brought in), and such stray animals are depicted in many of the sagas as one of the main causes of conflict between men (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 252).[22] However, this collecting of sheep from the highlands has a secondary association, as *heimta* can also mean to claim a debt or payment, and the noun *heimta* means both a claim or payment due, as well as the bringing home of the sheep (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, pp. 251, 252). This double meaning of *heimta,* as recovering the sheep and being paid, may suggest that the return of the sheep to the home after a summer away was conceived as a recovery of the farmers' dues from the wilder land beyond the farm-centre: a return of these animals from *óheimt* to *heimt* status. Although there may never have been a word for a **heimasauðr*, home was an important place for sheep to be in the winter.

[22] For some examples, see *Havarðar saga Ísfirðings* (sheep), *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch.18, horses), and *Bandamanna saga* (ch.5, sheep).

The language of reclamation from nature is perhaps indicated also in the phrase used to describe the milking of cattle in Old Icelandic law texts ("ONP," n.d.). *Heimta nyt af fé* (to bring home/draw milk from cattle) utilises the same verb as the bringing home of the sheep from the mountain pastures we find in the *Íslendingasögur*, and can perhaps be linked with the same domesticating sense of bringing reward from the natural world by bringing an animal or animal product from the un-home into the home (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 251). It may be notable that some of the *heim*-compounds discussed in this chapter can be related to use and usefulness. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the terms for milk and milking are related to terms for benefit, and so the phrase *heimta nyt af fé* could have a sense of bringing a useful product to the home. Likewise, the term *heimahestr*, often assumed to indicate a prized stallion, may have been the animal most valued for his potential to produce the best offspring, and *heimamaðr* was one of the terms used to refer to the worker(s) who gathered hay and maintained the *túngarðr* (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 249). However, there is a relative lack of *heim*-animals in the sagas, suggesting that the home in the *Íslendingasögur* is not presented primarily as a unit of usefulness or production, but rather that when these terms were deployed by saga authors, they were used to indicate a specific relationship.

Exclusion from the saga home

The conceptualisation of home involves exclusion as much as inclusion, and it is important to note the structures, animals, or figures that may have been excluded from the home (Miller, 2004, p. 129). In the *Íslendingasögur*, a marked effort appears to be made to exclude the dead, and a link may be made between the complex relationship between the living and the dead with their homes, and the relation of animals to the home (Miller, 2004, p. 130). The restless dead seem determined to return to the house and disrupt the workings of the farm (Byock, 1982, pp. 133–134; Kanerva, 2014, p. 220, 2013, p. 205; Martin, 2005, pp. 75–81; Miller, 2004, p. 128; Ólason, 2003, pp. 164–165), and in their quest to deny the living enjoyment of the home, the dead are represented as killing animals, or possessing them to damage hay, humans, and other animals, reinforcing the integral link between home and animals in these sagas. The haunting of Glámr in *Grettis saga* appears to be a particularly anti-animal campaign (see *Grettis saga,* ch.33 especially), but

the most explicit linking of the dead, animals, and the destruction of the farm is found in the haunting of Þórólfr *bægifótr* (lame-foot) in *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch.63), the latter part of which is discussed in detail below.

Medieval Icelanders expressly did not want the dead knowing the way home, for fear of this disruption; and like the dead, the movement of animals in the sagas, particularly their knowledge of the home-place, is ambivalently depicted (Miller, 2004, p. 130). In some cases, as demonstrated below, it was useful and indeed advantageous for animals to know the way home, and such knowledge could be a feature of a close animal-human relationship. In other cases, however, animal awareness of *heimr* triggers feuds between men, and results in the damage and destruction of the homefield, particularly walls and haystacks, which are formative structures of the home in these texts. By destroying hay, animals unmake the home-place of which they are a vital component.

Animals at home in the *Íslendingasögur*

As the opening of this chapter has demonstrated, *heimr* in Old Norse is a term in which living and place are entwined. The proceeding sections will attempt to deepen our understanding of this concept, and re-construct characteristics of the relationships between animals, humans, and the home as presented in the *Íslendingasögur*, through analysis of various animal-human interactions involving the home-place. This home-place is signified by the adverb *heima*, and the nouns *heim(r), garðr, tún,* and *túngarðr*; and this chapter analyses animal-human episodes that involve movement towards or within these places.

Coming home

In *Droplaugarsona saga* (ch.3) a winter journey is taken between farms in a sled drawn by a team of oxen. This is rare, as most journeys in the *Íslendingasögur* are made on horseback and rarely described. At first, the movement in this passage seems to be directed by two human figures, but at a certain point in the journey they allow the oxen to take control:

> Ok er þau kómu út um Hallormsstaði, þá fóru þrælarnir í sleðann, því at uxarnir kunnu þá heim. (Jóhannesson, 1950d, p. 144)
>
> And when they came out around Hallormstaðr then the thralls went in the sled because the oxen then knew home.

The verb used here, *kunna,* means to know, understand, to know by memory, or to recognise (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 358). Accordingly, this passage is translated as the oxen knowing the way home (McTurk, 1997, p. 358). However, these oxen are also required to know that their human passengers wish to return to this place. While animals, primarily oxen, cattle and horses, implicitly know the way home in many sagas, they are usually travelling alone, and as far as I am aware, the phrase *kunna heim* is used nowhere else for this movement, nor is it associated with animals in any other context. The use of *kunna,* with its further connotations of knowledge and understanding, seems to imply that these oxen not only know the way home, but understand that their human passengers wish to return there.[23]

In contrast, another example of animals returning home can be found in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings* (ch.14) in which *heim* is used to refer to the sheep-house, rather than the human homefield. In this episode two brothers anxiously venture out after a night of bad weather to find out whether their animals had "come home" in the storm:

> Þat var einn dag á ǫndverðum vetri, er þeir brœðr gengu til fjárhúsa; hafði veðr komit mikit, ok ætluðu at vita, hvárt heim væri kominn allr fénaðrinn (Þórólfsson and Jónsson, 1943b, pp. 337–338).
>
> That was one day in the beginning of winter, when they, the brothers, went to the sheep-house; the weather had turned very bad, and they intended to know whether all the sheep had come home.

[23] An episode in *Finnboga saga* (ch.24) in which men are collecting hay from the heath, may also depict animals knowing the way home, and knowing that home is the place where the hay is stored: *Síðan fara þeir heimleiðis, ok ganga fyrir eykirnir, svá hverr sem búinn var. [...] Síðan Hrafn var búinn, lét hann ganga eptir fǫrunautum* (Halldórsson, 1959b, p. 293; Then they go homewards, and walk in front of the carts, as each was ready [...] Then when Hrafn was ready, he let [them] go after [their] companions). However, while this episode has been translated with animals being the "they" in these passages, the text does not specify who these figures are; the text only mentions Finnbogi, his father, Hrafn, and *mart manna* (many men) who are attending the haying.

The situation depicted here is one in which grazing sheep were expected to seek shelter from bad weather by themselves, and no mention of a shepherd is made. However, here it is the animal-place that is referred to as *heim*, rather than the farm buildings, and it is implied that this sheep-house is at a distance from the human home. While *fé* and *fénaðr* can mean both sheep and cattle, in the context of this saga it is most likely to mean sheep; and the context of the passage also suggests sheep are more likely to be the animals depicted, as sheep are most likely to be roaming without supervision and sheltering in a place at a distance from the homefield. In contrast, cattle required closer care and attention (McGovern, 2003). The separation then between human and sheep-places in this passage may emphasise the semi-independent nature of sheep in medieval Icelandic farming, as for half the year certain sheep had their own home in the mountains, distinctly outside of the human home-place in comparison to other animals. Clearly the concept of home was different when applied to different domestic animals. As seen in Chapters 2 and 3, "domestic animal" is not a homogenous category, and different animals interact with place and humans in various distinctive ways.

A third occurrence of an animal returning home is the most elaborated. In *Fljótsdæla saga* (ch.13), the horse Inni-Krákr returns home after having been used to pull a sled:

> Nǫkkuru fyrri kom Inni-Krákr. En í þessu kom griðkona ór fjósi ok sagði Gró, at Inni-Krákr var kominn heim með undarligan búning. Gróa gengr út ok húskarlar með henni ok taka Inni-Krák ok beita frá sleðanum, brynna ok gefur honum. Síðan leysir hann ór sleðanum rekendina (Jóhannesson, 1950c, p. 254).
>
> A while before Inni-Krákr had come. And at this moment a household-woman came out of the cow-house and said to Gróa that Inni-Krákr had come home with extraordinary attire. Gróa goes out and house-servants with her, and they take Inni-Krákr and unharness him from the sled, water, and feed him. Then he loosens the chains from the sled.

In this episode, Inni-Krákr not only knows the way home, but apparently waits in the *garðr* to be noticed by a servant, and is announced to the lady of the house in the same way that a human visitor would have been. He is welcomed, released from his outdoor attire (the sled harness) and provided with a meal; although notably the line *leysir hann ór sleðanum rekendina* does not specify who is releasing the chains from the sled, and it may be suggested that Inni-Krákr himself is assisting with the household work.

Inni-Krákr occupies an odd place in the home: his name (Inside-crow) suggests that he should be associated with the inside of the farm, but he is no prize stallion. Instead, gelded horses have calmer natures than stallions, and Inni-Krákr's castration would have made him a desirable workhorse, associated with the outside world rather than the home (Kilcoyne, 2013, p. 476; Shoemaker et al., 2004).[24] It should be considered then that this may be a parody of the prized stallion motif found in many of the sagas (Evans, 2013), replacing the man and stallion with a woman and her gelding. However, this is one of multiple episodes in which Inni-Krákr appears in the saga, and he will therefore be discussed in greater detail in a separate section below.

The saga extracts presented here, show that certain animals in the *Íslendingasögur* were depicted as understanding "home" as a desirable place of shelter, security, food, and companionship, but that specific animals were also excluded from the human home, depicted as having their own place at a distance from the homefield. It can be suggested that the more significant the representation of the animal-human relationship in the saga, the more elaborate the depiction of the homecoming of the animal, and the closer the relationship between the animal and the household. These suggestions will be developed further in the proceeding sections on the closest animal-human relations depicted in the sagas.

Fóstri minn: animals and the family

In the previous section, it was demonstrated that home in the *Íslendingasögur* is a place in which humans or animals, or both, are perceived as dwelling, formed around the main buildings of the farm and the surrounding enclosure and homefield, and conceived of as a place of productivity, security, and belonging. This section analyses several relationships that are distinguished from other animal-human interactions in the sagas, both by the length of their narrative episodes and the specific language used, in relation to the structures of the home-place. This discussion focusses particularly on the location of the action(s), and the detailed physical descriptions of the animals involved. Sensory

[24] See *úti gangshestr* (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 249; outgoing-horse, work-horse).

experience, as expressed through the vocalisation and tactile descriptions of the animals, seems to be an important component of the representation of these animal-human relationships. I also consider the terms used to describe these animals, including *fóstri*, *gripr* (valuable thing), and *garprinn* (the bold one), and trace these relationships through their wider context, both within the individual text, and the *Íslendingasögur* more widely. It is important to recognise that these animal-human relationships do not exist in isolation from these contexts.

Two sagas contain an episode in which an animal is referred to as a *fóstri* (foster-kin): *Njáls saga* and *Hrafnkels saga*. In both these sagas, an animal (Sámr the dog in *Njáls saga*, and Freyfaxi the horse in *Hrafnkels saga*) are referred to by this term indicative of fictive kinship networks, and while *fóstri* in these cases is normally translated into English using the term "fosterling," in Old West Norse the connotation of this masculine noun could be either foster-father, foster-brother, or foster-son. The term "fosterling," implying as it does the sense of foster-son, is the wrong term to use for these episodes, as it may simplify or misrepresent the meanings of the passages.

A common formula appears to be used in both *Njáls saga* and *Hrafnkels saga*, with the term *fóstri* in these cases being combined with a comment on the treatment or handling of the animal, and a remark on the consequences of the event. An episode following a similar narrative structure can be identified in *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* in which a group of oxen resist captivity by Hǫrðr and his men, and instead return to their home. While the term *fóstri* is not used in the *Harðar saga* episode, a part of the formula is utilised, and the same level of close relationship is hinted at: although in this instance the behaviour of the oxen is ascribed to the magical ability of their owner. The gelded horse, Inni-Krákr, introduced above, also shows similarities to many of the tropes used in these more explicit episodes; and the interactions or events in these extracts are entwined with the home-place. In addition, communication between animals and humans appears to be a key part of these episodes. Both Sámr and Freyfaxi communicate their distress or warnings to their human foster-kin through vocalisation (crying out and neighing), and both Freyfaxi and Inni-Krákr appear to understand human speech. This section will first consider the possible connotations of referring to an animal as a *fóstri*, before discussing each episode in turn.

Fosterage and bonding in medieval Iceland

The system of fosterage in medieval Iceland was an important feature of the social fabric of the family. This family unit, or extended household, was instrumental in providing defence of the farm, the fulfilment of legal cases, and the economic success of the household (Christiansen, 2002, p. 39). However, the kin-group, both fictive and blood-related was not an automatic bond of affiliation, and scholars have suggested that such alliances had to be contrived and worked at in order to reap benefits from such arrangements (Christiansen, 2002, pp. 47–48).

In *Grágás*, legal rights of vengeance are equivalent for blood and foster-kin (Dennis et al., 1980, p. 154f; Parkes, 2004, p. 603), indicating that people may have not only thought it appropriate to avenge their foster-kin, but actively sought to do so. As shall be discussed in further detail below, such an attitude and apparent legal obligation towards one's *fóstri* (plural *fóstrar*) must be borne in mind when reading Hrafnkell's response to Freyfaxi's mistreatment. However, the relationship between foster-relations was not always perceived as a positive one. Icelandic sagas often depict the interweaving of natal and foster kinship and the problems this may cause to society (Parkes, 2004, p. 604). The practice of allegiance fosterage, that is, families fostering their social superiors to cement loyalties, may have been viewed with particular ambivalence as an artificial way of bonding different social classes (Bremmer, 1976; Parkes, 2004, p. 607). It is perhaps notable that close bonds between humans and animals are likewise often viewed ambivalently in the *Íslendingasögur*, as is discussed further below.

When discussing the term *fóstri* in the context of these animal-episodes, it is important to consider the use of this term elsewhere in the sagas. The *Íslendingasögur* present a range of parenting models that appear to be placed consistently under the label of *fóstri*, with the emphasis on figures who care for children not biologically related to them (Hansen, 2008b, pp. 73, 76). While this is not consistent with the specific legal definitions of fosterage in the Old Icelandic laws, the wide use of this term in the sagas, referring to parenting care not involving the biological parents of a figure, may be suitable to refer to an animal, particularly to a close relationship with an animal that requires careful attention or is especially valued (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 46). The suggested attention to

bonds of protection and obligation required for the maintenance of blood and foster alliances, whether between social equals, superiors, or inferiors, is not far from the care required in raising animals, and goes beyond the interpretation of this word as simply a term of endearment for a pet, a meaning that is listed in Cleasby and Vigfússon apparently based solely on these two episodes from the *Íslendingasögur,* and one mention in *Sturlunga saga* (1874, p. 168).

In a marked contrast to impressions of surviving Old Icelandic laws, Old Swedish laws refer to *fostre* (*fostra,* f.) as *hemma (född och) upp-fostrad träl* (a home-born and brought-up thrall), that is, a slave that has been born and raised in the home, presumably with the family (Foote and Wilson, 1970, p. 75; "Fornsvensk Lexikalisk Databas," n.d.). However, while such a definition could conceivably have a conceptual overlap with the raising of working animals, likewise the Old Icelandic meanings of foster-father, -son, or -brother, as highlighted above, are tied very much into conceptualisations of the socially-useful kin-group, though a fictive kinship bond may have involved more sentimental attachment than to a slave. Neither of the *fóstri* episodes involves animals which have been explicitly raised or brought up by their human partner, unlike animals such as Inni-Krákr or Brandkrossi, who are not referred to as *fóstri,* but who have been explicitly raised by their human figures (discussed below).

Ties between foster-relations could be as strong as blood kinship, as depicted in historiographical and literary accounts (Foote and Wilson, 1970, p. 116). Hákon, the son of Harald *hárfagri* is often referred to as Hákon *Aðalsteinsfóstri* and the *Íslendingasögur* contain episodes in which foster-kin are avenged, or blood-kin are defied in preference of foster-bonds; though the latter is mostly depicted as a result of "blood-brother" bonds formed through homosocial friendships later in life rather than foster-kin relations from childhood (for example: Jónsson, 1936, pp. 14, 85). While *fóstri* is not the term most often used for this foster- or self-claimed blood-brother, the death and mistreatment of Sámr and Freyfaxi evoke the same strong attachment as that expressed by sworn-brothers in the sagas. Instances of fictive brotherhood are sometimes accompanied, or represented by the phrase *eitt skal yfir oss ganga* (Jónsson, 1936, pp. 14, 85; one [fate] shall go over us), and this shall be discussed further below in relation to the deaths of Sámr and Gunnarr. The

use of the term *fóstri* in these episodes invokes connotations of dependence, attachment, and alliance.

Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða

The most elaborate of the *fóstri* episodes follows the unauthorised riding of Freyfaxi, which results in the killing of Einarr, the case against Hrafnkell that leads to the confiscation of his property, and the killing of Freyfaxi. As shown in the opening to this thesis, the relationship between Freyfaxi and Hrafnkell has often been interpreted in the context of religious conflict, with the figure of Freyfaxi as a beloved substitute for Freyr.

Like many horses or oxen in the sagas, Freyfaxi's significant value to Hrafnkell is emphasised from his first mention in the saga: [25]

> Hrafnkell átti þann grip í eigu sinni, er honum þótti betri en annarr. Þat var hestr brúnmóálóttr at lit, er hann kallaði Freyfaxa sinn. Hann gaf Frey, vin sínum, þann hest hálfan. Á þessum hesti hafði hann svá mikla elsku, at hann strengði þess heit, at hann skyldi þeim manni at bana verða, sem honum riði án hans vilja (Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 100).
>
> Hrafnkell had that treasure in his possession, which seemed better to him than others. It was a horse, mouse-grey in colour, with a black stripe down the back, that he called his Freyfaxi. He gave Freyr, his friend, half of this horse. He had such great love for this horse, that he made this vow, that he should (would be obliged to) kill that man, who rode him without his willingness.

This description sets Freyfaxi alongside "treasured" animals such as Inni-Krákr, Hvítingr, and Brandkrossi (Nordal and Jónsson, 1938b, p. 136; Inni-Krákr and Brandkrossi are discussed further below). As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, the pledging of an animal to a pre-Christian deity is also referenced in *Flóamanna saga* (ch.21), in which calves are given to Þórr (Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, 1991c, p. 281), but the vow made by Hrafnkell, and the *mikla elsku* (great love) explicitly expressed by him for this horse is unparalleled. Hrafnkell calls Freyfaxi *Freyfaxa sinn*, emphasising the belonging of the

[25] Several animals in the *Íslendingasögur* are described as *gripr*, although they are only briefly mentioned in these narratives: an ox in *Svarfdœla saga* (ch.17), the horse Svartfaxi in *Harðar saga* (ch.3), a stallion in *Gull-Þóris saga* (ch.9) – explicitly a Gotlandic horse fed on grain all year – and a lost horse in *Heiðarviga saga* (ch.15). Bjǫrn's three valuable animals in *Bjarnar saga*, including the stallion Hvítingr, are discussed at length by Rohrbach, and are not discussed in this chapter (Rohrbach, 2009, pp. 63–79).

named horse to the man; yet while this can be interpreted as a sign of extreme affection (Miller, 2017, p. 48), it may also be interpreted as emphasising ownership, or a recognition of the responsibility Hrafnkell has towards Freyfaxi, in the same way a figure would have responsibility for *son sinn* (his son) or other members of his household.

This episode has most often been translated and read in a way that emphasises the love between Hrafnkell and Freyr (Miller, 2017; Pálsson, 1971), and the phrase *án hans vilja* is most often translated as "without his permission," suggesting that Freyfaxi's sacred nature makes him a forbidden animal not to be ridden without Hrafnkell's consent (Pálsson, 1971, p. 38). However, the noun *vili* has a secondary meaning of "disposition" or "mind" that may suggest that Hrafnkell forbids anyone to ride Freyfaxi without the disposition Hrafnkell would take to the task. While this may be taken as a contrived interpretation of the phrase when clearly the sense "permission," "good-will," or "willingness" works within the immediate context of the vow, I believe this secondary meaning fits well with the later events of the saga. Hrafnkell does not tell his shepherd not to ride Freyfaxi without asking for permission, but rather tells him: *ek vil, at þú komir aldri á bak honum* (I want, that you never come onto his back; Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 102). For Hrafnkell, Einarr is not of the right disposition to ride this horse. As if proving Hrafnkell's judgement correct, when Einarr choses to ride Freyfaxi, he does so in an emphatically excessive way: he *reið Freyfaxa alt frá eldingu ok til miðs aptans. Hestrinn bar hann skjótt yfir ok víða, því at hestrinn var góðr af sér* (rode Freyfaxi all through daybreak and until the middle of the evening. The horse carried him quickly far and wide, because the horse was excellent; Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 103). While Freyfaxi is the only horse that does not run from Einarr, seemingly provoking Einarr to take advantage of his availability, it can be suggested that Einarr's decision to ride Freyfaxi in this specific manner was his downfall. Alternatively, the line: *hann skyldi þeim manni at bana verða, sem honum riði án hans vilja* (he should kill that man, who rode him without his willingness) is grammatically ambiguous, and it may indicate that Freyfaxi's consent must be given before the riding may take place. In this case, Freyfaxi may appear to give consent, by allowing Einarr to approach him, but Einarr's subsequent treatment of him violates that contract, and causes Freyfaxi to report the behaviour to Hrafnkell.

The manner in which riding was conducted was important in medieval Icelandic society, and in particular the way you rode another man's horse was subject to legal action if undertaken incorrectly (Finsen, 1879, p. 247; see also Chapter 2). Einarr reduces Freyfaxi to a state in which he *var vátr allr af sveita, svá at draup ór hverju hári hans, var mjǫk leirstokkinn ok móðr mjǫk ákafliga* (was wet all over with sweat, so that it dripped from each of his hairs, was very splashed with mud and exceedingly exhausted; Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 103), and this is an inappropriate way to treat another man's horse. This description emphasises the excessive nature of Einarr's use of Freyfaxi and the physical implications of the mistreatment. It is a description that is aware of the sensory experience of encountering an overworked horse, and many of the episodes discussed in this chapter include descriptions that emphasise the sounds and appearance of animals. The most sensory descriptions of animals are found in the episodes that arguably depict the most intense animal-human relationships.

Once Einarr dismounts, Freyfaxi reacts to his poor treatment in an emphatic manner:

> Hann veltisk nǫkkurum tólf sinnum, ok eptir þat setr hann upp hnegg mikit. Síðan tekr hann á mikilli rás ofan eptir gǫtunum. Einarr snýr eptir honum ok vill komask fyrir hestinn ok vildi hǫndla hann ok fœra hann aptr til hrossa, en hann var svá styggr, at Einarr komsk hvergi í nándir honum (Jóhannesson, 1950a, pp. 103–104).
>
> The horse turned himself some twelve times, and after that he rises up neighing greatly. Then he takes off running down the path. Einarr turns after him and wants to reach the horse and wanted to capture him so he could bring him back to the stud-horses, but he was so angry, that Einarr reached near him not at all.

Freyfaxi's response to Einarr's treatment is to be *styggr,* and while Cleasby and Vigfússon suggest this adjective means "shy" when referring to animals and "angry" when used about men (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 601; "ONP," n.d.), it is appropriate to describe Freyfaxi as expressing anger and indignation at his treatment at Einarr's hands; and this is the same descriptor used of the runaway pigs in *Vatnsdœla saga* (ch.15) who refuse to return to human control. This anger might be expressed also in Freyfaxi's loud neighing, and his agitated behaviour in turning around and around. Alternatively, it has been suggested that *veltisk nǫkkurum tólf sinnum* refers to rolling around on the ground, showing Freyfaxi making sure that dust and dirt sticks

to his sweat and that his disgruntled appearance will be fully visible to Hrafnkell (Miller, 2017, p. 68). Such action may demonstrate that the communication of the horse relies upon both vocalisation and appearance, and both are noted by Hrafnkell when Freyfaxi runs to the farm:

> Hestrinn hleypr ofan eptir dalnum ok nemr eigi stað, fyrri en hann kemr á Aðalból. Þá sat Hrafnkell yfir borðum. Ok er hestrinn kemr fyrir dyrr, hneggjaði hann þá hátt. Hrafnkell mælti við eina konu, þá sem þjónaði fyrir borðinu, at hon skyldi fara til duranna, því at hross hneggjaði, – „ok þótti mér líkt vera gnegg Freyfaxa." Hon gengr fram í dyrrnar ok sér Freyfaxa mjǫk ókræsiligan. Hon sagði Hrafnkeli, at Freyfaxi var fyrir durum úti, mjǫk óþokkuligr. „Hvat mun garprinn vilja, er hann er heim kominn?" segir Hrafnkell. „Eigi mun þat góðu gegna." Síðan gekk hann út ok sér Freyfaxa ok mælti við hann: „Illa þykki mér, at þú ert þann veg til gǫrr, fóstri minn, en heima hafðir þú vit þitt, er þú sagðir mér til, ok skal þessa hefnt verða. Far þú til liðs þíns." En hann gekk þegar upp eptir dalnum til stóðs sins (Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 104).
>
> The horse runs down into the valley and stops at no place, before he comes to Aðalból. Then Hrafnkell sat at a table. And when the horse comes in front of the door, then he neighed loudly. Hrafnkell said to a woman, who served him at the table, that she should go to the door, because a horse neighed, - "and it seemed to me likely to be the neighing of Freyfaxi." She goes to the door and sees Freyfaxi in a very poor state. She said to Hrafnkell, that Freyfaxi was outside the door, greatly ill-favoured (dirty). "What will the bold one want, that he is come home?" says Hrafnkell. "It will signify nothing good." Then he went outside and sees Freyfaxi and said to him: "Bad it seems to me, that you have been treated in this way, my foster-kin; but you have your reason at home, when you told this to me, and this shall be avenged. Go you to your followers." And he went from there up into the valley to his stud-mares.

Freyfaxi comes right up to the door of Hrafnkell's house, and while he cannot knock, he neighs loudly to attract the attention of those within. Even though Hrafnkell appears to recognise Freyfaxi's voice, the horse is treated like a human visitor to the dwelling, as Hrafnkell sends a servant to investigate the noise. Only when the woman returns, does Hrafnkell go out to the doorway and speak to Freyfaxi himself. This is reminiscent of visitation scenes in which a man comes to the house while the householder is eating, such as *Bjarnar saga* (ch.27).

Hrafnkell's response to the woman's remarks are notable for three reasons: first, he refers to Freyfaxi as *garprinn* (the bold one); second, he reinforces the impression that Freyfaxi has *heim kominn* (like Inni-Krákr discussed above), and third it suggests that Freyfaxi's actions and appearance are to be taken as a bad omen: *eigi mun þat góðu gegn*

(it will signify nothing good). The presumption of bad omens from the presence or appearance of animals is also found in *Króka-Refs saga* (ch.3), in which Þorgerðr believes the presence of cattle damaging her homefield: *illu mundi gegna* (Halldórsson, 1959a, p. 123; may signify something bad). The motif of animals providing knowledge or signals of bad events may be linked to prophetic abilities ascribed to certain animals, for example the horse, Kengála, in *Grettis saga*, and the ox, Spámann, in *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls.* While these examples will be discussed in greater detail below in the section on *Grettis saga*, what is clear from these saga episodes is either that animals being out of place was viewed with anxiety, as indicating social or environmental upheaval, or that animals were credited with the ability to communicate negative events to specific human figures.

The communication between Hrafnkell and Freyfaxi is brief, and it is Freyfaxi's appearance and behaviour that enables Hrafnkell to discern what has happened. This interaction should not be dismissed as a wholly implausible event, as it has been suggested that familiarity with an animal enables the handler to recognise behaviours indicating distress (Wemelsfelder, 2001, p. 15). However, in addition to somehow communicating events to Hrafnkell, Freyfaxi is depicted as understanding Hrafnkell's command to *far þú til liðs þíns* (go you to your followers), which is echoed in *Fljótsdœla saga* when Inni-Krákr obeys an order to return to the farm (discussed below). The noun used in this Freyfaxi episode, *lið,* is often translated as "herd" in this specific instance (Pálsson, 1971, p. 42). However, *lið* is a very common noun indicating belonging or leadership, which can be translated as people, troops or followers, or family or household, and is only used twice in an animal context outside of *Hrafnkels saga*, to indicate the followers of boars (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 387; "ONP," n.d.). Its use here is a clear indication that Freyfaxi, although close to Hrafnkell, is not resident in the same place, and belongs to his own household – a household that is conceptualised in human terms. The term *heim* however, is used twice in this quotation. Hrafnkell's comment that Freyfaxi *er heim kominn* (is come home) may suggest that while Freyfaxi lives outdoors with his own household, he knows the location of Hrafnkell's *heimr* and understands he will find Hrafnkell there. The second use of *heim* in this passage can be translated idiomatically, as: *en heima hafðir þú vit þitt* (and you had your reason at home). This line suggests that Freyfaxi had his reason

where it belonged, with him, when he thought to come to Hrafnkell; and the use of *vit* may imply a human-level of intelligence such as that ascribed to the dog Sámr (see below).

Finally, as mentioned above, Hrafnkell uses two or three notable terms to refer to Freyfaxi. With regards to *fóstri*, it can be suggested that by perceiving this animal as close-kin rather than simply an animal or possession of Freyr, Hrafnkell justifies his future actions in the saga. I would suggest that this is the impression given by Hrafnkell's reaction to Einarr's activities. While Hrafnkell's oath to kill any who ride Freyfaxi can be attributed to the perceived insult to Freyr, Hrafnkell's reaction to the unauthorised riding is not described in terms of sacrilegious activity. It may instead be perceived as a reaction to a legal transgression: both an excessive and disrespectful horse-riding, and an insult against a close relation. If Hrafnkell considers his horse as a *fóstri*, this provides legitimisation, in his eyes, for the punishment of Einarr; and the future actions of the saga can be seen in these terms, rather than simply an act of devotion to a pre-Christian deity.

In addition, the redaction of the text included in AM 158 fol and AM 443 4to presents Freyfaxi as possessing warrior characteristics, similar to the presentation of Sámr in *Njáls saga*.[26] Hrafnkell refers to Freyfaxi as a *garpr* (bold/warlike one), which is normally used in the *Íslendingasögur* to refer to great men, and is listed in *Skáldskaparmál* as a positive *heiti* for man (Faulkes, 1998, p. 106; "ONP," n.d.). It has been suggested that *garpr* is an affectionate term for a strong, but rash and wilful figure (Eddison, 1930, p. 258). In particular, Eddison suggests the term may indicate a "homely" hero-figure, and likens the term to *skǫrungr*, meaning prominent man or woman (Eddison, 1930, p. 258). Both *garpr* and *skǫrungr* are used often in the *Íslendingasögur* in introducing human characters ("ONP," n.d.). Here then, Hrafnkell's use of the term to refer to Freyfaxi may indicate an affectionate admiration towards the stallion, or express a mild exasperation at an interruption that occurs often. Such exasperation may link into the idea of Freyfaxi as a repeated caller to Hrafnkell's farmhouse, as proposed in the Introduction to this thesis.

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[26] *Garprinn* (the bold man, warlike one; Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1957, p. 192), while used in AM. 158 fol and AM. 443 4to is replaced with *griprinn* (the valued one, treasure) in AM. 156 fol. or *grepprinn* (the poet, strange creature, monster; Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1957, p. 214) in AM. 551 c 4to (Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 104f). The editor of the ÍF edition includes *garpr* (Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 104).

While home for Freyfaxi is his herd, he clearly knows the way to the farmhouse at Aðalból, and it is not implausible that readers or listeners of the saga would understand this knowledge as evidence for a route repeatedly taken. The use of *garprinn* offers a bold contrast to the two redactions of *Hrafnkels saga* in which *gripr* is used. This latter term portrays the relationship as more grounded in economic and social worth than affection. The term *gripr*, used for animals such as Hvítingr in *Bjarnar saga*, and in the opening chapters of *Hrafnkels saga* to refer to Freyfaxi, has a primary meaning of "possession" and "something of value" (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 215).[27]

However, if Freyfaxi is an objectively valuable animal, then his killing is incongruous:

> Þjóstarssynir létu senda eptir Freyfaxa ok liði hans ok kváðusk vilja sjá gripi þessa, er svá gengu miklar sǫgur af. Þá váru hrossin heim leidd. Þeir brœðr líta á hrossin. Þorgeirr mælti: „Þessi hross lítask mér þǫrf búinu. Er þat mitt ráð, at þau vinni slíkt, er þau megu, til gagnsmuna, þangat til er þau megu eigi betri en aðrir hestar, heldr því verri, at margt illt hefir af honum hlotizk. Vil ek eigi, at fleiri víg hljótisk af honum en áðr hafa af honum orðit. Mun þat nú makligt, at sá taki við honum, er hann á." Þeir leiða nú hestinn ofan eptir vellinum. Einn hamarr stendr niðr við ána, en fyrir framan hylr djúpr. Þar leiða þeir nú hestinn fram á hamarinn. Þjóstarssynir drógu fat eitt á hǫfuð hestinum, taka síðan hávar stengr ok hrinda hestinum af fram, binda stein við hálsinn ok týndu honum svá (Jóhannesson, 1950a, pp. 123–124).
>
> The Þjóstarssons sent for Freyfaxi and his followers and said amongst themselves they wanted to see this treasure, about whom were told such great stories. Then were the horses led home. They, the brothers, look at the horses. Þorgeirr said: "These horses look to me necessary at the farmstead. It is my advice, that they work such that they are able, as useful things, until they are not able to be better than other horses; in comparison that other is worse, and much ill has fallen from him. I do not wish, that more killings should result from him as they have done. It will now be proper, that the one who owns him [i.e. Freyr] should take him." They now lead the horse down out of the field. A certain cliff stands down by the river, and in front of it is a deep pool. They now lead the horse there forwards to the cliff. The Þjóstarssons pull a piece of clothing over the head of the horse, and then take long poles and push the horse forwards from them, bind a stone against his neck, and he loses his life in this way.

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[27] *Gripr* also comes to be used in a manner like *fé*, having meanings of livestock or thing (*gangandi gripir*), and cattle or horse (*stórgripr*; Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 215).

This episode clearly demonstrates that Freyfaxi is considered antagonistic to the home that does not include Hrafnkell.[28] After Hrafnkell has been exiled, his enemies take over his property, including his horses; but in an assessment of the utility of the animals, Freyfaxi is rejected. If such an assessment were based on the objective usefulness of the horses it may be assumed that Freyfaxi would have been kept, as earlier in the saga it is suggested that Freyfaxi would have been the most useful horse on the farm. When Einarr is looking for a horse to ride to collect the sheep, the text says:

> Ok er hann kom til hrossanna, þá elti hann þau, ok váru þau nú skjǫrr, er aldri váru vǫn at ganga undan manni, nema Freyfaxi einn. Hann var svá kyrr sem hann væri grafinn niðr (Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 103).
>
> And when he came to the horses, then he pursued them; and they were now shy, those which were not accustomed to walking under a man, except Freyfaxi alone. He was so quiet as if he were rooted in the ground.

This passage has been interpreted as showing Freyfaxi's provocation of Einarr, and is an important turning point in Einarr's decision to ride Freyfaxi (Miller, 2017). It has never been considered in discussions of Freyfaxi's death. Yet, this seems to show that Freyfaxi is the only horse among the group who is accustomed to humans, and therefore the most useful. The timid and untrained nature of the stud-mares would make them liabilities as working animals on the farm, and reinforces the non-practical enmity the Þjóstarssons have towards Freyfaxi, implicated as he is in the killing of Einarr. His rejection from the home-place is explicitly emphasised, as he is led out of the field and taken to a place of execution on a boundary between earth and water, and perhaps between one set of lands and another.

In *Eyrbyggja saga*, persons accused of magical practices are killed with their heads covered, and in *Gautreks saga* figures jump off cliffs either when old and no longer useful to society, or after extraordinary events; but neither of these examples provide direct intertextual comparisons to the circumstances of Freyfaxi's execution (Milroy, 1966, p. 211; Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, ch.20). It may be that Freyfaxi's killing is designed to

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[28] It is known that close relationships between horses and their owners can lead to behavioural issues upon separation, which may provide an additional reason for Freyfaxi's rejection from the farm (Argent, 2016).

bestow the most humiliation and dishonour upon Hrafnkell, or that the act should be read as the destruction of the pagan elements in the narrative. However, this event may be read as a responsive movement in a feud, and as the Þjóstarssons taking action against Freyfaxi in revenge for the killing of Einarr. Freyfaxi's execution is the punishment of a criminal, and, as mentioned above, the covering of Freyfaxi's head can link him to persons such as Katla in *Eyrbyggja saga*, who exercise agency in unusual ways (in Katla's case: sorcery). It may be suggested that Freyfaxi's actions in provoking Einarr and then communicating the unauthorised ride to Hrafnkell, provide an example of a horse acting outside of its supposed sphere of action, which must be punished in a way that restricts agency by the reduction of the senses prior to death. In relation to this reading of Freyfaxi's death as an outlaw killing, it should be noted that Freyfaxi's actions after Einarr's dismounting are the correct procedure following the receipt of an injury and the pursuit of a legal case (Keith Ruiter, 2017, pers. comm.). Like a responsible member of society, Freyfaxi returns to his householder and attempts to gather support for his cause. It is Hrafnkell, who, in line with his overbearing nature, takes the law into his own hands, as he had vowed to do, and as he emphatically has done for previous wrongdoings.[29] This escalates the feud, and leads to the killing of Freyfaxi in place of his troublesome *fóstri*, Hrafnkell.

The relationship between humans and horses in Iceland, as discussed briefly in Chapter 1, can be seen reflected in pre-Christian graves (Eldjárn and Friðriksson, 2000; Pétursdóttir, 2009, 2007; Vésteinsson, 2000b; Yeomans, 2009; Zugaiar, 2012). More than 320 pre-Christian graves have been reported in Iceland, and of these, 115 involve the interment of horses. Often, these animal remains are listed as "grave goods," and analysed as objects of economic or symbolic value to the deceased and the grieving community (Vésteinsson, 2000b, p. 170). However, we do not only find horses included in human burials, but also in individual graves with grave goods of their own, such as buckles, nails, and bridle-bits (Pétursdóttir, 2009, p. 28, 2007, pp. 56–57, 75; Zugaiar, 2012, pp. 84, 94, 97). The burial of horses may also include canine remains (Zugaiar, 2012), and in one

[29] For example, *Hrafnkels saga* (ch.2) suggests Hrafnkell always dealt unfairly with men outside of his district, and in chapter 7, Hrafnkell himself emphasises his habit of never paying compensation for killings.

example a horse burial was situated within an oblong of stones (Pétursdóttir, 2007, p. 75). It appears as though there were two different kinds of horse graves in Viking Age Iceland: the first in which a human would be entangled with an equine body; and a second in which the horse is buried without a human companion.

Research into the pre-Christian period in Scandinavia, suggests that boundaries between humans and animals were considered more fluid and ambiguous in the pre-Christian period (Armstrong Oma, 2016a, p. 180; Hedeager, 2011, 2004, p. 234, Jennbert, 2011, 2002, p. 118), and that horses were particularly viewed as creatures between human and animal states (Einarsdóttir, 2013; Jennbert, 2011; Leifsson, 2012; Loumand, 2006; Pétursdóttir, 2007, p. 73; Sundkvist, 2004). Conceptualisation of the horse as an animal between the human and the animal may be seen in the representation of figures such as Freyfaxi, in which the animal intersects with, responds to, and is effective on human social practice. Icelandic horse graves suggest that certain horses should not simply be considered as grave goods in human burials, but rather as persons in their own right, deserving, or considered suitable for burial within the same social practices in which human persons are buried and remembered (Pétursdóttir, 2007, p. 74).[30] In thinking of horses involved in the same social sphere as humans, we see analogies with Freyfaxi's participation in legal processes and his outlaw-like banishment from the social world.

Brennu-Njáls saga

The dog Sámr is perhaps the most famous animal in saga literature. Given to Gunnarr as a gift of friendship from Óláfr *pái* (peacock), Sámr is presented as the perfect companion, possessing remarkable characteristics for a dog.

Óláfr says to Gunnarr:

> „Ek vil gefa þér þrjá gripi: gullhring ok skikkju, er átt hefir Myrkjartan Írakonungr, ok hund, er mér var gefinn á Írlandi; hann er mikill ok eigi verri til fylgðar en rǫskr maðr. Þat fylgir ok, at hann hefir manns vit; hann mun ok geyja

[30] Argent has emphasised the shared characteristics between humans and horses in her work on the prehistoric Pazyryk culture, and interprets the burial of horses in this region in the context of horse-human inter-sociality (Argent, 2016, p. 23).

> at hverjum manni, þeim er hann veit, at óvinr þinn er, en aldri at vinum þínum; sér hann ok á hverjum manni, hvárt honum er til þín vel eða illa; hann mun ok lífit á leggja at vera þér trúr. Þessi hundr heitir Sámr." Síðan mælti hann við hundinn: „Nú skaltú Gunnari fylgja ok vera honum slíkr sem þú mátt." Hundrinn gekk þegar at Gunnari ok lagðisk niðr fyrir fœtr honum (Sveinsson, 1954, p. 173).

> I will give to you three treasures: a gold ring and a cloak, which has been owned by Myrkjartan king of Ireland, and a dog, which was given to me in Ireland; he is great and not worse as a follower than a brave man. It follows also, that he has a man's knowledge; he will also bark at each man, whom he knows is not your friend, but never at your friends; he sees also in each man, whether by him is wished to you well or ill; he will also lay down his life in order to be true to you. This dog is called Sámr. Afterwards he said to the dog: "Now you must accompany Gunnarr and be to him such as you are able." The dog goes at once to Gunnarr and lay himself down at his feet.

In this passage, we see Sámr explicitly marked out as a brave warrior-like companion, just as good as a man, and as having a *manns vit*, that is the intelligence or reason of a human. This term, *manns vit* or *mannsvit*, for which the ONP lists only four entries, can be compared with *mannvit*, which is used in Eddic poetry as "understanding" or "wisdom," particularly as expressed by men ("ONP," n.d.; see for example *Hávamál* st. 6, 10, 11, 79 and *Hamðismál*, st. 27). In addition, Sámr understands Óláfr's order that he is now to follow or accompany Gunnarr, and act in accordance with all the special abilities outlined in the previous lines. Óláfr also says Sámr will sacrifice himself for his companion, perhaps adhering to a human code of honour. Sámr's self-sacrificing nature seems to go beyond that of a normal guard-dog, and his ability to know the meaning of loyalty is emphasised. Rather than explicitly defending his human partner, Sámr will be *trúr* (true, faithful) to Gunnarr, setting him alongside the horse, Kengála, and in contrast to the bull, Glæsir (both discussed below).

Unsurprisingly, given these characteristics, Sámr is perceived as a dangerous impediment to the success of the men who wish to attack and kill Gunnarr:

> Mǫrðr segir, at þeir mundu eigi koma á óvart Gunnari, nema þeir tœki bónda þar á næsta bœ, er Þorkell hét, ok léti hann fara nauðgan með sér at taka hundinn Sám ok fœri hann einn heim á bœinn. (Sveinsson, 1954, p. 185)

> Mǫrðr says, that they would not be able to come to Gunnarr without him knowing it, unless they were to take the farmer there at the next farm, who was called Þorkell, and let him go under compulsion with them to take the dog Sámr and he would go alone homewards onto the farm.

Given Sámr's ability to judge the friendship or enmity meant towards Gunnarr on viewing a man, the attackers know that they will need a neighbouring farmer to approach the dog, as a friendly and familiar figure. In addition, Gunnarr's enemies know that Sámr will be watching over the home-place, and must therefore be lured away to allow them to proceed with their attack:

> Traðir váru fyrir ofan garðinn at Hlíðarenda, ok námu þeir þar staðar með flokkinn. Þorkell bóndi gekk heim, ok lá rakkinn á húsum uppi, ok teygir hann hundinn braut með sér í geilar nǫkkurar. Í því sér hundrinn, at þar eru menn fyrir, ok hleypr á hann Þorkel upp ok grípr í nárann; Ǫnundr ór Trǫllaskógi hjó með ǫxi í hǫfuð hundinum, svá at allt kom í heilann; hundrinn kvað við hátt, svá at þat þótti með ódœmum, ok féll hann dauðr niðr (Sveinsson, 1954, pp. 185–186).
>
> There were animal-pens at the top of the enclosure at Hlíðarendi, and they, with the band of men, stopped there at that place. Farmer Þorkell goes towards the home, and the dog lay up on the house, and he enticed the dog away with him into a certain lane. In that moment, the dog sees that there are men in front of him, and he leaps up on Þorkell and catches hold of his groin. Ǫnundr from Trǫllaskógr struck with his axe into the head of the dog, so that the blade went into the brain; the dog cried out loudly, so that it seemed to them unprecedented, and he fell down dead.

In order to be ambushed, Sámr must be drawn away from the home, towards the animal-pens where the rest of the men have stopped. The term *traðir,* translated here as "animal-pens" can alternatively refer to "trodden paths;" however, the translation of "animal pens" suggests that the human enemies must lure Sámr into this animal-place and kill him there, before they may proceed with their attack on Gunnarr's dwelling. Sámr's position on the roof of the house depicts him as an integral part of Gunnarr's home-place, and by luring him away, the attackers not only dispatch a fearsome enemy, but also begin to deconstruct Gunnarr's home – a deconstruction that is continued when they roll the roof from the house later in their attack (ch.77). Notably, Sámr is unleashed in this episode. As seen in Chapter 2, dogs in *Grágás* are considered without legal protection unless they are correctly leashed, and it may be suggested that the partnership between Gunnarr and Sámr is emphasised here: as an outlaw and an unleashed dog respectively, neither figure has legal immunity.

When Sámr is killed, he *kvað við hátt* (cried out loudly). While there are verbs in Old Norse for different animal sounds, Sámr *kvað við* (cried out), which is the remarkable and distinctive communication used also by the bull-calf in *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch.63), as

discussed below, and which is otherwise used for human speech. Like Freyfaxi's neighing, Sámr's howl as he dies provokes a reaction from the human figure within the house:

> Gunnarr vaknaði í skálanum ok mælti: „Sárt ertú leikinn Sámr fóstri, ok búð svá sé til ætlat, at skammt skyli okkar í meðal" (Sveinsson, 1954, p. 186).
>
> Gunnarr woke in the hall and said: "Painfully are you played with Sámr foster-kin, and it may be intended (to come to pass) that a short time should be between us-two.

Once again, the mistreatment of the animal is referenced, and a close relationship triggered by the term *fóstri*. However, Gunnarr's second statement, while echoing the sense of an ill omen found in multiple animal-human interaction episodes discussed in this chapter, also hints at a different side to the relationship. Unlike Hrafnkell, Gunnarr does not vow to perform the vengeance due to mistreated foster-kin, but instead alludes to the short time that he sees will lapse between Sámr's death and his own; and this comment may be linked to the *fóstri* allusion. As discussed above, sworn-brothers in the sagas are two figures who, out of great friendship or in response to a particular event, claim themselves to be bound together; and the emphasis often rests on sharing the same fate: *eitt skal yfir oss ganga* (one [fate] shall go over us; Jónsson, 1936, pp. 85, 14). When Gunnar says: *skammt skyli okkar í meðal* (a short time should be between us-two), it can be suggested that he is expressing a similar attachment, reinforced by his claim of Sámr as foster-kin. Gunnarr's comment may refer to the sense of obligation between himself and Sámr to share the same fate as is the duty of sworn-brothers.

However, while the Freyfaxi and Sámr episodes can be singled out, it is also evident from the other animal-human interactions discussed in this chapter that the various motifs and language used to represent the relationships between Gunnarr and Sámr, and Hrafnkell and Freyfaxi are present in many other episodes as well. Sámr and Freyfaxi may be the only animals explicitly labelled *fóstri* in the sagas, but there are other animals presented as enjoying close and communicative relationships with humans. For example, the episodes involving the horse, Inni-Krákr, the ox, Brandkrossi, and the bull, Glæsir, also show animal-human interactions within apparently close and enduring attachments.

Fljótsdœla saga

In chapter 10 of *Fljótsdœla saga*, a horse called Inni-Krákr is introduced:

> Hun hafði eigi lengi búit, áðr hun ól þann grip með fé sínu, er henni þótti betri en ǫnnur eiga sín jafnmikil. Þat var hestr, er hun kallaði Inni-Krák, því at hann var inni hvern vetr. Hann var svartr at lit. Lét hun hann gelda snemma (Jóhannesson, 1950c, pp. 237–238).
>
> She [Gróa] had not been farming for a long time, before she brought up that treasure within her livestock, which seemed to her better than others they had equally good. It was a horse, which she called Inni-Krákr, because he was inside each winter. He was black in colour. She had him gelded early.

Like Freyfaxi, Inni-Krákr is a *gripr* (treasure) and like Brandkrossi (discussed below) he is *ól* (raised) by a human figure. The name Inni-Krákr is explained by his being kept inside all winter, although it is not specified whereabouts Inni-Krákr is considered to have dwelt. The *fjós* (contracted form of *fé-hús*, cow-house) is the only identified building near the farmhouse at Eyvindarár (mentioned in the episode discussed above), and as *fé* is rarely, if ever used to refer to horses, it can be assumed that this *fjós* is not Inni-Krákr's dwelling-place, and that Inni-Krákr instead shares a place within the human dwelling. The final part of Inni-Krákr's name *krákr,* meaning crow or raven, is found in the sagas used as an epithet for men, such as Þorleifr *krákr* in *Njáls saga*, and the full name of animals, for example a black horse in *Ála saga flekks* (Faulkes, 1998, p. 91; "ONP," n.d.). Like all the individual animals named in the sagas, Inni-Krákr seems better than any other animal, but this praise is often phrased in a way that emphasises the subjective value of the animals. While these animals seem best to their owners, the sagas do not state that they are objectively better than others, and close relationships between specific humans and animals seems to have been ambiguously perceived, as is discussed further in relation to *Brandkrossa þáttr* and *Eyrbyggja saga*.

Inni-Krákr is used in multiple episodes of *Fljótsdœla saga* as a riding horse or to pull a sled. This is unusual in the sagas. No other *gripr* is used for riding or work without incurring the wrath of the owner, except in one episode in which Bjǫrn's farmhand rides Hvítingr in *Bjarnar saga* to get home in a storm. However, as mentioned above, Inni-Krákr's gelded nature makes him suitable for such activities. In *Fljótsdœla saga* (ch.12),

Inni-Krákr is used for riding and carries two men (Jóhannesson, 1950c, p. 247), and then in chapter 13 he is harnessed to a sled that Helgi takes to visit a woman:

> Þá er þeir bræðr hǫfðu tvær nætr heima verit, þá tekr Helgi Inni-Krák ok beitti fyrir sleða. Hann lætr koma húð í sleðann ok kvaddi Grím til ferðar með sér, snúa síðan ofan á ís. Þeir fara út eptir ísinum, allt fyrir Skeggjastaði, snúa til bæjar, láta þar hestinn úti í túni ok kasta heyi fyrir. Þeir bræðr ganga inn í stofu (Jóhannesson, 1950c, p. 249).
>
> Then when they, the brothers, had been two nights at home, then Helgi takes Inni-Krákr and harnessed him in front of a sled. He puts a cow hide into the sled and summoned Grímr to journey with him, they then went over the ice. They go out over the ice, all the way to Skeggjastaðr, go to the farm, and there let the horse out into the homefield and throw hay in front of him. They, the brothers, go into the living room.

Helgi takes Inni-Krákr without requesting any permission from Gróa, which should be an offence; in addition, the horse is harnessed in front of the sled like a usual beast of burden. However, Helgi appears to treat the horse well enough at this point, as when they reach their destination the horse is released from the sled into the *tún*, and provided with hay, although without the permission of the householder, emphasising Helgi's disregard for the property of others. However, it is made explicit that Inni-Krákr remains outside in the snow while Helgi and Grímr are welcomed into the *stofa*. The horse is not permitted to rest inside, as he would have done at home, and there is a clear distinction made between the horse outside in the wintery homefield, and the two men entering the living room of the house.

When the two men leave Skeggjastaðr, they do so with Helgi sitting in the sled, and Grímr riding Inni-Krákr. They are chased by Helga's other suitor, Bersi, and to disguise their escape, Helgi sets up Inni-Krákr in some bizarre attire:

> Fyrir nesit vóru allt vakar. Þar brynndi hirðir nautum sínum. Ok er þeir bræðr kómu at vǫkinni, þá segir Helgi, at þeir mundi brynna hesti sínum, því at honum var heitt. Þá var mjǫk hálfrǫkkvit. Þeir gjöra svó. Þá mælti Helgi, at þeir munu hlaupa upp í skóginn. Þeir bregða knífum sínum ok kvista viðinn. Helgi bendi ok gjórir sýlt í neðan. Þá bindr Helgi á bak hestinum fram við silann ok niðr undir kvið. Hríslu bindr hann í tagl ok leggr upp tauma ok mælti, at hann skuli fara ofan til Eyvindarár. Hríslunni hrǫkkvir um kríka hestinum, ok hleypr hann því harðara ofan eptir ísunum. Þeir bræðr hlaupa upp í skóginn (Jóhannesson, 1950b, p. 252).
>
> In front of the headland were everywhere holes in the ice. A herd of cattle watered themselves there. And when they, the brothers, came to the hole in the ice, then

> Helgi said, that they should water their horse, because he was hot. Then the night was fast approaching. They do so. Then Helgi said, that they must run up into the wood. They draw their knives and cut the tree. Helgi bundled the sticks and makes a split in the lower end of the bundle. Then Helgi ties the bundle of sticks onto the strap of the harness so that they hang down under the belly (of Inni-Krákr). He binds the twigs into the tail and he lets go of the reins and said, that he (Inni-Krákr) should go over to Eyvindarár. The twigs lash around the groin of the horse, and he ran hard then over the ice. They, the brothers, ran up into the wood.

Once again, Helgi appears to treat the horse tolerably well, for although Inni-Krákr is sweating, Helgi insists on them stopping to water him. However, once Inni-Krákr has drunk from the hole in the ice, Helgi ties branches to the horse so that the bundle of sticks hangs down through Inni-Krákr's legs. It is assumed that such an arrangement was designed to make Inni-Krákr run fast without the encouragement of a human driver. This would suggest perhaps that Inni-Krákr requires a human figure to direct his movement, except that Helgi tells Inni-Krákr to go to Eyvindarár, and he does so: clearly the horse is expected to know where his home is, and how to get there.

The detailed and physical description of Helgi's actions emphasise the physical condition of the horse, and while the rubbing of the twigs against Inni-Krákr's groin may be a method of spurring the horse onwards at speed, such treatment may be considered as mistreatment. It is in such attire that Inni-Krákr returns home to Eyvindarár in the episode from chapter 13 first discussed above:

> Nǫkkuru fyrri kom Inni-Krákr. En í þessu kom griðkona ór fjósi ok sagði Gró, at Inni-Krákr var kominn heim með undarligan búning. Gróa gengr út ok húskarlar með henni ok taka Inni-Krák ok beita frá sleðanum, brynna ok gefur honum. Síðan leysir hann ór sleðanum rekendina. (Jóhannesson, 1950c, p. 254).
>
> A while before Inni-Krákr had come. And at this moment a household-woman came out of the cow-house and said to Gróa that Inni-Krákr had come home with extraordinary attire. Gróa goes out and house-servants with her, and they take Inni-Krákr and unharness him from the sled, water and feed him. Then he loosens the chains from the sled.

As highlighted above, Inni-Krákr knows the way home. He is welcomed, released from his outdoor attire (the sled harness and the twigs tied into his tail) and provided with a meal. Such a scene of hospitality involving an animal is unique in the sagas, and nowhere else are we provided with a description of the care of a horse and the affirmation of their place in the home. While Freyfaxi is also described as a *gripr*, he is not absorbed into the

home in the same way as Inni-Krákr, and Freyfaxi is explicitly sent back to his own household after he has visited Hrafnkell (Jóhannesson, 1950a, p. 104). As it is winter at this point in *Fljótsdœla saga*, Inni-Krákr explicitly resides inside with these human figures, arguably as the most prominent male in Gróa's household.

In some ways, this episode can be linked particularly with the depiction of Freyfaxi in *Hrafnkels saga*, as well as the relationship between Þorgríma and her oxen in *Harðar saga* (discussed below). Like Freyfaxi, Inni-Krákr comes into the home-place of his own accord and with an unusual appearance. However, unlike Freyfaxi, Inni-Krákr does not announce his own presence, and is depicted as a quiet gelding as opposed to Freyfaxi's indignation. Nowhere else is such a gentle animal depicted as a *gripr* in an animal-human relationship. As mentioned above, it may be suggested that this is an inversion of the prized stallion motif found in many of the sagas, replacing the man and stallion with a woman and her gelding. Gróa does not react in an extreme way to the appearance of Inni-Krákr, but rather appears to accept the (mis)treatment of her animal and welcome him home. This can be compared to Þorgríma's reaction in *Harðar saga*, who, when her castrated animal(s) have been mistreated, does not vow revenge for it. In this way, Gróa and Þorgríma seem to provide more muted versions of the male animal-human relationships presented in the sagas.

Animal-human relationships

Such episodes as these demonstrate that the sagas can depict close, enduring, and communicative relationships between animals and humans. However, while the textual representations of such relationships share many similar features across sagas, they do not wholly follow a uniform pattern. Moreover, the use of *fóstri*, carrying connotations of fictive kinship, does not necessarily indicate the closest animal-human relationships depicted in the sagas. However, all of these relationships are consistently linked to the home-place, and in some cases the absorption of animals into the dwelling itself. The exception to this is Freyfaxi, who has his own household of mares, and his own dwelling-place; however, Freyfaxi is not only aware of the location of Hrafnkell's home, but also the protocols of visiting a farm. Like Sámr, he may be presented as exhibiting human-like intelligence in understanding his place within his human's household.

As mentioned above, these animal-human relationships may be based on a system of value that is specific to the human figure involved. While both Hrafnkell and Gróa value their horses, an indication is given in their respective sagas that such a valuation is not universally accepted. Inni-Krákr is not treated in a markedly special way by Helgi, and Freyfaxi is killed by Hrafnkell's enemies. In contrast, the dog Sámr seems to be universally admired. However, the depiction of Sámr appears to be unique in the sagas, and individual attachment to an animal is often presented as an ambivalent characteristic of a person. In *Brandkrossa þáttr*, an ox-human relationship is depicted that shares many features with the episodes discussed above; however, Grímr's attachment to his ox is proven to have been misplaced, as Brandkrossi wrecks the homefield, destroys haystacks, and deserts the farm. The next part of this chapter will examine the expression of animal-human relationships in these narratives when the animals involved revolt against the home.

Animals out of place

This section examines the antagonistic movement of animals to and from the home-place. It begins by analysing three episodes in which groups of cattle are presented as attacking the homefield, before taking this forward into discussion of the destruction of the homefield as depicted in the narratives of two individual animals: the ox, Brandkrossi, in *Brandkrossa þáttr* and the bull, Glæsir, in *Eyrbyggja saga*. In addition to the motif of the animal-destroyer of the homefield discussed immediately below, this section will suggest that the relationships depicted between Brandkrossi and Grímr, and Glæsir and Þóroddr can be read as a mix of naturalistic description, supernatural elements, and animal-human relationship motifs discussed in the preceding section.[31]

In *Víga-Glúms saga* (ch.7) the *nautafjöldi* (herd of cattle) of another farmer comes into Glúmr's homefield:

[31] The term *naturalistic*, or the phrase *naturalistic behaviour* is used in this chapter to specify those animal behaviours described in these texts that may have been perceived by medieval Icelanders as behaviours exhibited by animals in the world outside of the text.

> Einn morgin vakti Ástríðr Glúm ok sagði, at nautafjöldi Sigmundar var kominn í tún ok vildi brjóta andvirki: [... Grímr] barði þau mjök þar til er þau koma í tún Þorkels ok Sigmundar; lætr þau þar spilla, sem þau vildu. Þorkell gætti heima andvirkis um morgna, en Sigmundr fylgdi húskörlum (Turville-Petre, 1960, p. 13).

> One morning Ástriðr woke Glúmr and said that Sigmundr's herd of cattle had come into the homefield and wanted to destroy haystacks [... Grímr] beat them very much there until they come into the homefield of Þorkell and Sigmundr; he lets them destroy there, as they wanted. Þorkell guarded the haystacks of home that morning, and Sigmundr accompanied the house-servants.

In this passage, the cattle are perceived as a threat. They are agents of destruction with the desire to spoil the haystacks, and Glúmr's response is to violently eject the animals from his homefield. Such a violent reaction is appropriate to an attack, but distinctly not the behaviour expected towards stray cattle, which should rather have been returned carefully to their owner's farm (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 83–84, 169–171; see Chapter 2). In the exchange that follows the above passage, Þorkell compares Glúmr's violent conduct against the cattle with his famous exploits abroad, highlighting the honourable nature of overseas adventures, and the dishonourable abuse of domestic animals; yet Glúmr vows to thrash the cattle again if they continue to trespass into his homefield (Turville-Petre, 1960, p. 13). Clearly, these cattle are perceived by Glúmr as dangerous creatures. As discussed in Chapter 2, domestic animals were perceived not only as figures to be protected, but also creatures against which hay and humans required protection. Without proper herding and the construction of legal walls, animals would be dangerous members of society (see Chapter 2), and Þorkell clearly anticipates the destructive tendencies of the cattle, as his role at the farm is explicitly to *gæta* (guard) the haystacks. This verb *gæta* is used both to mean guarding, for example, hay, but also tending or looking after animals, suggesting that the care of both may have been semantically as well as practically linked (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 223). While the passage does not specify that the cattle move homewards, unlike the other passages discussed in this chapter, a sense of *heimr* is emphasised in the term for the hay that Þorkell is charged to protect: *heima andvirkis*, the "haystacks of home." The invading cattle are set in opposition to the home-place indicated by these stacks of hay.

In all the episodes discussed in this chapter, hay is explicitly associated with the home; and in all these animal episodes, violence against the haystacks is placed alongside

either destruction of members of the household, or destruction of the home. In descriptions of violent bulls found in *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch.63), *Harðar saga* (ch.26), *Finnboga saga* (ch.7), *Þorsteins saga hvíta* (ch.8), *Vápnfirðinga saga* (ch.1) and *Bolla þáttr Bollasonar* (ch.1) the violence of these animals is most often directed against haystacks, as well as causing the disruption of the milk cows. As previously discussed, upsetting livestock to such an extent that their ability to provide milk is compromised is listed in *Grágás* as an offence with a penalty of lesser outlawry, and the actions of certain animals in the *Íslendingasögur* seem to echo the unruly behaviour regulated against in these laws (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 131; see Chapter 2). As seen in this episode, the destruction caused by the cattle is not solely aligned with their owner's desires, as they spoil Þorkell and Sigmundr's homefield as well as Glúmr's. Instead, the animals are a force unto themselves, and prepared to harm each homefield equally. Such a depiction of a herd of cattle provides a representation of the risks of keeping animals close to the home-place, and further reinforces the great trust placed in animals that are permitted into the homefield in literary narratives. This is a feature of both Brandkrossi's and Glæsir's relationships with their human home.

However, cattle were also depicted as malleable agents of destruction. In *Króka-Refs saga* (ch.3), domestic animals are utilised as a weapon against Þorgerðr following the killing of her husband; and the emphasis in this passage rests on the twofold destruction of both householder and hay. After the death of Barði, his killer, Þorbjǫrn, rides home and his wife suggests that he should drive their livestock onto Þorgerðr's land. Such an act ensures that the household will be devastated:

> Gengr féit heim í túnit ok brýtr ofan sætit hennar ok gerir mart illt. Hon kemr út ok sér nautin standa um allan garðinn. Þóttist hon vita, at illu mundi gegna, sendir til at reka í burt fénaðinn, ok finna Barða veginn í skálanum (Halldórsson, 1959a, p. 123).
>
> The livestock goes home into the homefield and destroys her haystacks and causes bad damage. She comes out and sees the cattle standing all around the enclosure. She seems to know that something bad must be signified, she sends (people) to drive away the cattle, and finds Barði slain in the hut.

Like the account discussed above, cattle enter the home-place and destroy the haystacks, though in this instance the attack is directed by human figures, and not the cattle

themselves. The death of Barði represents the breakdown of protection for the home, as the presence of cattle in the farmyard and the destruction of the home haystacks alerts Þorgerðr to the absence of Barði and leads to the discovery of his body. As in the episode from *Hrafnkels saga* discussed above, the movement and presence of animals in the wrong place is perceived as a bad omen. It shows that something in the locality is wrong and that these animals are not supposed to be this close to the home.

An elaborated version of this motif is found in *Gull-Þóris saga* (ch.14), in which a herd of cattle consistently return to a specific homefield:

> Hey mikit lá á vellinum um daginn, er hirða skyldi, en naut Helga af Hjöllum gengu í. Gunnarr spurði, hví eigi skyldi reka nautin ór vellinum. „Ekki þykkir oss þat tjóa," segir Eyjúlfr, „því at jafnskjótt eru aptr rekin nautin sem vér rekum í brott" (Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, 1991a, p. 206).
>
> A great amount of hay lay about the field that day, which should have been gathered, and the cattle of Helgi from Hjallar walked in. Gunnarr asked, why should the cattle not be driven out of the field. "That seems of no use to us," says Eyjólfr, "because the cattle return as soon as we have driven them away."

Compared to the excessively violent episodes discussed elsewhere in this section, in this episode the cattle in the homefield are presented in relatively calm terms. While clearly a common and disruptive presence preventing the collection of hay, no damage is emphasised. It may be suggested that this episode is more about men than cattle; however, it uses the motif of animal invasion of the homefield to present the cattle as active participants in a human feud. While the consistent return of the cattle on this occasion is not explicitly ascribed to any human force, prior to this episode, the saga states: *með þeim Eyjúlfi í Múla ok Helga á Hjöllum var fjandskapr mikill um beiting, ok beittu Hjallamenn fyrir Eyjúlfi bæði tún ok eng* (between Eyjólfr of Múla and Helgi of Hjallar was a great feud about grazing and the men of Hjallar grazed [animals] on both the homefield and meadow of Eyjólfr; Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, 1991a, p. 205). While no men are mentioned in the invasion passage quoted above, the Hjallamenn have evidently previously encouraged the cattle to breach their enemy's fields. Here the cattle may be considered as working in tandem with the Hjallamenn, but without explicit human direction at this point: in contrast to the indiscriminate destruction portrayed in the *Víga-Glúms saga* episode, and the explicitly human-enforced invasion of *Króka-Refs saga*. Notably, though

these cattle are contributing to an ongoing feud based around the agro-pastoral concern of pasturage, this feud over grazing could have been demonstrated using any number of Eyjólfr's meadows; and yet it is the *tún* (homefield) that is picked by the Hjallamenn to best damage Eyjólfr. By portraying an attack on the *tún*, and the hay of the homefield, this episode shows that there was no greater injury than to violate the homefield.

Eyjólfr's saviour in this episode from *Gull-Þóris saga* comes in the form of Gunnarr, a man from the Eastfjords who presents a clear contrast to the farmers and farmhands busy with the haymaking:

> Þat var einn veðrdag góðan, at menn váru at heyverki í Múla, at þeir sá, hvar maðr reið sunnan yfir Þorskafjörð, ok at garði í Múla. En því var þessa við getit, at þessi maðr var öðruvís búinn en þeir menn, er þar riðu hversdagliga. Hann hafði hjálm á höfði, en skjöld á hlið gylltan: hann reið í steindum söðli ok hafði öxi rekna á öxl, nær álnar fyrir munn. Hann reið ákafa mikinn, ok var hestrinn mjök móðr. Ok er hestrinn kom í garðshliðit, var hann staðþrotinn. Þá hljóp maðrinn af baki ok setti öxina í höfuð hestinum, ok var hann þegar dauðr. Hann tók ekki af söðulinn ok gekk heim eptir þat. Eyjúlfr bóndi spurði hann at nafni. Hann kveðst Gunnarr heita, austfirzkr maðr at ætt, en kveðst Þóri finna vilja (Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, 1991a, pp. 205–206).
>
> That was one good weather-day, that men were haymaking in Múli, when they saw a man ride from the south over Þorskafjǫrðr, and to the enclosure at Múli. But this was how it was told, that this man was otherwise prepared than those men who ride there daily. He had a helmet on his head, and a gilded shield at his side: he rode in a painted saddle and had an inlaid axe over his shoulder, nearly an ell-wide at its mouth. He rode very impetuously, and the horse was very weary. And when the horse came to the side of the enclosure, he was quite exhausted. Then the man leapt from its back and set the axe into the head of the horse, and it was at once dead. He took nothing from the saddle and went homewards after that. Farmer Eyjólfr asked him his name. He says of himself he was called Gunnarr, a man whose family is from the Eastfjorðs, and says he wants to find Þórir.

Gunnar is depicted as a well-equipped warrior emphatically different from the local farmers, and his relationship to animals is presented in a negative manner. His horse is weary, he has not ridden it well, and he unceremoniously kills it on dismounting at the farm wall. Eyjólfr, by his own admission, is not capable of effectively driving away the cattle, and therefore Gunnarr, a man who is emphatically violent towards animals, is the catalyst for this episode. Eyjólfr's status as a *bóndi* (farmer) in comparison to Gunnarr's evident warrior identity, perhaps hinders his ability to express sufficient violence towards the cattle. Here it may be suggested that while such violence towards animals may have

been undesirable (Dennis et al., 2000, p. 86; see Chapter 2), both warriors and farmers were necessary to defend land against human and animal foes. Alternatively, this interaction may demonstrate that violence against domestic animals was a feature of a specific characterisation, for example as seen as in the figure of Brodd-Helgi (Spike-Helgi) in *Þorsteins saga hvíta* (ch.8) and *Vápnfirðinga saga* (ch.1) and Þórðr *melrakki* (arctic fox) in *Heiðarvíga saga* (ch.19); as seen above, Glúmr's violence towards cattle is worthy of comment in *Víga-Glúms saga*. The contrast between people portrayed as capable of forming close bonds with animals, and those who are excessively violent towards them is blurred in *Grettis saga*, as shall be discussed in the final section of this chapter, as Grettir evolves throughout the saga from a violent anti-animal figure, to a man who recognises and eventually appreciates empathetic relationships with animals.

In the above discussions, we have seen that animal-human interactions in the *Íslendingasögur* are often closely entangled with the concept of home. Home is represented as a place of security, status, and productivity, for both humans and animals. Animals can be depicted as guardians, respected visitors, and valued members of the human household; but they can also be agents of destruction that need to be vigorously controlled. The animal is not always seamlessly integrated into the home-place, and it shall be seen that even close relationships between a man and his animal(s) does not preclude the potential for destruction. The next section of this chapter will analyse two close animal-human relationships that result in the destruction of the home(field): Brandkrossi and Grímr, and Glæsir and Þóroddr.

Brandkrossa þáttr

The damage caused by rampaging animals in the sagas is often caused by another farmer's animals getting into the homefield; however, in the case of Brandkrossi the ox, the animal destroys his own home before swimming out to sea. Brandkrossi's skin is later found in the cave-dwelling of a figure in Norway, Geitir. The location of Geitir in a cave, which places him alongside giant-figures such as Hallmundr in *Grettis saga* (ch.57), and his assertion that he sent his servant to fetch Brandkrossi because he was covetous of such a fine animal, suggests that Brandkrossi's leaving Iceland was a supernaturally-influenced event. However, the relationship initially presented between Grímr and Brandkrossi

seems to fit into the context of other animal-human relations discussed in this chapter. This section will analyse Brandkrossi's relationship with Grímr and the home, his destruction of, and departure from the farm, and compare the different relations depicted between Grímr and Geitir with the ox.

While *Brandkrossa þáttr* survives only in paper manuscripts from the seventeenth century, it is assumed to have travelled alongside *Droplaugarsona saga* from the late thirteenth century, with all paper copies originating from AM 162c fol (Finlay, 1993). The title of the *þáttr*, which is unusually named after the prized ox in the story, appears in all paper manuscripts, which preserve the heading: *Þáttr af Brandkrossa ok um uppruna Droplaugarsona* (Jóhannesson, 1950e, p. LXXXVI; the tale of Brandkrossi and about the origins of the sons of Droplaug), suggesting the focus on Brandkrossi is part of the tradition handed down from parchment copies of these two texts (the *þáttr* and *Droplaugarsona saga*).

The following episode, which opens chapter 2 of the *þáttr*, demonstrates aspects of the relationship between Brandkrossi and Grímr, and Brandkrossi's relationship to the home-place:

> Maðr hét Grímr, er bjó í Vápnafirði í Vík inni innri. Hann var ungr maðr ok kvángaðr ok vellauðigr at fé. Hann ól upp uxa þann, er brandkrossóttr var at lit ok ágætanaut at hlutum ok vexti. Honum þótti hann betri en allt annat, þat er hann átti í kvikfé. Hann gekk í túnum á sumrum ok drakk mjólk bæði vetr ok sumar (Jóhannesson, 1950b, p. 186).
>
> A man was called Grímr, who lived in Vápnafjǫrðr in the innermost part of Vík. He was a young man and married and very rich with regards to livestock. He brought up that ox, which was brindled (brownish) in colour with a white cross on its forehead, and was a highly-praised ox with regards to parts and stature. It seemed to him better than all others, that which he owned in livestock. He went in the homefield in the summer and drank milk both winter and summer.

Although Grímr is rich in livestock, Brandkrossi is singled out as the most important feature of Grímr's success. Grímr *ól upp* Brandkrossi, presumably from a new-born calf, and this is a ten-year relationship in which Brandkrossi is not described as showing violent

tendencies.[32] Like Inni-Krákr, Brandkrossi has been raised by his human, Grímr, and the physical features of the ox are praised, like the human hero praised for his strength and stature; and we see this link between positive descriptions of saga men and animals more explicitly emphasised in the description of Glæsir (analysed in the next section).

Brandkrossi's residence is firmly within the home-place, for while the *þáttr* tells the reader that Brandkrossi stayed in the homefield in the summer, it can be assumed that his winter dwelling was either the human house, or an animal-building close-by. Animals were most likely to be resident near the human home-place in the winter, which is perhaps why the writer feels required to mention his unusual summer dwelling. The ox is also fed on milk all-year-round, which not only suggests he lives close to the human place, but also either enjoys a prolonged state of infancy, or inclusion within the human sphere of eating and drinking. While adult cattle and oxen would have ordinarily relied on water for refreshment (French, 1956; Murphy, 1992), and milk was an important commodity in Icelandic society (see Chapter 2), adult cattle enjoy drinking milk, and will take every opportunity to do so (Jennifer Harland, 2017, pers. comm.). To a medieval audience, to be told so much milk was lavished on Brandkrossi may have indicated that Grímr indulged the animal to the point of ridiculousness, and this is the only example we have in the *Íslendingasögur* of an animal drinking milk.

Considering this closeness to the home, it is remarkable that Brandkrossi's departure from Iceland is portrayed as a series of violent acts against the farm:

> Þat bar við um sumarit, þá er uxinn var tíu vetra gamall, en taðan stóð úti umhverfis húsin í stórsæti, at uxinn hljóp út ok inn ok kastaði sátunum ór stað. Þá vildu menn taka hann ok gátu eigi, ok gerði hann þá engan mun, ok var kominn þó fjölði manna til, en hann hljóp á leið fram ok allt um síðir í ina ýtri Krossavík ok þar á sjá út ok synti allt út í haf, meðan menn máttu sjá (Jóhannesson, 1950b, p. 186).
>
> It happened that in the summer, when the ox was ten winters old, and the hay from the manured field stood out all around the house in large haystacks, that the ox ran

[32] This stands in contrast to the many representations of bulls in the *Íslendingasögur*, which are portrayed as violent personalities, for example in *Eyrbyggja saga*, (ch.63), *Harðar saga*, (ch.26), *Finnboga saga*, (ch.7), *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, (ch.8), and *Vápnfirðinga saga* (ch.1). The initial part of the narrative of *Bolla þáttr Bollasonar* is also based around the excessively violent actions of a bull, and the feud that results from his killing.

> out and in and cast the stacks out of place. Then men wanted to take him, but they did not catch him, and it by no means happened then, even though a multitude of men had come to (catch him), and he ran a way forwards and all the way to the outermost part of Krossavík and there out into the sea and swam all out into the sea, as far as men were able to see.

Brandkrossi, as if possessed by a violent force, runs amok through the home-enclosure and destroys the haystacks, which are a symbol of the productivity and sustainability of the home-place, appearing in almost all representations of violence against the home by animals in the sagas. Like Beigaðr, the rebellious boar in *Landnámabók* and *Vatnsdœla saga*, Brandkrossi resists capture and flees beyond the farm to the wilder places of Iceland, as represented both by his escape via water, and his vanishing from the visual sphere of men.

When Brandkrossi swims away from Iceland, Grímr's grief at the loss of his ox is extreme, and his brother, who arrives to comfort him, becomes exasperated at his attitude. The text tells us that Grímr *unði nú stórilla við skaða sinn* (Jóhannesson, 1950b, p. 186; now felt his loss very badly), and has a distinct lack of concern for the economic and even social value of Brandkrossi. Þorsteinn tries to console his brother by suggesting that *hann kynni eigi svá illa skaða sínum þessum, sagði enn margt í bœtr bera, en fé var nógt, en eigi ørvænt, at hann œli upp annan uxa eigi verra, en sagði vera virðing mikla, at víkr þær báðar myndi síðan vera kenndar við uxa hans* (Jóhannesson, 1950b, p. 186; he knew no such great loss as this, his (loss), and (Þorsteinn) said that (life) may bear much in consolations, as livestock was ample, and it would be not without hope that Grímr might bring up another ox no worse, and Þorsteinn said it would also be of great reputation, that both of the bays would be known later by Grímr's ox). Grímr, however, does not hear his brother's remarks. They mean nothing to him, distracted as he is by what he perceives as the greatest loss he could have suffered. In contrast, Þorsteinn sees Brandkrossi as simply a valuable ox. He had no personal connection with the animal, and so sees the creature as replaceable.

Grímr's immense grief is used as the reason for the brothers' trip to Norway, and acts as a catalyst for the events of the rest of the *þáttr*. However, Brandkrossi's presence returns when they see his skin hanging in a cave-dwelling in Norway. Geitir then explains that he sent his thrall to retrieve Brandkrossi from Iceland, because he was jealous of Grímr owning the *bezt naut* [...] *á öllu Íslandi* (Jóhannesson, 1950b; best ox in all of

Iceland). However, a clear contrast is provided between Geitir's desire to own Brandkrossi, and the close care Grímr showed towards the ox. Geitir's ownership of Brandkrossi has resulted in death, either from drowning in the water and then having been supernaturally retrieved, or by slaughter for food or sacrifice. While this *þáttr* is part folktale and part family origin legend, it cannot be ignored that the relationship between Brandkrossi and Grímr is presented in a similar way to other close relationships in the sagas; and that close care of a domestic animal seems to be depicted as a uniquely Icelandic trait when contrasted with the stuffed skin displayed by Geitir in Norway. For Geitir it seems to be Brandkrossi's skin that is the enviable feature of the animal, whereas for Grímr, the animal was an integral part of his home-place as a living creature. Were Grímr interested mainly in the prestige associated with having raised such an ox, rather than the physical ox itself, it would have been some consolation that the bays were named after Brandkrossi, as his brother suggests.

The bodily experiences of dwelling, and eating and drinking are emphasised in descriptions of Brandkrossi's life and Grímr's grief. Grímr's grief is described in terms of physical affect, and the text states he becomes *mjök óárligan* (Jóhannesson, 1950b, p. 186; greatly unwell-looking). His living is disrupted, as *svaf hann lítit* (he sleeps little) and *neytti lítt matar* (Jóhannesson, 1950b, p. 186; used little food), and the description of Grímr's grief stands in contrast to the description of Brandkrossi earlier in the chapter. While Brandkrossi was excellent in form and stature, Grímr becomes ill-looking; and while Brandkrossi was indulged with unusual food, Grímr now makes little use of provisions. The loss of Brandkrossi may be an emasculating loss for Grímr, and his grief is presented in a similar way to the pining melancholy of lovesick women in Old Norse tradition. In the romance narratives from *Gunnlaugs* and *Kormaks saga*, as well as Brynhildr and Guðrún in *Vǫlsunga saga*, similar physical manifestations of loss are presented (Andersson, 2008, p. 57; Eggertsdóttir, 2008; Finch, 1965, p. 53). In addition, Þorsteinn's attempts to cheer him up and distract him with a trip to Norway finds analogues in attempts to distract the grieving women in *Vǫlsunga saga* (Andersson, 2008, p. 59; Finch, 1965, pp. 54, 62).

Lovelorn men are often portrayed negatively in Old Norse-Icelandic sources, with melancholy men being perceived as submissive individuals, both in adopting feminine

roles but also in withdrawing from the social world of men (Eggertsdóttir, 2008, p. 97). It is Grímr's grief, then, that may be emasculating, rather than the loss of the ox itself. The man's attachment to the animal, and his reaction to Brandkrossi going away, may align him with abandoned figures and their attachment to their love interest. It is odd that the opening introduction of Grímr calls him *kvángaðr* (married), when there is no mention of his wife and he later marries Droplaug. Instead, the most significant attachment Grímr has prior to travelling to Norway seems to be with Brandkrossi. Brandkrossi, then, is presented as both a child brought up by Grímr and a substitute love interest over which his grief-stricken self succumbs to melancholia. When Grímr agrees to go abroad with his brother and move on from his grief, he ends up acquiring a wife and returning to Icelandic society involved in a more appropriate social attachment. While Geitir takes the animal from Grímr, he provides him in return with his daughter, allowing Grímr to establish a more suitable legacy. The ox is replaced by the woman, and Grímr is re-masculated by acquiring his wife. The *þáttr* emphasises both the re-acquiring of masculine social identity through gaining a woman, and a suspicious attitude towards too great a reliance on animal-human friendships.

Eyrbyggja saga

A more extreme example of a close animal-human relationship that ends in destruction is the relationship between Þóroddr and Glæsir in *Eyrbyggja saga,* the interactions of which are placed firmly in the home-place. In *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch.63), a special bull-calf is born, with whom Þóroddr forms a close relationship. This bull-calf appears to have been supernaturally conceived, the offspring of a mysterious grey bull and a cow that has licked the ashes of Þórólfr *bægifótr*, whose bodily ghost had previously been restless and haunting the community. Þóroddr has killed Þórólfr's son, Arnkell, and the saga suggests that the bull has been somehow sent to kill Þóroddr in revenge for this killing, and is possessed by the spirit of Þórólfr.

While this episode has been extensively studied, the figure of the bull, Glæsir, is most often discussed in terms of these supernatural happenings, and not as an animal in his own right (Jakobsson, 2010, p. 205; Kanerva, 2013, p. 222, 2011; Martin, 2005; Ólason, 2003). In contrast, this analysis aims to consider the animal behind the supernatural motif.

The relationship between Þóroddr and Glæsir has hardly been scrutinised, and only a few studies have explored the expression of this supernatural theme through the animal-human relationship depicted (Nedkvitne, 1997, p. 40; Ólason, 2003, p. 166). In this relationship, the calf is brought into the household, named, and enjoys a close and attentive relationship with Þóroddr before turning on him.

The circumstances of the bull's conception and birth are presented as a supernatural event. The cow is seen encountering a mysterious grey bull, and then licks the ashes of the burnt Þórólfr while pregnant. This is provided as the reason behind the violence enacted by the bull later in the chapter, and the perceived trollishness of the calf is emphasised from its birth:

> En um várit, er lítit var af sumri, þá bar kýrin kálf; þat var kvíga; nǫkkuru síðar bar hon kálf annan, ok var þat griðungr, ok komst hon nauðuliga frá, svá var hann mikill; ok litlu síðar dó kýrin. Kálfr þessi inn mikli var borinn inn í stofu; var hann apalgrár at lit ok alleiguligr; var þá hvárrtveggi kálfrinn í stofunni ok sá, er fyrr var borinn (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 171).
>
> And in the spring, just before summer, then the cow bore a calf, that was a heifer; some time later she bore another calf, and it was a bull, and she received difficulty from this, as he was large; and a little later the cow died. This calf, the large one was carried into the *stofa*; he was apple-grey in colour and all-worth-having; then were both of the calves in the *stofa,* including that one which was born first.

Like other supernatural or special animals in the *Íslendingasögur*, the bull-calf is apple-grey (Wolf, 2009), and the text repeatedly emphasises the fast and dramatic growth of the animal, who *óx dagvǫxtum, svá at um várit, er kálfar váru út látnir, þá var hann eigi minni en þeir, er alnir váru á ǫndverðum vetri* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; grew visibly day by day, so that in spring, when the calves were put outside, then he was no smaller than they, who had all been born at the beginning of winter). The description of the calf as *alleiguligr* (all-worth-having, or all-precious), uses a compound only found elsewhere in *Svarfdœla saga* to describe a sword ("ONP," n.d.), and may suggest the social capital associated with having the best-looking animals. The desire to keep this animal causes Þóroddr to ignore the old woman at the farm who demands that the calf be killed because of his perceived trollish nature (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 171). However, while the calf's growth and accelerated maturity may be a mark of his supernatural conception, this also links him to certain saga heroes, such as Egill and Gunnlaugr, who

are both recorded as growing quicker than other children (*Egils saga*, ch.40; *Gunnlaugs saga*, ch.4). Glæsir's impressive appearance is repeatedly emphasised, and the description: *hann var hyrndr vel ok allra nauta fríðastr at sjá* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; he was well-horned and of all the cattle the most beautiful to see) reinforces a connection with heroes such as Gunnlaugr, Gunnarr, and Óláfr *pái* who are emphatically handsome young men (*Gunnlaugs saga*, ch.4; *Njáls saga*, ch.19; *Laxdœla saga*, ch.16).[33] At this point the bull is provided with a name, *Glæsir*, meaning embellished or gilded, perhaps on account of his magnificent horns.

This chapter contains the only description of new-born calves we have in the sagas, apart from the birth of a calf in *Bjarnar saga* (ch.16). However, unlike *Bjarnar saga,* in which the calf is kept in the byre, here the calves are brought into the *stofa*, the central living room of the house (Vidal, 2013, p. 49), and nowhere else in the sagas are animals brought this far into the human spaces of the house. However, the bringing in of new-born animals into a warm place is also a feature of sensible farming practice as a response to a traumatic birth and the death of the mother. In particular, calves born in the spring, as Glæsir is, may suffer from cold stress (hypothermia) and require warming post-birth (Lanette et al., 2006).

When the calves are bound on the floor of the *stofa*, the new-born bull-calf cries out twice, and the same verbal phrase is used as Sámr's vocalisation in *Njáls saga* (*kvað við hátt*), discussed above (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 171). In this case, however, the old woman at the farm sees the cry as a sign of the bull's supernatural nature, and tries to persuade Þóroddr to kill the calf. Vocalisation is a key feature of Glæsir's interactions that is increasingly emphasised throughout the chapter. He often *beljaði hátt* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; bellowed loudly) and *jafnan, er hann beljaði, lét hann stórum afskræmiliga*; (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; always, when he bellowed, he did so in a greatly hideous manner). Glæsir's vocalisation emphasises his proximity to the

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[33] The similarity of Glæsir's description with that of young men in certain sagas may also be extended to included those saga characters who experience difficult father/son relationships, for example Egill and Skalla-Grímr (*Egils saga*), and Grettir and Ásmundr (*Grettis saga*), as Glæsir becomes an antagonistic character who attacks his father-figure.

home, as he *beljaði hátt, sem griðungr gylli,*[34] *svá at gǫrla heyrði í hús inn* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; bellowed loudly, like a shrieking bull, so that he was fully heard in the house), and the bellowing seems to infuse all spaces of the narrative, making the bull seem larger and more ominous than his unnaturally large physical presence. It has been suggested that full-grown bulls vocalise more than any other type of cattle, which is perhaps why the young calf is likened to a "shrieking bull" (Moran and Doyle, 2015, p. 53). While such "hideous" bellowing is portrayed as a trollish feature of Glæsir, read from a naturalistic perspective, such bellowing could have indicated pain, frustration, or stress likely to lead to later violent behaviour (Bouissou et al., 2001, p. 116; Moran and Doyle, 2015, p. 45). Like Freyfaxi neighing outside Hrafnkell's door, Glæsir's bellowing may be read as an effort to communicate; however, this bellowing stands in contrast with the two-way communications we find between Sámr and Freyfaxi and their human partners, as Glæsir's cries are unheeded by Þóroddr, and the only time Þóroddr tries to speak to the bull (at their final encounter), the communication fails.

This bellowing, while perceived by the old woman as hideous, is contrasted with the bull's otherwise calm nature, and the saga says, *hógværr var hann bæði við menn ok fé sem sauðr* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; he was calm in mind both with men and cattle as well as sheep/with livestock such as sheep). Glæsir's calmness of spirit sets him in direct contrast to the many other depictions of bulls in the *Íslendingasögur*. By emphasising Glæsir's easy-going nature towards both humans and animals, the saga-author may be implicitly drawing a comparison between the bull and men in the sagas who are described as *hógværr* (Þorsteinn Egilsson, ch.1, *Gunnlaugs saga*) and *vinsæll* (popular; Þorsteinn Egilsson in *Gunnlaugs saga* ch.1; Þórólfr Kveld-Úlfsson in *Egils saga* ch.1 and Þórólfr Skalla-Grímsson, ch.31). Despite seemingly living in harmony with the whole farm, Glæsir's most explicitly positive interactions are with Þóroddr. Whenever the man visits the *stǫðul* (milking-pen): *gekk Glæsir at honum ok daunsaði um hann ok sleikði um klæði hans, en Þóroddr klappaði um hann* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; Glæsir went to him and sniffed at him and sniffed at his clothes, and Þóroddr patted him). The

[34] *Gylli* here is from *gjalla* (to scream, shriek). Different manuscripts have different words: *gyldi* (AM 448, 4to), and *gildr* (AM 442, 4to) perhaps from *gylla* (to gild; Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172).

relationship between Glæsir and Þóroddr is thus depicted in sensory and visceral terms, with Glæsir snuffling and sniffing around Þóroddr's hands and clothes, and Þóroddr explicitly encouraging the close physical contact. The sniffing is a naturalistic description of a bull greeting another animal; and stroking, rubbing, or resting a hand on the animal's back may represent a positive interaction on the part of a human figure designed to calm the young bull (Moran and Doyle, 2015, p. 58).

As highlighted above, Glæsir socialises with both the cows on the farm and those humans involved in the dairying process. The saga states that *hann var jafnan heima með kúneytum* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; he was always at home with the milk-cows), and the milking-pen is repeatedly emphasised as the site of Glæsir's interactions. However, Glæsir is also strongly associated with the homefield, and the saga tells us that *hann hljóp mikit í tǫðunni, er hann kom út* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172; he ran greatly in the homefield, when he came out), demonstrating the great trust placed in the bull, not to trample the haystacks that would have been a feature of the homefield at the end of the summer. His presence in the homefield is a motif shared with *Brandkrossa þáttr*, suggesting preferential treatment from other animals. It seems from this passage that Glæsir is the only animal permitted in the most valuable of fields, and by placing the bull in the homefield and the milking-pen, the narrative places him at the centre of the home: directly alongside the hay and the milk on which the household would have depended (see Chapter 2).[35] However, for a medieval reader or listener, allowing the bull near the milking-cows and the haystacks would have suggested that Þóroddr was asking for trouble. Glæsir's presence in the homefield, and his closeness to the dairying can be compared to a ram in *Heiðarvíga saga* (ch.7), who is explicitly raised at home and grazes in the homefield rather than with the other sheep. However, unlike Glæsir's apparent peaceful relationship with the human members of the farm, the ram *var glettinn við vinnukonur* (Nordal and Jónsson, 1938a; was bantering with the work-women), and this

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[35] Notably, the term used for milk cows in this passage is *kúneytum*, which can be translated as "cows which are fit for use," where, as discussed previously, the term for use and milking are related (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 172).

teasing is presented negatively, as the ram *spillti opt mjólk þeira* (Nordal and Jónsson, 1938a, p. 226; often destroyed their milk).

A key change in Glæsir's positive interactions with the farm and household occurs when he reaches four winters old and becomes temperamental in nature practically overnight. This change in behaviour is demonstrated through a bodily removal from certain places and certain relationships:

> Þá er Glæsir var fjǫgurra vetra gamall, gekk hann eigi undan konum, bǫrnum eða ungmennum, en ef karlar gengu at honum, reigðisk hann við ok lét ótrúliga, en gekk undan þeim í þraut. Þat var einn dag, er Glæsir kom heim á stǫðul, at hann gall ákafliga hátt, at svá gǫrla heyrði inn í húsin, sem hjá væri. Þóroddr var í stofu ok svá kerling (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, pp. 172–173).
>
> Then when Glæsir was four winters old, he went away from the women, children, or young men, and if old men went to him, he showed his displeasure (bridled up) and became unfaithful, and escaped from them with difficulty. It was one day, when Glæsir came home to the milking-pen, that he shrieked vehemently loudly, so that he was fully heard in the house as it was nearby. Þóroddr was in the *stofa* and so was the old woman.

In this passage, we see Glæsir turning away from his previous home, and particularly from the human members of the household with whom he had previously shared company. The term *ótrúliga*, which has meanings of unfaithful, unsafe, or untrustworthy, may suggest not only that Glæsir has become dangerous and unpredictable, but that he has somehow betrayed the trust of his human partners. Unlike Sámr, *trúr* (true, faithful) until the end, Glæsir is *ótrúr*, the opposite, and the close animal-human relationship has been compromised by Glæsir's change of behaviour.

As emphasised throughout this section, this episode shares many similar features with the close animal-human relationships discussed elsewhere in this chapter. The body and voice of the bull-calf are strongly emphasised in the narrative, and the physical appearance of the animal is elevated as the best of all bulls. However, unlike the other relationships presented in this chapter, the loyalty and affection apparently demonstrated in the interactions between Þóroddr and Glæsir are inverted when Glæsir's behaviour changes and he ends up killing Þóroddr: a reversal of Freyfaxi, Sámr, and Brandkrossi, who end up being killed by men who are antagonistic to their human partners. Glæsir's anger in the above passage, indicated by the use of *reigjask við*, meaning "to throw back

the body," or "stiffen in displeasure" may be compared to Freyfaxi's anger at being ridden by Einarr (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 490; "ONP," n.d.); however, in this case, the animal does not appeal to his human partner for justice. Rather than a problem with a specific person, Glæsir has developed an issue with all humans – and the products of their agro-pastoral existence: hay.

The final confrontation between human and animal in this episode fits into the destruction of hay motif discussed above, occurring at the end of the summer, just after the hay has been cut and raked into stacks:

> Þat var um sumarit, at Þóroddr hafði látit raka tǫðu sína alla í stórsæti, at þá kom á regn mikit; en um morguninn, er menn komu út, sá þeir, at Glæsir var kominn í tún, ok var stokkrinn af hornum hans, er á hafði felldr verit, er hann tók at ýgjask; hann hafði týnt venju sinni, því at hann var aldri vanr at granda heyvinu, þó at hann gengi í tǫðunni; en nú hljóp hann at sátunum ok stakk hornunum undir botnana ok hóf upp sætit ok dreifði svá um vǫllinn; tók hann þegar aðra, er ǫnnur var brotin, ok fór svá beljandi um vǫllinn ok lét ǫskrliga (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, pp. 174–175).
>
> It was in the summer, that Þóroddr had the hay from his manured field all raked into large haystacks, and then a great rain came; and in the morning, when men came out, they saw, that Glæsir had come into the homefield, and had the stock off his horns, which had been fitted on when he took to fierceness; he had lost his habits, because he was never accustomed to injure the hay, although he would go into the homefield; but now he ran at the stacks, and with his horns under the bottom of the haystack lifted up the stack and scattered it around the field: he took at once another one when the other was broken, and went so bellowing around the field and in a hideous manner.

Not only has Glæsir found his way into the homefield, but he has done so without the wooden block that had been fitted onto his horns as a preventative measure when his behaviour changed. These two points indicate that whatever follows in this passage will be of negative consequence. Glæsir is now a malevolent presence in the home-place. While he used to dwell alongside, or within the home, he now "injures" the hay, which as previously mentioned, is often presented as the focal point of the home and the recipient of much "criminal" animal behaviour in the sagas. However, despite Glæsir's attacking of the home-place, none of Þóroddr's *heimamenn* attempt to drive him off. This perhaps suggests their lack of courage, or an expectation that it is Þóroddr's responsibility to confront the figure with whom he had previously been close, or indeed as the householder, to confront any attacker of the home.

When Þóroddr hears about Glæsir's actions, he runs out at once and *viðarbulungr stóð fyrir durum úti, ok tók hann þar af birkirapt mikinn ok reiddi um ǫxl, svá at hann helt um skálmirnar, ok hljóp ofan á vǫllinn at griðunginum* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, pp. 174–175; a pile of wood stood outside in front of the doorway, and he took a birch-branch from there and carried it on his shoulder, so that he held the tip, and ran over to the field to the bull). While this seems a logical decision when attempting to confront a large and temperamental animal, Þóroddr's actions also correspond to the advice given by modern-day livestock manuals on how to approach bulls: to carry a large stick or equivalent in order to appear larger and attempt to present a more imposing figure to the animal (Albright, 2004). The confrontation itself appears as a mix of naturalistic description and motifs found in other animal-episodes. When Glæsir sees Þóroddr enter his space, *nam hann staðar ok snerisk við honum* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 175; he stopped and turned towards him), confronting the threat head on, perhaps as a reaction to Þóroddr's invasion of his flight zone (Albright, 2004; Bouissou et al., 2001, p. 121; Houpt, 1998; Moran and Doyle, 2015, pp. 48–49; Phillips, 1993; Shahhosseini, 2013, p. 17). In this respect, and in Þóroddr's wielding of the birch-branch, this episode may show signs of a real-world encounter with a threatened or threatening bull. While *Grágás* contains little information on the keeping of bulls, their dangerous nature is emphasised (see Chapter 2), and from the number of violent bulls described in the *Íslendingasögur* it can be suggested that such large aggressive animals were a prominent part of the agro-pastoral imagination.

However, the prior intense connection between the two figures and potential human understanding of Glæsir is emphasised, as Þóroddr attempts to reason with the bull, speaking harshly to him. As seen above, communication with animals is not out of place in the sagas, and both Freyfaxi and Inni-Krákr respond positively to such interaction. However, in this case Þóroddr is unsuccessful, as *griðungrinn gekk eigi undan at heldr* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 175; the bull did not go away from him even then). This line suggests that Glæsir may have been expected to respond like Freyfaxi and Inni-Krákr, and listen to his human partner, but in this case the animal-human relationship is broken, and Þóroddr has no choice but to fight Glæsir.

The head-to-head fighting described between these two figures is fast and full of movement. Rather than backing away slowly, Þóroddr strikes the bull *milli horna honum* (between his horns) with the stick, provoking Glæsir to run at him, his head lowered (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 175). The description of the fight remains solidly aware of the bodily presence of the bull, and echoes descriptions of bull behaviour in modern times (Fraser, 1974, pp. 107–108) Þóroddr *fekk tekit hornin ok veik honum hjá sér* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 175; grasped hold of his horns and moved him near to him), and the subsequent jostling for position may have been an image familiar to those who had experienced fighting between bulls (Bouissou et al., 2001, p. 121). Þóroddr and Glæsir go backwards and forwards, presented as equally matched opponents until:

> er Þóroddr tók at mœðask, þá hljóp hann upp á háls griðunginum ok spennti hǫndum niðr undir kverkina, en lá fram á hǫfuð griðunginum milli hornanna ok ætlar svá at mœða hann. En griðungrinn hljóp aptr ok fram um vǫllinn með hann (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 175).
>
> when Þóroddr became wearied, then he leapt up on the neck of the bull and clasped with his hands down under the throat, and lay forward on the head of the bull between the horns and intended so to weary him. But the bull ran back and forwards around the field with him.

It is at this point, perhaps inspired by the sight of their householder clinging to the neck and back of the bull, that Þóroddr's home-men decide to gather their weapons and join the battle. However, the addition of further men to the fight appears to provoke Glæsir to more drastic action. Notably, Glæsir's method of killing Þóroddr, ripping into his stomach with his horns, is the same method employed by bulls against other bulls:

> En er griðungrinn sá þat, rak hann hǫfuðit niðr milli fóta sér ok snaraðisk við, svá at hann fekk komit ǫðru horninu undir hann Þórodd; síðan brá hann upp hǫfðinu svá snart, at fótahlutinum Þórodds sló á lopt, svá at hann stóð nær á hǫfði á hálsi griðunginum. En er Þóroddi sveif ofan, vatt Glæsir undir hann hǫfðinu, ok kom annat hornit á kviðinn, svá at þegar stóð á kafi; lét Þóroddr þá laust hǫndunum, en griðungrinn rak við skræk mikinn ok hljóp ofan til árinnar eptir vellinum (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 175).
>
> And when the bull saw that, he drove his head down between his feet and turns himself quickly, so that he got one of his horns under Þóroddr; then he moved his head up so swiftly, that the nether part of Þóroddr's body swung into the air, so that he stood on the neck of the bull near the head. And when Þóroddr fell from above, Glæsir swung his head under him, and a second horn came into the stomach, in such a way that it sank deep at once; Þóroddr then let his hands fall loose, and the bull uttered a great shriek and ran over to the river from the field.

The *skræk mikinn* (great shriek) with which Glæsir leaves the homefield can be interpreted in multiple ways. It is perhaps a reminder of the trollishness of the bull, as interpreted by the old woman, or may indicate one final mark of dominance over the home, as he has, by killing the householder, damaged the home in the most irrevocable manner. Alternatively, this could be the hideous shriek of an angry bull, perhaps one who is frustrated that he has been made the instrument of such violence, forced by his supernatural possession to kill a human figure with whom he had previously been affectionate.

Like supernatural animals such as the grey horse in *Landnámabók* (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 120; see Chapter 1), Glæsir disappears into a marsh, *svá at hann kom aldri upp síðan* (Sveinsson and Þórðarson, 1935, p. 176; so that he never came up again); however, this may also be linked with the death of the violently rebellious boar Beigaðr who swims away from Ingimundr in *Vatnsdœla saga* (Sveinsson, 1939b, p. 43) and the mare Skálm in *Landnámabók*, after whom a marsh is named by her death (Benediktsson, 1968b, p. 96). The disappearance of these animals into waterscapes, aside from folkloric connotations (Almqvist, 1991), may represent a movement out of society and into the wilder, less tamed spaces of the Icelandic environment. By fleeing the homefield, Glæsir is outlawing himself for the killing of Þóroddr. As seen in Chapter 2, after a bull kills a man, he is to lose his legal security and be killed in return.

It cannot be denied that Glæsir's sudden change of behaviour is foreshadowed in the narrative by the isolation of his mother, his fathering by the mysterious grey animal, and the large troublesome nature of the calf at birth; however, the intensely positive relationships described between Glæsir and all members of the farm stand in stark contrast to the earlier ominous events and the later violence. While Glæsir's character and interactions with Þóroddr are clearly part of a wider narrative about the haunting of Þórólfr and the killing of Arnkell, the descriptions of both the farm and the animal-human relationship are the most detailed in the sagas. It can be suggested that this part of the narrative has been formed from experience of farmscapes and animals. In particular, sudden changes in behaviour are one of the risks of keeping dairy bulls, which are considered more difficult to keep and more likely to attack humans than bulls kept for beef; and advice for modern farmers stresses how even seemingly tame and docile animals

may undergo sudden changes in temperament (Albright, 2004; Moran and Doyle, 2015, p. 63). In addition, it has been suggested that size in bulls has an effect on how rank is perceived, and so, as Glæsir's abnormal growth set him aside from other animals, he might have wanted to challenge Þóroddr's dominance in their relationship (Reinhardt and Reinhardt, 1975).

The story of Glæsir's abnormal growth, his friendship with Þóroddr, and his sudden change in behaviour appears to be a naturalistic account interwoven with supernatural elements. It has been suggested that *Eyrbyggja saga* includes many narratives about attempts to establish a secure community in a new land, and that such efforts involve the creation and enforcement of boundaries (Phelpstead, 2014, pp. 16–17). In warning against such close and indulgent interactions with animals, the story of Glæsir may seek to contribute to the enforcement of an animal/human divide and the importance of human control over the natural world, highlighting as it does the dangers involved in animal husbandry, the fragile relationship between the animal friend and foe, and their very real ability to destroy the home and destabilise society.

Natural and supernatural relations

While *Harðar saga* (ch.30) does not display a close relationship between an individual human and animal, it does contain an episode that shares many features with the animal-human interactions discussed in this chapter. Like *Eyrbyggja saga*, it shows the use of naturalistic animal descriptions to represent supposed supernatural happenings, but it also shares features with the *fóstri* episodes discussed above, and the association between certain animals and recognition of the home. While *Brandkrossa þáttr* presents the apparent supernatural abduction of Brandkrossi solely in terms of animal behaviour, the passage from *Harðar saga* discussed below, like the Glæsir episode, exhibits a mix of the supernatural and natural in the description of an ox. Such episodes highlight the mixed modality of saga authors, their ability to blend genres, and to combine the natural and the supernatural within these stories of a fictionalised past.

When Hǫrðr and his men decide to steal the oxen of Þorgríma *smíðkonu* (making-woman), a certain ox fends off the outlaws and leads the group of oxen home:

> Þeir fóru Síldamannagǫtu til Hvamms í Skorradal ok tóku yxn Þorgrímu smíðkonu við Skorradalsvatn fyrir sunnan ok ráku suðr á hálsinn. Einn var apalgrár uxinn; hann viðraði mjǫk; hann hljóp aptr í hendr þeim, ok svá hverr at ǫðrum, ok út á vatnit ok lǫgðust yfir, þar er mjóst var, ok gengu síðan heim í Hvamm. Hǫrðr mælti þá: „Mikit er um kynngi Þorgrímu, at fénaðr skal eigi sjálfr mega ráða sér.“ Þorgríma hafði sofit ok vaknaði vánu bráðara ok sá út; hon leit uxana váta ok mælti þá: „Hart hefir yðr nú boðit verit, en laust heldu garparnir nú“ (Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, 1991b, pp. 75–76).

> They went by Síldamannagata to Hvammr in Skorradalr and took the oxen of Þorgríma *smíðkona* from the south of Skorradalsvatn and drove them south via the ridge. One of the oxen was apple-grey. He snuffled greatly. He ran backwards through their hands and ran at each in turn and out into the water and they swam over there where it was narrowest and walked then home to Hvammr. Hǫrðr said then: “Great is Þorgríma’s (magical) knowledge, that the cattle shall not be able to rule themselves.” Þorgríma had been sleeping and in a short time she woke and she looked out. She sought the wet oxen. And said then: “You have now been badly treated, but the bold ones held [onto you] loosely now.

There are three important points to explore in this passage. Firstly, the supernatural associations of the lead ox are made clear by his *apalgrár* colour, and the use of the verb *viðra* (Wolf, 2009). Secondly, the ox does not wish to be handled by the men, literally taking himself out of their hands, and confronts them aggressively before running out into the water. Finally, this extract echoes the *fóstri* episodes, in which an animal returns home, stands outside of the house, and the human figure comments on their mistreatment.

The verb *viðra*, used here to express the snuffling of the ox, is used in both the *Íslendingasögur* and the *fornaldarsögur* for the actions of the wind, the snuffling of babies (*Finnboga saga ramma*, ch.3), animals, and the provocation of seemingly natural events to the benefit of the woman performing the action (“ONP,” n.d.). It is closely linked to magical practice, and particularly magical events involving nature. In *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* (ch.13), the *refkeila* (vixen) *fylgja* (“fetch” or guardian spirit) of a magical person: *viðraði í allar ættir ok snuðraði undir hverja eik* (Jónsson, 1954; snuffled in all directions and sniffs under every oak), and in *Gísla saga* (ch.18), this action is performed by a woman with apparent magical ability, Auðbjǫrg, who acts like an animal to bring about terrible weather. This weather causes an avalanche or landslide to fall on the home of Bergr, who earlier that evening had landed a blow on her son that the son was unable to avenge (Þórólfsson and Jónsson, 1943a, pp. 59–60):

> Kerling fær ekki sofnat um nóttina, svá var henni bimbult. Veðr var kalt úti ok logn ok heiðríkt. Hon gengr nǫkkurum sinnum andsœlis um húsin ok viðrar í allar ættir ok setr upp nasarnar. En við þessa hennar meðferð þá tók veðrit at skipask, ok gerir á fjúk mikit ok eptir þat þey, ok brestr flóð í hlíðinni, ok hleypr snæskriða á bœ Bergs, ok fá þar tólf menn bana, ok sér enn merki jarðfallsins í dag (Þórólfsson and Jónsson, 1943a, pp. 59–60).

> The old woman could get no sleep in the night, so uneasy did she feel. The weather was cold outside and calm and cloudless. She goes a number of times, widdershins around the house and snuffles in all directions and breathes in through her nose. And as a result of her behaviour then the weather began to undergo a change, and becomes a great snowstorm and after that thawing weather, and a flood breaks from the slope, and an avalanche runs to the farm of Bergr, and twelve men got killed there, and the marks of the earth-fall can be seen today.

In this extract, we see Auðbjǫrg performing animality to cause a series of natural events. The phrase: *viðraði í allar ættir* (snuffled in all directions) that we find in *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar* performed by a vixen, albeit a supposed supernatural one, we find here performed by a woman.

However, despite its magical associations, the snuffling of the ox in *Harðar saga* may also be perceived as part of a naturalistic description, like the sniffing of the bull in *Eyrbyggja saga*: an act of curiosity and greeting. When the ox discovers that he does not recognise these people, he then attempts to extricate himself from their hold, and aggressively runs at each of them in turn to warn them off. Swift backwards locomotion is performed when cattle experience fear at their physical restriction, and this naturalistic description can be linked to other sensory descriptions of animals in these episodes, such as Freyfaxi's neighing and sweating (Shahhosseini, 2013, p. 15). Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that the use of *viðra*, combined with Hǫrðr's comment on Þorgríma's magical knowledge, presents this episode as a supernatural event; and the grey ox could even be perceived as Þorgríma herself in ox-form. The ability of figures to practice magical abilities while asleep has been associated with the practice of *seiðr* and *gannreið,* particularly in the sending out of helping spirits in the form of animals (Mitchell, 2011, p. 132; Tolley, 1995), and Þorgríma explicitly wakes a short time after the oxen have returned home. In this case, the return of the oxen to the home may indicate a supernatural event, rather than any understanding of the home-place on the part of the oxen. However, it is notable that elsewhere in the sagas, invocations and supernatural happenings associated with the home seem to share a vocabulary with animal behaviours, and the saga authors incorporate

naturalistic descriptions into magical motifs. Perhaps animal behaviour and supernatural events cannot be so easily separated into different categories. Certain supernatural events in the *Íslendingasögur* are conveyed through animal habits, as discussed further below in the section on *Grettis saga,* and this may also be found in the descriptions of humans in the form of pigs in *Harðar saga* (ch.26) and *Gull-Þóris saga* (ch.10).

As mentioned above, this passage also seems to echo the interactions in the *fóstri* episodes discussed earlier in this chapter. Similar to the descriptions of Freyfaxi's interaction with Hrafnkell, and Gunnarr's response to Sámr's killing, Þorgríma's reaction to the return of the oxen is expressed in terms of the mistreatment of the animals. However, Þorgríma's response is somewhat muted compared to Hrafnkell's, and does not have wider repercussions in the saga. As is suggested above in the discussion of Inni-Krákr, this may be a feature of animal-human relationships in these sagas that involve a woman and a castrated animal. However, unlike Inni-Krákr's connection to Gróa, no mention is made of a particularly close relationship between Þorgríma and her oxen in *Harðar saga,* aside from Hǫrðr's insinuation of a supernatural connection between the woman and the animals. Nonetheless, there are clear links between animals and magical women elsewhere in the *Íslendingasögur,* for example in *Gull-Þóris saga* (chs.10, 15, 17), *Harðar saga* (ch.26), and *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch.20).

Magical events aside, the failure of the outlaws to keep hold of the oxen could also be attributed to their lack of farming prowess and therefore lack of understanding of how to handle animals. In most other instances in this saga, the men slaughter their stolen animals as quickly as possible (for example *Harðar saga,* ch.29), suggesting a desire to avoid working with, or caring for animals as much as possible. Outlaws, once they leave the home, are not farmers, and perhaps struggle with caring relations towards domestic animals, as shall be explored in the final section of this chapter on Grettir's varying relationships with animals.

Grettir's animal relations

The final section of this chapter considers the development of Grettir Ásmundarson's character in *Grettis saga,* in relation to his interactions with certain domestic animals.

While Grettir originally rejects the home-place, and revolts against his father's trust in animals through mistreatment, killing, and abuse of domestic animals, by the time of his death on Drangey he explicitly encourages the companionship of a single ram. The apparent development of Grettir's ability to form positive relationships with animals is emphasised alongside his increasingly "animal" habitation places, suggesting perhaps that Grettir's ability to interact positively with certain animals develops in part through establishing his home in animal-places. In this section, I close-read three episodes from *Grettis saga:* Grettir's antics as a boy, his killing of a lamb and interaction with its mother, and the relationship with a ram on Drangey, and analyse the interactions depicted in relation to the preceding sections of this chapter.

Violence

Grettir's most discussed animal-human interactions are the mutilations and killings he makes in his youth towards his father's animals. Such actions have been alternatively perceived as demonstrating Grettir's cruelty of character, or as acts of deflected anger or feud in response to the abuse of Grettir by his father (Clunies Ross, 2001, p. 36; Poole, 2004, pp. 10, 11; Ranković, 2009, p. 798). Such psychological interpretations of Grettir's character have emphasised the toxic nature of the father-son relationship presented between Ásmundr and Grettir (Poole, 2004, p. 11). Within these works, only Slavica Ranković has noted Grettir's later interactions with sheep as discussed in this chapter, although only to suggest that Grettir cannot be a sadist towards animals because he does not kill the ewe or the ram. Nonetheless, Ranković suggests that the animals crippled, killed, and mutilated by Grettir in his youth should still be viewed as victims in an ongoing battle between Grettir and Ásmundr in which the father vindictively attempts to wear down Grettir's spirit with a number of unsuitable tasks (Ranković, 2009, p. 798). As I shall demonstrate below, Grettir's violence towards animals and the actions of Ásmundr can be read in an alternate way that emphasises the differences between the two men involved, their contrasting views of strength, and contrary attitudes to the animals that co-create and maintain the home-place.

Until he is ten years old, Grettir has no specific role on the farm; but once he is ten, Grettir's position in the household-farm is reliant on being useful, and Ásmundr tells

him: *þú skalt gæta heimgása minna* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 37; you shall guard my home-geese). This is the same verb *gæta* as we find in a passage discussed above used about guarding haystacks, and can mean to "guard," "look after," or "attend to:" a verb indicating relations of care and protection. However, not only is Grettir disinclined to offer these, but he kills some of the birds and breaks the wings of the others:

> Eigi leið langt, áðr honum þóttu þær heldr bágrækar, en kjúklingar seinfœrir. Honum gerði mjǫk hermt við þessu, því at hann var lítill skapdeildarmaðr. Nǫkkuru síðar fundu fǫrumenn kjúklinga dauða úti ok heimgæss vængbrotnar; þetta var um haustit. Ásmundi líkaði stórilla ok spurði, hvárt Grettir hefði drepit fuglana (Jónsson, 1936, p. 37).
>
> It was not long before they (the geese) seemed to him rather difficult to drive, and the chickens slow. He became very angry with them, because he was a man with little mastery of his own temper. At a certain time, vagrants found the chickens dead outside and the home-geese broken-winged; that was in the autumn. Ásmundr greatly disliked this and asked whether Grettir had killed the birds.

Grettir objects to the difficulty he finds in managing the birds, and it has been suggested that this job is a demeaning task for him, hence his violent reaction (Poole, 2004, pp. 10–11). However, the evidence for this seems to be solely Grettir's reaction to the job; the text itself appears to cast judgement on Grettir for losing his temper with the animals, rather than Ásmundr for setting the task. Inability to control his temper is explicitly marked out as a flaw in the ten-year-old Grettir. Evidently, he is inexperienced at effective animal-human relations.

A similar example of a young man mutilating animals is found in *Valla-Ljóts saga* (ch.1). In this episode, Halli is warned by his mother not to lose his temper with animals when he is sent to fetch a piglet from his future step-father:

> Móðir hans mælti: „[...] þyrfti þó, at þú værir eigi of skapbráðr, því at gríssinn mun vera illr með at fara" (Kristjánsson, 1956, p. 235).
>
> His mother said: "[...] it is needed, though, that you will not be too hot-tempered, because the piglet will be hard to manage."

However, when Halli reaches the farm, his mother's suitor, Torfi, is busy, and refuses to look at him or fetch the animal for him, though he gives Halli permission and encouragement to collect the piglet himself. However, like Grettir, Halli is reluctant to get close to the animals. He claims it is not *formannligt* (leader-like) to go *í saur* (through

mud) in order to reach the sow; though Halli does clarify this, by suggesting that this unsuitability rests partly on this being a farm of *ókunnum mǫnnum* (unknown men, strangers), and this may indicate that Halli would have been inclined to adopt such work had he been at home, rather than at Torfi's farm (Kristjánsson, 1956, p. 235). Nonetheless, Torfi goads him for his reluctance to encounter the sow, suggesting he does not consider himself as brave as the animal; and in reaction to this taunt, Halli completes the task in an excessively violent manner: *hann hljóp at durunum ok snaraði inn, ok þegar hjó hann af henni ranann, tók grísinn ok gekk út* (Kristjánsson, 1956, p. 235; he ran to the doorway and flung himself in, and at once he cut the snout from her, took the piglet and went out). Halli's anger seems partly at the insult Torfi gives him, and partly at the place he must venture into to get the piglet, and the proximity he must experience with the sow. For Torfi, such an action does not seem problematic, though like Ásmundr, Torfi may be testing Halli's ability to interact with animals. If this is the case, Halli fails spectacularly, and kills Torfi for his goading. As we shall see from *Grettis saga*, and as we have seen from the previous animal-human interactions discussed in this chapter, there is a clear division presented between men who can interact positively with animals, and those who cannot.

In the episode from *Grettis saga*, however, it seems the movement of the birds is the primary reason for Grettir's displeasure, and the specific mutilations and killings reflect his anger at the personal agency of these animals. By breaking the wings of the geese, Grettir grounds the birds in a space that he can control, reducing their scope for activity; and he kills the *kjúklinga*, which can be translated as "chickens," "chicks," or "goslings," for being too slow. He refuses to move at the animals' pace. The place occupied by the birds also seems to be important, as it is vagrants, figures who wander from farm to farm, who find the birds, suggesting they have been placed, dead and crippled, outside of the farm enclosure, and that Grettir wished to eject the birds from the home-place.

When Ásmundr vows that Grettir shall no longer look after the geese, Grettir responds with a proverb: *vinr er sá annars, er ills varnar* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 38; that one is a friend of another, who withholds evil from them). Harris has pointed out the subversive use of proverbs in *Grettis saga*, and suggests that this line pushes Ásmundr into a circle of friendship with the birds (Harris, 2011). For Harris, proverbial sayings act as expressions of ethics in the *Íslendingasögur*, when voiced by reputable characters (Harris, 2013, 2011).

In contrast, when put into the mouths of problematic characters, like Grettir, Harris argues that these sayings may be used by the compiler of the saga to provide critique of this wisdom, or at least a humorous subversion of contemporary expectations; in this case, around friendship (Harris, 2011). Harris suggests this saying, as well as the proverb used by Grettir to mock Ásmundr for his ignorance of Kengála's mutilation (discussed below), may highlight contemporary humour towards animal-human friendships (2011).

This phrase, humorous or not, highlights the stark difference between Grettir's view of such interactions, and his father's; and the relationship between Ásmundr and the geese is emphatically a friendship with which Grettir does not engage. Instead, Grettir is primarily concerned with what is *hentr* (suitable, fitting) for him, and he does not consider the care of animals such as geese and chickens to be such an activity. Notably, the term he uses to describe such work is: *lǫðrmannligt verk,* which means "mean" or "despicable work" (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 404). This adverb is found only in *Grettis saga,* although *lǫðrmenni* is a term for a coward used in *Sǫrla saga sterka* (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 404; "ONP," n.d.). If the first component of this word is taken as *lǫðr* or *lauðr* (froth, or a type of soap), from *lǫdra* or *lauðra* (to foam, to be dripping wet), it may be suggested that this term refers to the work of dripping men, or froth-men with an emphasis on washing; alternatively, the verb can refer to dripping with blood, perhaps with connotations of injury and defeat rather than victory (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, pp. 374, 404; "ONP," n.d.). The former etymology, with its connotations of washing, may place the action within the sphere of home-work, linking it with the concepts of *heimaelskr* and *heimskr* discussed earlier in this chapter, and therefore cowardice. Moving beyond the home is how Grettir believes he will gain glory and renown, and so anything that ties him too closely to the home is negatively perceived. Ásmundr's decree that Grettir shall *strjúka* (stroke/brush) his back by the fire is also seen as *lǫðrmannligt* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 38; cowardly).

Ásmundr and Grettir appear to fundamentally disagree on what constitutes strength. As Grettir kills and cripples the birds because of his inability to control his temper, the implication is given that guarding the home-geese should have been a job requiring strength of character. When Grettir shows himself incapable of exercising such strength, Ásmundr gives him the more shameful job of scratching his back by the fire.

This reading of the episode provides context to Ásmundr's fireside goading of Grettir in which he calls him *mannskræfan* (miserable coward) and states that there is no *dugr* in him (Jónsson, 1936, p. 38). *Dugr* can mean strength, but in particular a strength of body and soul, implying strength of character and virtue (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 109; "ONP," n.d.). In the back-scratching episode, I would suggest Ásmundr provokes Grettir for not having the strength to resist harming the animals previously placed into his care. While the back-scratching does not involve animals, it is placed into the context of animal-human interactions, as Grettir is to brush his father's back in the place where the women work with wool; and on seeing a wool comb on the bench, he *tekr upp kambinn ok lætr ganga ofan eptir baki Ásmundar* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 38; takes up the comb and drew it down over Ásmundr's back). The scraping of his father's skin with the wool comb foreshadows the mutilation of the horse, Kengála, that will follow, as well as linking Ásmundr with another animal: the sheep. In this display of hard-handed physical strength that humiliates Ásmundr, Grettir issues a challenge to his father. He shows Ásmundr the sort of strength he possesses, directing it towards the animal substitute that Ásmundr has become by his use of the wool-comb.

However, despite Grettir's antagonistic actions towards him and his animals, Ásmundr persists in providing a final animal-related task. He sets Grettir to watch over his horses, which seems like a risky venture, given Grettir's previous actions. It is difficult to uncover Ásmundr's possible motivations for this, which are unstated in the text. However, if this action is considered within the animal contexts discussed in this thesis, an explanation may be proposed. The care of stallions appears to be a positive activity in the *Íslendingasögur*. Men are often portrayed as visiting their stallions, combing their manes, and feeding them hay (Halldórsson, 1959b, p. 292; Nordal and Jónsson, 1938b, p. 268; Sigfússon, 1940, p. 190). The laws also emphasise the importance of caring for another man's horses (Dennis et al., 2000, pp. 169, 202, 1980, p. 86). Looking after stallions, then, may be considered a task worthy of a saga hero. However, Grettir is not being asked to associate with stallions, but primarily with the mare, Kengála:

> „Þá skaltu svá at fara," sagði Ásmundr, „sem ek býð þér. Hryssa á ek bleikálótta, er ek kalla Kengálu; hon er svá vís at um veðráttu ok vatnagang, at þat mun aldri bresta, at þá mun hríð eptir koma, ef hon vill eigi á jǫrð ganga. Þá skaltu byrgja í

húsi hrossin, en halda þeim norðr á hálsinn, þegar er vetr leggr á;“ (Jónsson, 1936, pp. 39–40).

"Then you shall do such," said Ásmundr, "as I bid you. I own a dun-coloured horse with a dark stripe down her back, who I call Kengála; she is so wise concerning the weather and the fall of rain, that it will never fail, that a storm will then come after, if she wants not to walk on the earth. Then you shall shut the horses in the house, and keep them north of the ridge, once winter sets in."

By setting Grettir to care for the horses, his father gives him a chance to demonstrate his strength to the farm, that is, proper virtuous strength such as he has failed to show so far. In addition, by forcing Grettir to work with Kengála, Ásmundr may be attempting to show Grettir how useful animals can be. Ásmundr clearly values Kengála and her knowledge of the weather. Such careful directions not only instruct Grettir in reading animals, but provide the opportunity for Grettir and Kengála to bond, and develop the trust that is presented between Ásmundr and Kengála. This action on the part of Ásmundr may be intended as an educational opportunity for Grettir, but he fails to learn.[36] He is charged to *geyma hrossa*, which is most often translated as "watch the horses," but the verb *geyma* also has the meaning of heeding something. While Grettir agrees to watch the horses, Ásmundr's instructions make it very clear that he is charged instead with heeding them and respecting Kengála's actions. Grettir is not in control in this scenario; he is not expected to herd the horses, but rather be directed by them. Specifically, Grettir is to be controlled by Kengála.

Kengála, like many of the individualised animals discussed in this chapter, is distinguished by her appearance and her intuition or personality.[37] Kengála's wisdom, being able to predict the weather, is of an environmental nature, incredibly valuable to farming, and especially farming in Iceland. The depiction of Kengála may in some ways be compared to modern discussions of specific sheep populations in Iceland: the so-called leader-sheep (ON *forystusauðr*, *forystugeldingr*), which in historical and modern Icelandic

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[36] The education of young men via farming-related tasks has been suggested by McCooey as a method by which children would be socialised into the farming society in medieval Iceland (2017b).

[37] Kengála is clearly a valued horse for both wisdom and production of outstanding stallions, as Grettir's brother, Atli, uses Kengála's son as his fighting stallion later in the saga (ch.29).

farming, have been bred with particular behavioural traits advantageous to livestock management in the Icelandic environment (Aðalsteinsson, 1981; Dýrmundsson, 2002, p. 46). These sheep are known for their intelligence, their non-white colouring, and their ability to "foresee climatic events" (Dýrmundsson, 2002, pp. 45, 46; Jónsson, 1953, p. 336; Ryder, 1983, p. 546). While these sheep were valued for their ability to lead their flocks homewards in inclement weather, and therefore possessing a strong sense of the home-place, it is their ability to appear to predict the weather that raises the strongest link with Kengála. This is a feature of animal behaviour mentioned nowhere else in the sagas, although it may be the implication behind *Spámann* (prophet) the ox discussed below. The association of non-white colouring with leader-sheep, while most likely a practical feature allowing them to be identified and followed in the snow, may indicate an association between coloured animals and intelligence in Icelandic agro-pastoral tradition; and it is evident from the sagas that the colouring of animals is important and almost always emphasised.[38] It should, however, be mentioned that the only *forystugeldingr* mentioned by name in the *Íslendingasögur* is Fleygir in *Heiðarvíga saga* (ch.18), about whom neither colour nor perception is emphasised.[39]

The combination of animals, environment, and social relations makes the Kengála episode particularly pertinent to the topics discussed in this thesis. The relationship presented between Ásmundr and Kengála, between man and mare, is one that benefits both parties. By correctly interpreting the changing weather, Kengála would assist Ásmundr not only in caring for the horses, but with all his farming ventures. As well as "wise," *víss* can also mean "certain" and therefore perhaps trustworthy (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 718). If Kengála is so reliable that she will always assist Ásmundr through her actions, she is valuable indeed, and can be placed alongside Sámr's *trúr* nature, and in contrast to Glæsir's *otrúligr* transformation (discussed above). In verse 10 in *Grettis*

[38] See, for example, Freyfaxi, Brandkrossi, the Drangey ram, Glæsir, and Mókolla in this thesis; elsewhere, the colour of horses is emphasised in *Bjarnar saga* (ch.10), *Víglundar saga* (ch.8, 9) and *Njáls saga* (ch.52), oxen in *Ljósvetninga saga* (ch.7) and *Víglundar saga* (ch.8) and a bull in *Bolla þáttr Bollasonar*. This list is not exhaustive.

[39] Hǫrðr makes use of *forystusauðar* in *Harðar saga* (ch.29) to transport a flock of stolen sheep through a mountain pass in the snow, but these are not named.

saga, responding to the mutilation of his horse, Ásmundr refers to Kengála as *traustr*, which means "trusty," "safe," or "strong," with the particular notion of protection (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 639; Jónsson, 1936, p. 41). Like Sámr, Kengála is true to her human owner, and she can be relied upon to protect Ásmundr and the farm, though from the weather rather than intruders.

It is implied that Grettir had expected something quite different from his horse-watching. He says that this work will be *kalt verk ok karlmannligt* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 39; cold and manly work), which places it in direct contrast to the emasculating or cowardly *lǫðrmannligt verk* he perceived his earlier tasks to be. However, this statement is expressed before his father provides him with the details of the assignment, and he finds the actual task to be unpalatable:

> Þá gerði á kulda mikla með snjóvum ok illt til jarða. Grettir var lítt settr at klæðum, en maðr lítt harðnaðr; tók hann nú at kala, en Kengála stóð á, þar sem mest var svæðit, í hverju illviðri; aldri kom hon svá snimma í haga, at hon myndi heim ganga fyrir dagsetr (Jónsson, 1936, p. 40).
>
> Then it became greatly cold with snow and bad on the earth. Grettir was poorly furnished with clothes, and a little hardened man; he began to freeze, but Kengála stood out in the place where it was the most open in all the bad weather; she never came so early into the pasture that she would go home before nightfall.

The horses explicitly reside outside of the farm enclosure, and yet while it takes him outside of the home, this job is not to Grettir's liking, and his resentment towards Kengála quickly builds. In contrast to Óláfr in *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, who emphatically does not feel the cold and always wears only a shirt (Durrenberger and Durrenberger, 1996, p. 45; Þórólfsson and Jónsson, 1943b, pp. 294–5), Grettir's inexperience of inclement weather and lack of substantial attire causes him to freeze.[40] Kengála seems to have little regard for her human watcher, though it may be suggested that she, like Ásmundr, is attempting to educate or test Grettir. The provocative horse is a trope found also in *Hrafnkels saga* (discussed above), when Freyfaxi presents himself as the only available riding horse as if to test Einarr's loyalty to Hrafnkell's command. In both cases, it can be suggested that the

[40] Óláfr Hávarðsson is also a skilled sheep-herder (Durrenberger and Durrenberger, 1996; Þórólfsson and Jónsson, 1943b).

horse is aware of the human activity around them and co-operative with the intentions of their human partner.

As with the geese, Grettir is placed at the disposal of the animal, forced to match the pace of his living to their movements. Likewise, Kengála's movements and actions are the source of Grettir's anger towards her, and her body pays the price for her agency:

> Grettir hugsar þá, at hann skal gera eitthvert þat bellibragð, at Kengálu yrði goldit fyrir útiganginn. Þat var einn morgun snimma, at Grettir kom til hrossahúss, lýkr upp, ok stóð Kengála fyrir stalli, því at þótt hrossum væri fóðr gefit, þeim er með henni váru, þá hafði hon þat ein. Nú fór Grettir upp á bak henni; hann hafði hvassan kníf í hendi ok rekr á um þverar herðar Kengálu ok lætr svá ganga aptr tveim megin hryggjar. Hrossit bregðr nú hart við, því at þat var feitt ok fælit, eyss svá, at hófarnir brustu í veggjunum. Grettir féll af baki, ok er hann komsk á fœtr, leitar hann til bakferðar (Jónsson, 1936, p. 40).
>
> Grettir thinks then, that he shall do some sly trick, so that Kengála is repaid for her out-goings. It was early one morning, when Grettir came to the horse-house, opens it, and Kengála stood in front of a stall, because even though the horses were given fodder, those horses who were with her, she ate it alone. Now Grettir went up on her back; he had a sharp knife in his hand and drives it around the side of Kengála's shoulders and drags it down the two sides of her back. Now the horse suddenly bucked hard, because she was fat and fearful, she kicked out with her hind legs in such a way that the hooves burst against the walls. Grettir fell from her back, and when he came to his feet, he seeks to mount her again.

The past participle *goldit*, translated here as "repaid," is a form of the verb *gjalda* that often appears used in a legal context, meaning to make a legal payment or fulfil an obligation (Miller, 2017, p. 90, 1990, p. 326). In particular, Miller has suggested that *gjalda* suggests a payment of compensation to an injured party on the part of the wrongdoer: a payment that admits the legal culpability of the payer (Miller, 2017, p. 90, 1990, p. 326). However, if this verb is part of the language of feud and compensation, here the concept is subverted, as Kengála receives a violent compensation. On the one hand, the use of *gjalda* suggests that Grettir should be considered liable for blame in the interaction; on the other, the payment is given to Kengála explicitly for her actions, and not because of Grettir's. Grettir has yet to commit an injury against her. It may be perceived as uncertain in this passage who the wrong-doer is: Grettir perceives Kengála as a frustrating figure who deserves to be punished, while the reader or listener of the saga may perceive Grettir's violence to be the wrong course of action. The subverted use of *gjalda* in this episode may deliberately convey a sense of uncertainty in the correct behaviour in this exchange. In either case, it

pushes the interaction into the legal sphere of human social interactions, like Freyfaxi's actions and death discussed above.

Descriptions of acts of violence in the *Íslendingasögur* are often detailed and precise, whether regarding humans or animals. As previously discussed in this chapter, the deaths of Sámr and Freyfaxi are physically elaborate, and such detailed descriptions are also found in acts of mutilation or injury in horse-fights (Halldórsson, 1959c, pp. 79–80; Sveinsson, 1954, pp. 150–151). In this episode, after *viðreign in snarpasta* (the roughest dealings), Grettir *flær af henni alla baklengjuna aptr á lend* (flays from her all the back strip of her hide back to the rump) and drives the horses out into the pasture (Jónsson, 1936, pp. 40–41). Such mutilation causes Kengála to return to the shelter of the *hús* before midday, and this is a victory for Grettir, as he has gained the control over Kengála that had previously been denied him. The description of Kengála after her mutilation is rooted in observable animal behaviour. Domestic animals, when in pain, often turn their head from side to side as if looking at their back (Fraser, 1974, p. 169), and the saga states: *eigi vildi Kengála bíta nema til baksins* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 40; Kengála wanted nothing but to bite at her back).

On account of Kengála's actions, Ásmundr assumes *at þá myndi skammt til hríðar, er hrossin vildu eigi á standa í þvílíku veðri* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 41; that then would be shortly a storm, when the horse wanted not to stand in such weather). Grettir gloats at this, and comments on what he sees as Ásmundr's misplaced faith: *Grettir segir: „Skýzk þeim mǫrgum vísdómrinn, er betri ván er at“* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 41; Grettir says: "the wisdom is overlooked by the many, when better is expected"). This proverb sees Grettir indicating the limited wisdom of the horse and the misguided or foolish nature of Ásmundr for expecting more than an animal can provide (Harris, 2011). Grettir may suggest that his father overlooks the intelligent course of action because he believes it is better to trust in Kengála than other forms of knowledge; or he may goad his father for

his ignorance of the damage done to Kengála and his assumption that there couldn't possibly be anything wrong with the horse.[41]

Believing Ásmundr is fooled by belief in Kengála's supernatural skill, Grettir may be attempting through this trick to expose the wisdom of animals as reliant on their bodies rather than any supernatural knowledge. As Grettir is explicitly not a knowledgeable man about animals, it may have seemed initially to him that Kengála's skill in determining the weather was a supernatural ability, which had since been revealed to him as a more mundane skill rooted in her body and awareness of her environment. However, the bodily nature of Kengála's knowledge seems to be recognised and understood by Ásmundr as the source of the wisdom or intelligence of animals. Ásmundr says to Kengála: „*þú munt sízt bregðask at bakinu, Bleikála*" (you will least fail with regards to your back, Bleikála), firmly placing his faith in the body of the horse, as the medium through which she determines the weather (Jónsson, 1936, p. 41).[42] However, for Grettir, relying on a horse is a terrible idea. He does not believe that animals are worth listening to, and Ásmundr is presented as a strange figure for doing so. Like many of the animal-human interactions discussed above, the value of the animal is subjective to a specific human figure.

There is also a gender and age dimension to Grettir's violence. He maintains: *en illt þykki mér at treysta merinni, því at þat veit ek engan fyrr gǫrt hafa* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 39; it seems bad to me to trust in the mare, because I know none who have previously done so), suggesting that his mistrust of his father's practice is partly a response to Ásmundr's specific trust in a mare, rather than a stallion. Grettir's sense of masculine worth might have been placated had he been charged with attending to a fighting stallion. In addition, if we take Grettir's earlier charges as geese and goslings, as some translations do (Scudder, 2005, p. 25), rather than geese and chickens, Grettir has emphatically been

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[41] See Chapter 2 for the prohibition on the apparently pre-Christian habit of putting more faith in some livestock than others.

[42] The name Bleikála, supplied here instead of Kengála, is a colour-name combining *bleikr* (dun-coloured) with *áll* (the coloured stripe on the back of a horse; Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 43; de Vries, 1977; "Málið," n.d.). Kingála or Kengála can be translated as "bent-striped," from *kengr* (bent, arch, horseshoe-bent metal; Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 335; "Málið," n.d.).

charged with caring for, and listening to young and female animals: placed as far as he could be from the world of adventure he perceives waiting for him outside the home-place.

Remorse

Despite Grettir's violence towards female animals in the preceding episodes, his encounter with a ewe in chapter 61 is conducted rather differently. At this point in the narrative, Grettir is an outlaw. He has been forced to seek a home outside of society, and survives by stealing the animals of others. Unsurprisingly then, the outlaw Grettir's discovery of the hidden valley Þórisdalr is distinguished by the superlative quality of the sheep available for the taking:

> Á lítil féll eptir dalnum ok sléttar eyrar báðum megin. Lítill var þar sólargangr, en þat þótti honum ótal, hvé margr sauðr þar var í dalnum; þat fé var miklu betra ok feitara en hann hefði þvílíkt sét. Grettir bjósk nú þar um ok gerði sér skála af þeim viði, sem hann fekk þar til. Tók hann sér nú sauði til matar; var þar betri einn sauðr til niðrlags en tveir annars staðar (Jónsson, 1936, pp. 199–200).
>
> A little river fell through the valley and there were flat islands on both sides. It was early in the day when it seemed to him uncountable, how many sheep were there in the valley; those sheep were greatly better and fatter than such as he had seen. Grettir now dwelt around there and made his house from the wood, which he had procured. He took to himself now the meat of sheep; in this place, one sheep was better in the slaughtering than two of another place.

For an outlaw, this constitutes a good place. Grettir can make his own dwelling from the wood, and has his pick of the best sheep he has ever seen. However, while the sheep are initially described in terms of their tasty appearance, and the bountiful composition of their bodies, it is here that Grettir appears to develop empathy for the mother of a lamb he slaughters:

> En ær mókollótt var þar með dilki, sú er honum þótti mest afbragð í vera fyrir vaxtar sakar. Var honum forvitni á at taka dilkinn, ok svá gerði hann ok skar síðan dilkinn; hálf vætt mǫrs var í dilkinum, en hann var þó ǫllu betri. En er Mókolla missti dilks síns, fór hon upp á skála Grettis hverja nótt ok jarmaði, svá at hann mátti enga nótt sofa; þess iðraðisk hann mest, er hann hafði dilkinn skorit, fyrir ónáðum hennar (Jónsson, 1936, pp. 199–200).
>
> But a ewe with a dusky head was there with a sucking-lamb, and that ewe seemed to him most excellent with respect to stature. It was to him a matter of curiosity to take the lamb, and so he did and afterwards slaughtered the lamb; half of the weight of suet was in the lamb, and it was even better than all. But when Mókolla missed

> her lamb, she went up on the hut of Grettir each night and bleated, so that he was not able to sleep at night; this he repented most, that he had slaughtered the lamb, because of her unrest.

In this passage, we see Grettir regretting an act of violence towards an animal. While the lamb is described with eating in mind, this stands in direct contrast to the introduction of the ewe, Mókolla, who is introduced like other valuable animals in this chapter, with her colouring and outer appearance emphasised. The text refers to her as *Mókolla* (dark-head), a name based on colouring, which we see earlier in the saga when Ásmundr calls Kengála *Bleikála*. However, instead of *kollr* (head), this latter component may be *kolla,* most often used to indicate a cow or a hind, or, in compounds, a woman (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 347). It is not then implausible that this name may mean something like "dark-woman." Notably, the opening descriptions of male characters in sagas often contain references to their superlative excellence of form using the term *vǫxtr* (stature), and it is found here used the same way.[43]

While the saga does not show Grettir communicating with the ewe, and he does not bestow the name upon the animal, the use of a name by the saga-author echoes the relationship between Ásmundr and Kengála demonstrated earlier in the saga, and may indicate Grettir's developing capacity for positive relationships with certain animals. The ewe elicits a specific emotional response from Grettir. The verb *iðrask* (to rue, repent of something), used of Grettir's feelings towards the killing of the lamb, is the reflexive form of *iðra*, which means "to be inwardly moved by something" (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 313). This is a verb suggestive of deep feeling, used often in the Icelandic homilies, the Icelandic Old Testament book *Stjórn*, *Biskupasögur,* and Saints' lives ("ONP," n.d.). Such usage suggests it may be strongly associated with repentance on a spiritual level, rather than simply regret for an action that has caused inconvenience.

Viewed from the perspective of expected animal behaviour, the actions of the ewe may be plausible, but embellished. When separated from the rest of their flock, ewes will emit a high-pitched bleating, and when unable to visually connect with their lamb such

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[43] For example, see descriptions of Gunnlaugr (ch.11) and Þorsteinn Egilsson (ch.1) in *Gunnlaugs saga*; and the description of Skalla-Grímr (ch.20) in *Egils saga*.

vocalisation will become more intense (Fisher and Matthews, 2001, pp. 218, 227). However, it has been suggested that such bleating will decline after four hours of continuous separation (Fraser, 1974, p. 64), and so the nightly disruption of Grettir's sleep suggests the naturalistic observation in this episode is exaggerated. Clearly, the actions of Mókolla are portrayed as deliberate. She acts beyond the scope of the maternal instinct of a ewe, and instead consciously tries to disturb the man she knows has taken her child from her. Mókolla here becomes a more than natural figure, participating in an educational interaction with Grettir that takes place literally on the roof of Grettir's makeshift home. In this episode, Grettir is positioned on the outside of society, on the border of the wood and the valley. It is a place of sheep, and by standing on the roof of Grettir's shelter to express her grief, Mókolla reminds Grettir that this is a sheep-place into which he has placed himself.

While this is a brief episode in the saga, I believe it demonstrates a different sort of animal-human interaction than those Grettir is depicted as experiencing in his youth, and perhaps the development of Grettir's ability to interact positively with certain animals. Such intense interaction with an animal resurfaces later in the saga, in the last stage of Grettir's life, where the final interaction between Grettir and a domestic animal depicts the ram on Drangey in terms of his personality rather than the value of his flesh.

Enjoyment

Grettir's occupation of Drangey (ch.74) sees the outlaws slaughter all but one of the sheep dwelling on the island. Although Grettir's relationship with animals in general does not change, the sparing of one ram in an otherwise comprehensive slaughtering reaffirms the impression that Grettir does not relate to all sheep purely on a culinary level:

> Svá er sagt, at þá er Grettir hafði tvá vetr verit í Drangey, þá hǫfðu þeir skorit flest allt sauðfé þat, sem þar hafði verit; en einn hrút létu þeir lifa, svá at getit sé; hann var hǫsmǫgóttr at lit ok hyrndr mjǫk. At honum hendu þeir mikit gaman, því at hann var svá spakr, at hann stóð fyrir úti ok rann eptir þeim, þar sem þeir gengu. Hann gekk heim til skála á kveldin ok gneri hornum sínum við hurðina (Jónsson, 1936, p. 273).

> So, it is said, that when Grettir had been two winters on Drangey, then they had slaughtered almost all the sheep that had been there; but they let one ram live, as is spoken of; he was grey on the belly of colour and greatly horned. They took

> great delight in games with him, because he was so gentle, that he stood outside of the door and ran after them as they walked there. He went home to the hut in the evening and rubbed his horns against the door.

Several features of this extract indicate this animal-human relationship is unusual. This ram is allowed to live, when all the other sheep on the island have been slaughtered, and his grey colour and large horns place him alongside Glæsir in appearance. Such a description suggests that this animal should possess supernatural features, and that the use of *spakr* to describe him is more significant perhaps than translators have acknowledged. The meaning of *spakr* as "tame" or "gentle," which is often used in translations of this passage (Scudder, 2005, p. 168), appears otherwise restricted to religious texts, as it is used only in *Stjórn* and *Ceciliu saga*. In the latter, *spakr sauðr* (gentle sheep) is used as a simile for a servant of God, while *Stjórn* relates the Old Testament parable of the poor man's lamb (2 Samuel 12:3), in which *þersi alisauðr uar sua spakr at hann aat brauð ok drakk af keri hins fateka mannz* (Unger, 1862, p. 516; this home-reared sheep was so gentle that he ate bread and drank from the cup of the poor man).[44] In the *Íslendingasögur*, *spakr* is used instead to mean "prophetically wise" (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 580), and while most often describes people of visionary abilities, it is used about an ox in *Þiðranda þáttr ok Þórhalls*: *ek a uxa æinn xij uetra gamlan þann er ek kalla spamann þuiat hann er spakare en huert naut annat* (Vigfússon and Unger, 1860, p. 419; I have one ox that is twelve-winters old that I call *Spámann* [prophet] because he is wiser than all other cattle). *Spakr* here must be taken to mean "prophetically wise", because of the name *Spámann*, although it may also reference an established convention of the two meanings and uses of *spakr*: to mean "quiet" or "gentle" in referring to animals, and "wise" when referring to men. In *spakr*, we may have a term, like *viðra*, which describes both a feature of supernatural practice and an aspect of animal behaviour.

Sheep are gregarious social animals who become anxious when separated from their flock and the ram's constant following of the men may have an explanation rooted in sheep behaviour (Fisher and Matthews, 2001, p. 218; Fraser, 1974, p. 64). In the absence

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[44] The full *Cecilíu saga* line is *ambatt þin þionar þer sem spakr sauðr* (Unger, 1877, p. 278; your handmaid serves you as a gentle sheep).

of a flock, isolated sheep can form social bonds with other animals, including humans, and this passage presents the ram as a companion to the outlaws, particularly focussed on movement to and from their shelter (Rushen et al., 2001, p. 356). Such apparent desire for companionship may be an aspect of human-sheep interaction based in experienced animal behaviour. By following the outlaws around, in a notably subservient role, the ram adopts the outlaws as dominant members of his new flock.[45] However, the rubbing of his horns on the door of the outlaws' shelter is difficult to explain in a similar way, and it may act as an indication of the ram's desire for inclusion within the home-place of the outlaws.[46] It places the ram firmly in contact with the centre of the home-place, and can be compared to the presence of the ewe, Mókolla, on the roof of Grettir's shelter that emphasises the sheep-place Grettir inhabits at that point in the saga. A similar emphasis may be demonstrated here, as Drangey is emphatically an island of sheep that the outlaws have adapted for their own purposes.[47]

In addition to the rubbing of the horns, the calmness of the ram may provide a further reason to question the level of naturalistic sheep-behaviour described in this passage. Rams are seasonally aggressive and dangerous animals with whom one should be careful and respectful, and modern-day farming advice emphasises the importance of never turning your back on them (Ball-Gisch, 2016; Murray and Sivaloganathan, 1987; "Suggestions for Ram Management," n.d.). This danger is reflected in an episode from *Fljótsdæla saga* (ch.3) in which Þiðrandi *hinn gamli* (the old) has his thigh bone broken by a ram after going into the *hrútahúss* (ram-house) alone (Jóhannesson, 1950c, p. 219). If the episode from *Fljótsdæla saga* warns people of the danger of dealing with a ram, then the games of the outlaws with the ram on Drangey present a very different image of ram-human interaction. Here the ram explicitly follows the men around, suggesting that the

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[45] Studies have shown that humans are able to exploit animal herding behaviour in order to assume dominant roles and control a group of animals (Lott and Hart, 1979; Rushen et al., 2001, p. 354).

[46] Rubbing horns against walls or posts is, however, an observable feature of bull behaviour (Fraser, 1974, p. 108).

[47] The association of outlaw spaces with animal-places is seen also in *Harðar saga*, as Hǫrðr describes Hólm as *víðr sem mikit stǫðulgerði* (Vilmundarson and Vilhjálmsson, 1991b, p. 64 as wide as a great fence around a milking pen).

outlaws have no fear of turning their backs on him; and by playing games with the ram, the outlaws may act contrary to an expected response. The line: *at honum hendu þeir mikit gaman, því at hann var svá spakr* (Jónsson, 1936, p. 273; they took great delight in games with him, because he was so gentle), not only reflects abnormal behaviour adopted by a ram, but also emphasises and exaggerates the social co-existence between the outlaws and the last sheep on the island. By making the ram a partner in *gaman* (play), which may be perceived as a particularly human activity, this phrase suggests that not only is the ram latching onto the men as a substitute flock, but the outlaws are extending their human sociability to the ram.

However, while the primary use of *gaman* in the *Íslendingasögur* is for "game," "sport," or "amusement," *gaman* is also occasionally used for pleasure of a sexual nature, particularly in *Hávamál* (Cleasby and Vigfússon, 1874, p. 188; "ONP," n.d.).[48] The sexual connotations of the word are noted by Heslop, in her study of *Grettisfærsla*, a poem that has been included in a number of *Grettis saga* manuscripts, and she suggests that part of the tradition of the Grettir of the poem is bestiality (2010, p. 209). However, to what extent the Grettir of the saga is the same as the Grettir of this poem has been debated (Heslop, 2010); and the poem itself appears to be a largely anti-clerical composition, with many of Grettir's obscene activities conducted with religious figures (Heslop, 2006). In this context, claims of bestiality may simply be one more anti-Christian obscenity to add to the list, rather than indicating that bestiality was a core part of a Grettir tradition. Nonetheless, *Grettisfærsla* is not the only poetic composition involving animals associated with the character of Grettir, in which sexual overtones have been suggested. The *Sǫðulkolluvísur* (Saddle-head verses), incorporated into chapter 47 of *Grettis saga*, are a series of verses composed by Grettir and Sveinn, after Grettir has stolen Sveinn's horse, Sǫðulkolla. While these verses appear to show Grettir mocking the traditions around horse-keeping, as he flouts the laws surrounding horse theft and major riding, it has also been suggested that the verses display sexual overtones, in showing Grettir stealing a mare from a farmer who, it can be suggested, is overly attached to the animal in question (Dennis et al., 1980, pp.

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[48] See *Njáls saga* (ch.22), *Brandkrossa þáttr* (ch.2), *Fljótsdœla saga* (ch.11, 21), and *Víga-Glúms saga* (ch.3, 24) for a few examples of *gaman* used as "fun," "amusement," or "sport."

82–86; Heslop, 2010; Verses 34 and 35, Jónsson, 1936, pp. 150–151). While there is nothing in the Drangey episode to suggest animal-human sexual relations, it is important to bear in mind that each narrative in the Grettir tradition may have multiple angles, and the saga text presents only one form of these narratives, compiled for a specific purpose and audience.

Grettir: changing relations?

Although the arguably unnatural depiction of ram behaviour analysed above may suggest that this episode was written by a person unfamiliar with the danger of associating with rams, the interactions between the outlaws and the ram may rather be deliberately presented in an exaggerated way. This episode may show Grettir as an extreme example of the animal-friend, as he not only manages to have positive relations with a sheep, but manages to have such positive interactions with a ram that he can be the dominant figure, and engage in play with this potentially dangerous animal.

A wish to keep the ram alive is apparently a key feature of Grettir's last home-place on Drangey. He has had no qualms in killing animals before, either for eating or to make a point. For some reason, however, this ram is special, as was the ewe in the episode discussed above. Perhaps it is the relationship the ram forms with the men that makes him unsuitable for slaughter, and this can be compared to Grettir not killing the bleating ewe despite her keeping him awake. While the ewe begins as a figure of punishment for Grettir, she may also be presented as a partner in his loneliness. Grettir is without companions, she is without family, and both are distressed at being alone. The final ram on Drangey is an impressive animal, with large horns and a prestigious if not supernatural colouring: the animal representation of Grettir's infamy perhaps, just as the sorrowful bleating ewe was the suitable companion for Grettir's isolation in the wild. However, the ram is not the wild and dangerous figure we would expect. Like a *heimamaðr*, the ram goes out with the men, follows them as if offering assistance, and returns to their home in the evening after the activities of the day. He is subservient and powerless; and for Grettir and the ram, Drangey is both a haven and a prison.

In the larger narrative of the saga, this Drangey episode may seem insignificant, and yet the saga explicitly states that the story is known and is told by people about Grettir's time on Drangey. By using the markers: *Svá er sagt* (so it is said) and *svá at getit sé* (as is spoken of), the line: *svá er sagt, at þá er Grettir hafði tvá vetr verit í Drangey, þá hǫfðu þeir skorit flest allt sauðfé þat, sem þar hafði verit; en einn hrút létu þeir lifa, svá at getit sé*; (so it is said, that when Grettir had been two winters on Drangey, then they had slaughtered almost all the sheep that had been there; but they let one ram live, as is spoken of), reinforces the alleged fame of the passage. The inclusion of the story and the self-conscious comment on its reputation, suggests that this may be perceived as an important episode in the Grettir tradition, included and emphasised in the saga as a companion to Grettir's interaction with the ewe Mókolla, and in contrast to his earlier mutilation of animals. By referring to an outstanding tradition of this ram and Grettir's refusal to kill him, whether this is an actual tradition or a fabrication by the compiler of the saga, the text suggests we should understand Grettir's interactions with animals as a developing feature of his characterisation. The emphasis placed on the ram's appearance, personality, and association with a place of dwelling, demonstrates his suitability to be discussed alongside the other individual animals analysed in this chapter. Additionally, the reference to the supposed endurance of this story fits with the large number of animal-human interactions depicted elsewhere in the sagas, and show the saga-writer using an established motif of animal-human interaction to express the development of Grettir's character.

Conclusions

This chapter has analysed relationships between domestic animals and humans in several *Íslendingasögur*, and demonstrated the link between these interactions and the place of the home in these texts. While no specific type of animal is consistently depicted as particularly close to the farm and the householder in these narratives, and each animal-human relationship should be analysed on its own terms, it is evident that each of the relationships or interactions discussed in this chapter demonstrate multiple common features. Animals can be depicted as close companions, and worthy or beloved members of the household. They can direct the action of the saga, and act for themselves, either for or against their human household. They can take part in feud, invoke specific emotions in

their human interactors, and understand the responsibilities required of them as partners to human figures. But they can also be dangerous and untrustworthy characters, capable of betrayal and directed violence. The language of *fóstri* is the language of male homosociality, and by extending these relations to Freyfaxi and Sámr, the compilers of these sagas suggest that this is a plausible extension to make. Such animals are not so unlike humans, and the descriptions of the appearance and behaviour of certain animals in the sagas discussed above, seem to emphasise commonalities perceived between these animals and humans, drawing on characteristics ascribed to men in the sagas. The Drangey ram is a companion to, not a reflection of Grettir, just as Glæsir is in part an adolescent male warring with his father, like Grettir in *Grettis saga*. Freyfaxi actively engages with human social networks, while Sámr follows his master into outlawry and lands the first blow in his final battle.

It is evident from the analysis conducted above that there is not one way for saga characters to interact with animals, and that animals may have their own home-places into which human figures can integrate themselves. Grettir is one such human figure, and his later position as an outlaw may impact on the presentation of his relationships with domestic animals in these narratives. Figures in the sagas who are subject to full outlawry, and therefore not allowed to be at home but neither allowed to leave Iceland, occupy a distinctive narrative space in the *Íslendingasögur* (Poilvez, 2012). Outlaws are *óheimilt* (un-homed, without domicile; see *Króka-Refs* saga, ch.3), *skógarmenn* (men of the wood) and *útilegumenn* (outlying-men); and semantically associated with the forest and other liminal places rather than the farm. While the relationship between the outlaw and the home has been well discussed by scholars (Ahola, 2011; Miller, 2004; Poilvez, 2012), in many cases these have focussed on the social outcasting of the outlaw figure and their subsequent relationships with the supernatural or the environment. No recent studies of outlaws have considered their relationship to domestic animals as an integral part of the home from which they have been cast, and further studies on animal-human relations in the sagas could focus on the figure of the outlaw as a certain category of man to investigate whether the relationship of the outlaw to the home-place can be accessed through their relationships with domestic animals; for example, Hǫrðr, whose interactions with animals have been given only very minor roles in this chapter. In addition, such a study could

consider the hybrid nature of sheep in these narratives, as sheep, like outlaws, are both reliant on a home-place and strongly associated with the wilder areas beyond society. In the Drangey ram, Grettir finds his place alongside a creature who shares both the environment and nature of the outlaw.

While I have chosen in this thesis to focus on those animal-human interactions that take place in and around the enclosure of the home, there were various other places that made up the Icelandic farm. Outfields, shielings, and highlands are often places of violent human-human encounters in these narratives, most closely associated with sheep and horses. A study into the hybrid nature of sheep in these texts would require closer examination of these liminal places, as well as episodes in which sheep are used as metaphors for violent men or men to be hunted.[49] A further link between sheep and violent men can be seen in episodes in which shepherds are the figures able to perceive bands of men on their way to attack farms, and the figure of the *sauðamaðr* (shepherd, literally: sheep-man) may be perceived himself as a hybrid figure, able to access and move between all places of the farm and extended animal spheres.[50] Like outlaws, *sauðamenn* move in and out of the bounded places of human sociality. It has also been demonstrated in this chapter that alongside animals, milk and hay are key points of reference for the home-place in these narratives. Milk and hay are two products of agro-pastoral farming that, like animals, have their own network of social and environmental relationships that may provide an alternative way of approaching representations of the material world in these texts, extending the subject of literary analysis beyond the human, as this chapter has done with animals.

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[49] This seems to be a feature of *Njáls saga* associated with Skarpheðinn (ch.44, 78, 91).

[50] For example, *Laxdœla saga* (ch.55, 63), and *Njáls saga* (ch.68).

Conclusions

As highlighted in the Introduction to this thesis, the figure of Freyfaxi has perhaps been one of the most discussed animals in the *Íslendingasögur*, almost always approached as a divinely-inspired provocateur, or a reflection of Hrafnkell's unruly nature. At the beginning of this project, at a large, international conference, I was condescendingly told: "but Freyfaxi isn't a real horse, is he." It wasn't a question; it was a statement of what the speaker perceived as fact. In the mind of this person, this horse was evidently a complete figment of the saga-author's imagination because of his human-like representation, his provocation of Einarr, his communication with human figures, and the mutual understanding between him and Hrafnkell. He was solely a prop in a religious conflict, or a figure constructed to develop the plotline of the saga. At the time, I was stunned into silence, unable to coherently gather my thoughts to respond with the eloquence and consideration that this statement, and Freyfaxi, deserved. To the extent that Freyfaxi is a character in a specific saga, of course, he is not a "real" horse. However, the idea of Freyfaxi came from somewhere, and the idea of a horse involved in human social relations, in a close, communicative relationship with a human figure, would have been drawn from interactions with, and experiences of real horses, and stories told about these real animals. Material culture plays a formative role in the creation and continuation of narrative in an oral society, as stories build around objects or structures (Vidal, 2013), and I propose that we may extend this theory to include animals as holders of mnemonic function, enabling the formation and continued re-telling of narratives involving animals and their relations with humans. Everyday association with domestic animals enables the remembering and re-telling of stories about other animals, particularly if the behaviour of the animal in the

story is like that expressed by the animals with whom the receiver and re-teller of the story is familiar.

This thesis set out to examine the various representations of domestic animals and their interactions with humans in relation to the household-farm of medieval and Viking Age Iceland. It has done so through analysis and discussion of certain texts, and features of the built environment of Iceland, focussing on the organisation and demarcation of human- and animal-places in these sources, and the animal-human relations that would have informed, and been informed by, these constructions of cultural space. Within these traditions, including settlement narratives, laws, building practices, and certain literary representations, the experience of living and working with animals can be seen to have had an impact on the way persons, places, and products such as hay and milk, are represented in the high medieval narratives discussed in this thesis.

Chapter 1 explored various texts and archaeological interpretations that present narratives of the settlement of Iceland and its establishment as an agro-pastoral community. Such narratives include close interactions between animals, humans, and the environment, and this chapter argues that part of the ideological framework of these written narratives may have been to represent a joint animal-human settlement. These textual narratives of settlement present the management of, or cooperation with animals as a process combined with the setting up of the farm, and both are methods of induction into the Icelandic community. Such narratives would have had little relevance or interest to medieval society in Iceland unless they were representative of a contemporary collective view of the importance of domestic animals in shaping human social presence.

Chapter 2 investigated the *Grágás* laws on the care, control, protection, and valuation of domestic animals. Legal regulations are the ideal situation of social relations, representing a desired outcome or process. While there is often no way of knowing which regulations were respected, the codified existence of these laws in written texts, tells us two things: first, that the relationships depicted by these regulations were desirable; and second, that interactions between animals and humans were important enough to justify the time and effort invested by law-makers and scribes in recording these rules in such compilations. These laws enforce a strictly demarcated legal landscape, in which the

household reliance on the animal-producer meant that domestic animals were to be controlled, protected, and punished in carefully defined ways. However, these animals were not a homogenous category in either valuation or legal status, and required differential treatment for the transgressing of boundaries.

Chapter 3 investigated the animal-place in Icelandic archaeology, and conducted analysis of the spatial organisation of animal and human spaces at two Viking Age farms: Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot. This chapter demonstrated that reconstructing animal-human relations in Viking Age and medieval Iceland is a difficult task, reliant on extensive and detailed excavation work of a kind only undertaken at a few sites in Iceland so far. While the analysis in Chapter 3, as only conducted for two sites, cannot be used to present conclusions about Icelandic farms in general, it shows the value of such studies in enabling more nuanced understandings of changing social networks at a site, and can be used to support the view that excavations such as those conducted at Vatnsfjörður and Sveigakot are advantageous to Icelandic archaeology. Reading the *Íslendingasögur* alongside such detailed analysis encourages us to pay more attention to the spatial aspect of animal-human relationships in these texts, by considering the Viking Age household-farm as a place that these sagas, as texts set in a mythologised Viking Age past, attempt to emulate and re-create.

Chapter 4 examined the concept of home in medieval Iceland, and the close relationship between the home, humans, and domestic animals in the *Íslendingasögur*. Animals such as Freyfaxi and Sámr are depicted as understanding the value of the home and the obligations of the household, and are placed into human male homosocial networks of obligation and comradeship. The descriptions of animals such as Sámr, Glæsir, Brandkrossi, and even Mókolla echo the descriptions of esteemed men, and are represented as actors in the social networks of the saga-world. However, the animals discussed in Chapter 4 are emphatically animal, with some saga-authors describing these animal encounters with a high level of naturalistic detail. The animals with whom saga persons interact or fight, and from whom they even learn, are presented in terms of real animals in the world of the authors or compilers of these sagas. Evidently, as Crane has argued for medieval literature from the British Isles, the authors of the sagas did not forget the living animal (Crane, 2013, p. 171).

This thesis has highlighted the various ways in which animal-human relationships may be translated, both from life into narratives, and from Old Norse into modern English. With regards to the former, certain aspects are clearly emphasised in this translation from the material to the conceptual, for example the location of the animals' dwelling places, their interaction with the human home, and the use of certain language to refer to these animals, such as *fóstri* and *gripr*. Such representations are indicative of a view of these relationships that recognises the importance of place, boundaries, and relations between animals and humans in the connected world into which the Icelanders and their animals settled themselves. Translation of these relationships into Modern English has sometimes failed to convey the same associations, particularly when it comes to representing the full possibilities of animal-human interaction, whether by shifting an animal to the object of the sentence, or by translating *fóstri* limitingly as "fosterling" (Pálsson, 1971, p. 42; Pálsson and Edwards, 1972, p. 85). Language shapes how we constitute the world, and translations that skew the agency or nature of the animals and animal-human relationships depicted in the sagas, change the reader's perception of this imaginative world. While such domesticating translations make the world of the sagas more relatable to the reader by crafting the narrative more in line with a modern ontology, it restricts the opportunity for the reader to wonder at the world presented: a world defined by closeness to domestic animals, reliance on farming, and the interconnectedness of animals, humans, and the environment. Animals were vital to the medieval world, and while, as modern readers, it is difficult to relate to the intimate connections between people and animals in these past societies (Pluskowski, 2002b, p. 1, 2002a, p. 167), by crafting translations that adhere closely to the original text, I believe we can encourage readers to re-consider their perception of this world.

Of course, the medieval world is not a bounded entity, and the animal-human relations expressed in this culture can be seen as the foundations of later traditions. The timeline of this medieval study could be extended to investigate the animal-human relations expressed in subsequent Icelandic textual sources and cultural traditions. For example, as the *gangabærinn* (passage-house) became the dominant method of structuring the home in the late medieval and early modern periods, animal-human relations in these places would have developed from experiences of this different way of living; and domestic

animals and the farmstead are key features of many of the folktales collected in the nineteenth century (Milek, 2006, pp. 46–47; Simpson, 2004). Extending the timeline further, an additional avenue of research might consider the representation of the relationships between humans and domestic animals depicted in modern Icelandic culture, for example in films such as *Hross í oss* (2013) and *Hrútar* (2015). In these two films, we find the entanglement of human-human and animal-human relationships in the negotiation of everyday interactions, which become heightened in times of social crisis. Specifically, the Icelandic title of the earlier film: *Hross í oss* (horse(s) in us) emphasises the commonality between humans and horses, in narratives based around the relationship between humans, animals, and the Icelandic world.

This thesis demonstrates the complexity of animal-human relations in the medieval Icelandic home-place, and their importance in shaping narratives of the establishment and continuation of the household-farm. It reads animals in Old Norse-Icelandic texts as real animals, and undertakes a study of animal-human relations that is grounded in the physical world that these texts attempted to re-create, re-establish, or control. By demonstrating the validity of such an approach, this thesis restates a case for interdisciplinary studies as the most important way to access questions concerning animals, humans, and their social landscape in these texts. This thesis also contributes to (zoo)archaeological research by providing an overview of potential ideas and concepts about humans and domestic animals in medieval Iceland. The above chapters have demonstrated that domestic animals were not just perceived as an economic strategy in Viking Age and medieval Iceland, but rather were integrated members of the community. As such, I would suggest that future excavations and studies of farm sites in Iceland might acknowledge this more fully, and consider animal remains and animal spaces not just in terms of economic efficiency, or religious ritual, but in terms of everyday social interactions and the practice of relations across farm spaces. While this thesis is defined by its rootedness in the Icelandic world, I believe that closer analytical attention on animals as animals, could, and should be applied across medieval studies; specifically, analysis of animals as embodied agents acting and interacting in the social and physical worlds of medieval authors and consumers of such texts.

Animal-human relationships are not just between animals and humans, but between animals, humans, and the structures humans construct around themselves, such as built space, legal traditions, and literary narratives. By extending the study of animal-human relations beyond one type of source, and considering the interplay between physical remains and legal and literary traditions, this thesis demonstrates that drawing evidence from across disciplinary boundaries enables more nuanced and grounded understandings to be reached of how these animal-human relations were perceived, constructed, and enshrined in the culture of Viking Age and medieval Iceland.

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