

I welcome this book, a keen Icelandic reader of the coastal culture and communities more or less connected here in the North Atlantic and the North Sea east to *Öresund* since the Viking Age. Besides the general public, students in teacher education, humanities, and social sciences could get inspired by the tales and the method. I can easily relate to the content of the book. We need to tell stories of the sea, old and new.

The book contains a dedication, contents, preface, maps, pictures, glossary, timeline, on spelling and pronunciation, on time, distances, weights and measures, comments on the text and stories, on the illustrations, acknowledgments, directions on a walk with the author, on the author, advertisements, and invitations to promotions by the author. The way the book reaches out to the reader is pleasing.

The author takes us on a journey through time that spans from the oldest epic poems to the present, built on a variety of sources. The most important texts are Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic medieval literature, of those the Norse Mythology on heathen gods the most important. The tales are of the interconnectedness of people in Iceland, eastern England, Shetland Islands, Norway, Faroe Islands, Denmark, and the now drowned Doggerland. The author wants stories to make us think in a different way than we now do. The moral and political message of this book is that we can make decisions that save us from the scenario of destruction of nature and human societies that otherwise might wait. Past mistakes can be fateful, being in military command in medieval times, or negligence regarding the safety of fishermen in modern times. By dividing the great gifts of the earth more equally amongst us, and by respecting nature as we did in the times of *Ægir* and *Rán*, when nature and human society were one, we might turn the tide. We do have a choice, the Neolithic people we learn about who lived on and fled Doggerland did not. The author works with the fact that after the innovation of technology that made it possible for the Norse to attack undefended monasteries on the coast of England, crossings were created that have been there ever since. I find that the author's location of the invaders in *Lofoten* shows a high level of optimism about the technical possibilities of the 8th century for sailing a thousand nautical miles, and the long way upstream. The *Limafjord* in contemporary Denmark must be the most likely place they came from. How much or how little should the method of narrative tale let scientific implications interfere with a good story?

The peoples of the North were as much or as little connected with the rest of the world as

all other nations were with their rest. Perhaps more, as sea voyages were safer travelling on roads until the New Age. The technology to travel the sea was expensive, but there are many mentions of Icelandic rulers on their way to and from Norway spending the winter in Shetland. English, German, Dutch, Basque, French, Norwegian, Belgian, and of course, Faroese sailors utilized the fishing banks around Iceland for over 500 years.

For some reason, an ancestor of mine, living on the now remote *Langanes* in the North-East, always had French jenever on offer, or so the story goes. Communication between foreign fishermen and, the local population may have decreased with the mechanization of fishing. The anger in one of the cod wars when *Tjallinn* (aka the Charlie), which was the Icelandic term for British trawlermen, rained broken locks, chain links and rotten vegetables on the crew on deck of a boat from my fishing village is memorable. They should have met them outside the ballroom!

The first Icelandic trawler was bought from Great Britain. Many words of English origin are still used on the deck of an Icelandic trawler, for example the fishing gear itself *troll* (trawl), and the excellent word *spanni* (crocodile spanner), which gracefully obeys all the inflections and grammatical rules of the Icelandic language (singular: *spanni* - *spanna* - *spanna* - *spanna*, plural: *spannar* - *spanna* - *spönnum* - *spanna*). I do not find the word in the online version of a modern Icelandic dictionary, and on the online translation website the word is explained as a wrench, which the tool is not. Coastal culture does not necessarily have much space in the culture of a nation even though it, for long based its prosperity in large part, on the sea. But, when we sing/scream the national anthem (written in Edinburgh, 1873) at the start of national soccer matches, King Gilgamesh's search for the eternal flower is there: "Eternity's flow'r, with its homage of tears".

The great poet Snorri Sturluson would not have minded being mixed with his namesake Snorri *goði* Þorgrímsson, "the wisest of those who were not prescient", as in a tale based on the *Saga of Burnt Njál*. For those of us who are used to distinguish, between the contemporary stories of the 13th century and the dramatic works written about life in the first centuries of Iceland's settlement, this is unfortunate. Still, it does not change the value of the narrative.

It is a pleasure to have a story told. Child slavery in England in the early 20th century is a

surprising exposure. One will think of the glory days as a deckhand in high summer on a shrimp fishing boat far north of Iceland. Three on board; the captain, my father who was a schoolmaster in the winter and a sailor in the summer like any other half-and-half East Anglian, and a proud 16-year-old. There was no trawling at night and the teenager took the night shift but got to sleep until noon on the morning-towing instead. We worked maybe two hours at a time when the troll was taken, otherwise not much to do. You were not allowed to fall asleep during the night shift on the wheelhouse. The orange midnight sun coloring the sky, the sea, and the other shrimp boats. Buzzing on the radio, those on the other boats chatting. The transmitter reached foreign radio stations which helped to stay awake; *Radio Luxembourg* presents *Status Quo* playing *Rockin' all over the world!*