

# CIRCUM-BALTIC MYTHOLOGY? THE STRANGE CASE OF THE THEFT OF THE THUNDER-INSTRUMENT (ATU 1148B)\*

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### Abstract

The myth of the Theft of the Thunder-Instrument (ATU 1148b) is found almost exclusively in the Circum-Baltic area. It is found among both Indo-European and Finno-Ugric cultures. This implies that it was adapted from one into the other, unless both assimilated it from a common cultural stratum. This paper surveys this mythological narrative tradition that is found in Baltic, Finnic, Germanic and Sámic cultures. It proposes that the tradition's persistence in a Circum-Baltic isogloss is a consequence of historical contact and interaction between these cultures, and that its evolution has been dependent on that history of contact and exchange.

Key words: comparative mythology, folklore, thunder-god, folk tale, cultural contact, *Prymskviða*.

The present paper<sup>1</sup> is concerned with a narrative of mythological proportions: the Theft of the Thunder-Instrument (ATU 1148b).<sup>2</sup> The narrative may be summarised as follows:

*A devil/giant steals the sleeping thunder-god's instrument (musical, mechanical or symbolic) and conceals it in his realm or home. The god assumes the disguise and role of a servant, either entering the service of the thief directly or entering the thief's house with his master. Others cannot play the instrument successfully. A*

*challenge is initiated by either the host or the god (through his master). The host unwittingly provides the instrument to the god, expecting a positive return (entertainment). The god plays successfully, destroying the host, household and/or otherworld community.*

ATU 1148b is found almost exclusively in Circum-Baltic cultures among both Indo-European and Finno-Ugric linguistic-cultural groups. This implies that it was adapted from one into the other, unless both assimilated it from a common cultural stratum. Whatever the case, ATU 1148b clearly crossed linguistic-cultural thresholds: examples are found among Sámic (Skolt, [possibly] Inari), Finnic (Finnish, Karelian, Estonian, Setu), Baltic (Latvian, Lithuanian) and Germanic (Icelandic, Faeroese, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish) language families in distinct conventional traditions (cf. Uther 2004 II, pp.9-50). However, ATU 1148b is not found among Slavic groups (cf. Barag *et al.* 1979, p.267), which have only held their increasingly significant presence in the Circum-Baltic for about the past millennium.<sup>3</sup> ATU 1148b is otherwise only attested in one early Greek poem, where it is combined with a narrative about the theft of Zeus's sinews.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Jūratė Šlekonytė, Aldis Putelis and Eila Stepanova for help in investigating sources in so many archives and so many languages – without them, this study would not have been possible. I would like to thank Professor Satu Apo for her comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper, and also Nijolė Laurinkienė. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Daiva Vaitkevičienė for the tremendous amount of time and attention which was required to make both the conference and this publication possible.

<sup>2</sup> Initially approached as type 1148 'Der Teufel und der Donner (das Gewitter)' (Aarne 1910, p.45; 1911, p.108); Thompson (1928, p.156) separated 1148 'The Ogre Afraid of the Thunder (the storm)' into subtypes A 'The ogre asks the man to tell him when it thunders. The man deceives him until at last the thunder kills him [K 1177]' and B, 'The ogre steals the thunder's instruments (pipe, sack, etc.) [G 610]'; Uther (2004 II, pp.48-50) reclassifies 1148a as 1147 and titles 1148b 'Thunder's Instruments' with a synopsis based on the Estonian tradition (adding 'hammer' as a possible instrument). Cf. Thompson's (1955–1958) motifs A162.3 ('Combat between thundergod and devil'), A162.3.1 ('Devil (ogre) steals thunder's instruments'), A162.2 ('Thunder and lightning slay devils'), G610 ('Theft from ogre'), K1816.0.1 ('God disguised as menial'), also A189.1.1 ('Man as helper of thundergod').

<sup>3</sup> On possible Slavic parallels and the possible Rumanian parallel, see Balys (1939, pp.43-47, 51-52; cf. Krohn 1931, pp.127-128). These traditions and surrounding arguments will not be reviewed here.

<sup>4</sup> U. Masing (1977) proposed that the Circum-Baltic ATU 1148b is a special development of a widespread tradition of the struggle between the thunder-bird and a water-monster with a history of some 5,000 to 10,000 years. The treatment is speculative and not unproblematic (cf. Uther

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Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Wälchli (2001, p.622) emphasise that one of the interesting aspects of the Circum-Baltic region is that it 'has never been united, but has always been an extremely dynamic area, constantly redivided among spheres of dominance – economical, political, religious and cultural.' The overview of ATU 1148b offered here is intended to approach the relevance of that long history of cultural contact and exchange to mythology, beliefs and the narrative traditions through which these are communicated and maintained. Once overviews of the traditions as they survived and (when possible) how they evolved have been established, it will be possible to return to the observation of Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Wälchli in order to consider how histories of cultural interaction are relevant to the evolution of ATU 1148b in the Circum-Baltic arena.

### 1. Circum-Baltic thunder-god traditions

According to Hans-Jörg Uther (1997–1999, p.763), narratives about thunder and a devil are especially prominent in Baltic, Finnic and Germanic cultures around the Baltic Sea. These narrative traditions are only one part of a remarkable system of thunder-related traditions distributed across diverse cultures in the region. These systems warrant detailed comparison, but only a few basic points will be presented here to provide some frame of reference. Oskar Loozits (1949–1957 II, p.5) suggested that the rise of the thunder-god to the supreme god among Finnic populations was attributable to Indo-European influences.<sup>5</sup> Ülo Valk (1996) stresses that such influences may have been heavily stratified through interaction with multiple Indo-European cultures across history, and that such interactions were never one-sided. For example, Anna-Leena Siikala attributes the range and diversity of Germanic influences in Finno-Karelian mythology, epic and magic (where the thunder-god has a central role) primarily to processes of radical cultural change which took place across the Iron Age, when Germanic cultural influences were dominant (Siikala 2002a; Salo 2006; Frog 2010, pp.118-141; cf. Loozits 1949–1957 III, pp.286-317). These influences dominate our field of vision in documented sources, but they no doubt overlaid earlier ethnocultural substrata (cf. Eila Stepanova's contribution to this volume). Conversely, the identification

of a fire-striking stone in Thórr's head with the polar 'nail'-star is likely the result of reciprocal influence.<sup>6</sup>

Influences from Germanic or Baltic culture can appear quite clear in Finnic and Sámic cultures because the latter are assumed to lack Indo-European linguistic and cultural foundations. A comparison between Germanic and Baltic languages and traditions becomes more complex. For example, cognates with the name Perkūnas are readily recognisable in Finnic languages,<sup>7</sup> as are cognates with Thórr.<sup>8</sup> However, the vernacular Germanic name Fjörgyn (cognate with Pērkon/Perkūnas) is not a 'loan', yet the use of this name for Thórr's mother is likely under the aegis of Baltic influence (cf. Biezais 1972, p.95; West 2007, pp.241-242). Corresponding linguistic interference owing to phonetic resonance with Pērkon/Perkūnas may underlie Estonian *Pikne*, *Pikäne*, etc. ('Lightning') and Livonian *Pikne* ('Lightning') as central vernacular names for the thunder-god (cf. Loozits 1926, pp.49-50; 1949–1957 II, pp.8-9; Salo 2006, pp.9-12). Vladimir Toporov (1970) has plausibly argued that Thórr's companion Thjálf crossed into Baltic traditions to become Perkūnas's smith-companion Teljavel' (Телявель).<sup>9</sup> However, our perspective may be skewed because the majority of the sources for vernacular Germanic mythology are West Norse (roughly Norway, Iceland, etc.), rather than East Norse regions (roughly Denmark, Sweden, etc.), which were on the Baltic Sea. Place name evidence in Sweden discussed by Vykintas Vaitkevičius (2009) clearly shows separate patterns of interaction oriented eastward, hence it is not clear whether the Gotlandic (East Norse) Thjelvar (Þielvar)<sup>10</sup> may have been more akin to Icelandic (West Norse) Thjálf or (Old Lithuanian or its antecedent) Teljavel'.

Some features of the thunder-god appear almost universal in the Circum-Baltic, such as patriarchal epithets and the epithet 'Old Man' (even where he is

1997–1999, p.764), and it stands beyond the scope of the present discussion.

<sup>5</sup> See also Salo 1990, 2006. The anthropomorphic figure appears to have gradually displaced conceptions of a 'thunder-bird' (Loozits 1926, pp.51; 1949–1957 III, p.303n; Siikala 2002a, p.207).

<sup>6</sup> See examples and discussion in Tolley 2009, pp.275-276, 281; cf. Koch 1990; Salo 1990, pp.119-129; 2006, pp.33-48. This motif and its history are complex and problematic.

<sup>7</sup> Common nouns meaning 'devil' (*Suomen sanojen alkuperä* II, p.340, listing Swedish and Danish cognates; Loozits 1949–1957 II, p.13).

<sup>8</sup> Sámic *Horgalles* ('Pórr karl', 'Old Man Thórr'), Finno-Karelian *Tuuri*, Estonian *Tooru* (Krohn 1915, pp.117-118; Itkonen 1946, pp.2-3; de Vries 1956–1957 II, p.115; Bertell 2003, pp.73-81; Kulmar 2005, pp.24-28).

<sup>9</sup> Mansikka 1922, pp.69-70; Vélius 1996, p.266; cf. p.260; cf. also Biezais 1972, pp.130-131; Vélius 1989, pp.52-53. For an overview of attempted etymologies, see Vélius 1987, pp.206-207; 1996, pp.257-258.

<sup>10</sup> Peel 1999, p.xvii-xviii, 2; for Östergötlandic (East Norse) Thjalfar (Þialfar), *ibid.*: 17; cf. also Rendahl 2001; on the world-creation imagery associated with Thjelvar, see Frog 2010, p.240. Note that throughout its history, Gotland has been an exceptional tradition area distinguishable from the rest of Germanic Scandinavia.

described with a red beard).<sup>11</sup> Other attributes of the god exhibit more complex patterns of relationships. For example, the axe or hammer is an attribute common to Germanic, Lithuanian (also sharing attributes of chariot and goats with Germanic), Finno-Karelian, and Sámic; in the midst of this, however, Latvian Pērkons has a ball or mace (*milna*, etymologically associated with *Mjöllnir*, the name for Thórr's hammer) and Estonian Pikne plays a blown instrument (as in ATU 1148b, where it is often referred to simply as a *pill* ['instrument']).<sup>12</sup> This distribution of attributes is of note because of the common inclination to systematise vernacular mythological systems – i.e. if an axe is an attribute of Finno-Karelian Ukko in one context or region, this should be valid for all contexts or regions (or else the tradition is 'corrupted' or has 'decayed'). However, Ukko's axe maintains prominence in certain fields of activity such as incantations and the widespread tradition of thunder-stones (Haavio 1967, p.332; Siikala 2002a, pp.204-208), while aetiological legends most often present the god's wagon as the source of thunder, never mentioning the curious objects or machine of ATU 1148b. In contrast, the *pill* is well established in Estonian and Setu traditions, where the axe attribute is absent, although there are also aetiologies of thunder associated with the god's wagon (Loorits 1949–1957 II, pp.22-25). The realities of circulating traditions often maintain several or even many parallel narratives, conceptions and beliefs, coexisting in a tradition ecology without a need to reconcile inconsistencies and contradictions, whether they are distributed in relation to contexts, functions and social groups, or are more actively competing with one another (Tarkka 2005, pp.160-194; Frog 2010, pp.230-231). This is sig-

nificant for approaching ATU 1148b because – with the exception of Estonian traditions – it presents a conception of the source of thunder as a musical instrument or other device which does not otherwise emerge as a conventional attribute of the thunder-god or conventional aetiology of thunder (neither synchronically nor historically).

## 2. The nature of the survey

Studies on systems of relationships among thunder-traditions in the Circum-Baltic tend to focus on traditions in only two or three Circum-Baltic cultures. This has been conditioned by the history of scholarship for each tradition, scholarship which can never completely sever its roots in arguments over whose culture has been borrowed from whom – arguments heated by Romanticism and slick with the sweat of nationalism.<sup>13</sup> A central factor in the persistence of these attitudes is, however, the language barrier: any comparative study requires knowledge of minimally half a dozen languages, and realistically several more. Had it not been for the generous assistance of Jūratė Šlekonytė with Lithuanian materials, Aldis Putelis with the Latvian example, and Eila Stepanova with one Sámic example (available only in Russian translation), this overview could not have been completed. The language barrier is a serious obstacle in Circum-Baltic comparative research, and it is imperative that the corpora of these diverse traditions are made accessible, much as Daiva Vaitkevičienė (2008) has recently done with the corpus of Lithuanian healing charms.

This survey is organised by linguistic-cultural group. Although the earliest documented evidence is found in medieval Germanic sources, these present certain issues which require addressing them last. The Sámic material will be presented first, approaching the traditions on the east side of the Baltic Sea, moving from north to south. Although ATU 1148b is largely if not completely extinct in the cultures in question, this survey should not be considered completely exhaustive. The diverse evolution of ATU 1148b in different linguistic-cultural groups makes finding relevant materials problematic for two reasons. First, not all examples are readily traceable through archive indices, and some sources may simply not yet have come to light.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Krohn 1906, p.165; Holmberg [Harva] 1915, p.67; Loorits 1926, p.49; 1949–1957, pp.7-14; Harva 1948, pp.77-80; Haavio 1967, pp.161-164; Biezais 1972, p.111; Laurinkienė 1996, p.16; Bertell 2003, pp.73-81; Salo 2006, pp.8-9. The lack of evidence for this epithet in medieval Germanic sources in spite of the (apparent) loan into Sámi may be attributable to regional biases of the early (West Norse) sources (cf. Nordeide 2006; de Vries 1956–1957 II, pp.116-120), where Óðinn was at the top of the pantheon and received these epithets (de Vries 1956–1957 II, pp.84, cf. pp.38-39).

<sup>12</sup> Krohn 1906, p.164; Holmberg [Harva] 1915, pp.67-70; Mühlenbach, Endzelin 1923–1932 II, p.627; Loorits 1932, pp.109-111; 1949–1957 II, pp.22-23; de Vries 1956–1957 II, pp.113-115, 124-127; Haavio 1967, p.332; Biezais 1972, pp.111-115; Laurinkienė 1996, pp.17-19; Siikala 2002a, p.204; Bertell 2003, pp.73-81; West 2007, pp.251-255. The poorly attested Livonian tradition appears to parallel the Latvian (Loorits 1926, p.56), including the identification of Pikne with the smith of heaven (Loorits 1926, pp.51-52; cf. Biezais 1972, pp.105-106; cf. also Salo 1990; 2006). Cf. also Thompson's (1955–1958) motifs A157.1 ('Thunderweapon'), A157.7 ('Hammer of thunder god').

<sup>13</sup> E.g. studies rooted in schools of Germanic studies tend only to take Baltic cultures into account where etymologies are concerned, even in broad comparative surveys: cf. DuBois 1999, pp.2, 78; Bertell 2003, pp.72, 190-191.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. no index of Sámic materials has been generated (cf. Kecskeméti, Paunonen 1974, p.249, where Charnoluskii 1962, pp.35-40 appears under AT 1148b, but not Itkonen 1931, p.37-47); the archive's index card for SKS KRA Krohn, Kaarle 8261 has been lost or misfiled; additional

Second, evidence of ATU 1148b is diffused across multiple genres (proverbs, belief legends, aetiological legends, ballads, etc.) and may be filed according to the interpretation of the collector without cross-indexing. Nevertheless, additional data is not anticipated to significantly impact the findings of the present survey, except to offer perspective on the Sámic and Latvian examples. This survey is the first stage in a long-term plan for a ‘mostly-exhaustive’ collection of sources of ATU 1148b with critical text and accompanying English translation.

### 3. ATU 1148b among the Sámi

The Sámic tradition presents the capture and binding of the thunder-god rather than the theft of his instrument. Axel Olrik (1906), followed by Kaarle Krohn (1906), introduced it into discussion for comparison with Germanic materials, and their works became themselves sources for later research (cf. Balys 1939, p.41). Their source was a dictionary of Sámic mythology in Jacob Fellman’s (1906) *Anteckningar under min vistelse i Lappmarken*. The dictionary was purportedly developed from both Sámic and Finnish informants owing to their long history of cultural contact and exchange (Fellman 1906, p.74). The entry ‘*Atshe*, father, *Aija*, *Aijeg*, grandfather or grandmother [...]’ describes a sacrificial cave on (Inari[?] Sámic) *Aijegjavre* / (Finnish) *Ukonjärvi* – ‘Old Man’s Island’ or ‘Island of the Thunder-God’ – in Lake Inari (northeast Finland), where ‘*Aijeg*’ was imprisoned for a time by ‘*Jeettanas*’ (Fellman 1906, pp.82-86). A fuller account of the narrative appears under ‘*jettanas*, *jeettanas*’, cannibalistic monsters of insatiable appetite (Fellman 1906, pp.102-103). The term *jëttanas* appears to be a Germanic loan (cf. Old Norse *jötunn*, Modern Swedish *jätte*), and the description resonates strikingly with the term’s etymology, which connects them to ‘eating’ (Harris 2009, pp.488-493; Tolley 2009, pp.232-238).

In this narrative, the capture and binding of the thunder-god ‘*Termes*’ (*sic*) in a cave is not elaborated. The majority of the text is concerned with the resulting drought and the harm it caused to men and animals. Two sayings are included for which the narrative

Finno-Karelian material may be sitting in audio archives, as yet untranscribed and unindexed; LFK 765/587 (in Balys 1939, p.36) is not listed under AT 1148b (cf. Arājas, Medne 1977) and according to Aldis Putelis, the last item in this collection to be properly indexed was, oddly enough, LFK 765/586; no Lithuanian examples are presently indexed under AT 1148b (cf. seven printed in Balys 1939, pp.34-36); large quantities of Sámic and Finnic materials are preserved in archives of the former USSR where they are filed and indexed by collector rather than by item type or typology.

supplies an explanation: *Termes läi tshadnum gidda* (‘*Termes* was bound fast’); *Pajan läi tshadnum gidda* (‘*Thunder* was bound fast’). The *jëttanas* are suspected because drought was in their interest (?!). While they sleep, the servant of *Termes* sneaks in and frees the god, who ascends into the sky and generates seven weeks of rain to wash out the *jëttanas*. The rain and storm is in no way related to an instrument.

Two additional versions of the narrative imply that its significance waned sufficiently for it to be subordinated as a resource in other narrative frameworks (cf. Frog 2010, pp.88-102).<sup>15</sup> A narrative recorded in Skolt Sámi in Norway, north of Finland, in 1927 or 1929, opens with the statement that a devil (*tsuartt*) once (literally ‘some times’) bound ‘*Tiermas*’ (Itkonen 1931, pp.37-47). The example has no concern for rain or a conflict between the thunder-god and the devil: a man who is the servant of the devil is the protagonist, and he is given keys but forbidden to enter a single chamber (cf. ATU 312). *Tiermes* is bound in that chamber and liberated by the servant while the devil sleeps. The man remains the protagonist and rides on *Tiermes*’s back in a Magic Flight sequence (ATU 313), in which *Tiermes* functions as a magic helper. A variant published in Russian by V. V. Charnoluskii (1962, pp.35-40) presents the same pattern except that the devil appears as a cannibalistic bear; the captured god is simply named ‘*Thunder*’<sup>16</sup> and locked in a forbidden storehouse, while the protagonist is a maiden, kidnapped by the bear, who also escapes in a Magic Flight on the god’s shoulders once she frees him. On reaching her home, he states that he will return to marry her when she comes of age and they will fly through the sky and herd clouds.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This presupposes that the preceding local/regional/ (potentially) Inari Sámic example was relevant to the Skolt Sámic tradition; cf. relationships of Finnish and Karelian (§4) and Estonian and Setu traditions (§5).

<sup>16</sup> This is consistent with variation in naming in other traditions, but it could potentially be attributable to the translator.

<sup>17</sup> I am thankful to Maths Bertell (p.c.) for pointing out that Erich Johan Jessen-Schardebøll (1767, p.20) describes how (South[?]) Sámi shamans would ‘free’ ‘*Horagalles*’ with yoiking, drumming and sacrifice. Although the motif of ‘freeing’ the god may be traditional and related to ATU 1148b, the motif of capture is absent: ‘freeing’ the god is equivalent to sending him on a mission as a shamanic helping spirit, and the account is concerned with actual ritual practice (or narratives thereof) rather than a myth, legend or tale about the god. Jessen-Schardebøll comments that if *Horagalles* is unable (!) to harm the adversary that he is sent against, he will return and turn on the shaman who ‘freed’ him. (Jessen-Schardebøll 1767, p.20.) This seems less in character for the god than a helping spirit (cf. the god’s role as a magic helper in the narratives above). This account seems to support that Sámic beliefs carried a conception that the thunder-god was ‘set free’. It also offers

#### 4. ATU 1148b among Finno-Karelians

The Finno-Karelian corpus consists of eleven narrative accounts. The examples were collected in a band crossing Finland into Russian (Ladoga) Karelia from east to west. Two were collected in North Ostrobothnia in 1883 (Balys 1939, pp.38-39). Eight were collected by Kaarle Krohn in 1884 and 1885 (Balys 1939, pp.39-40), presumably because the two earliest examples took his interest and he began explicitly requesting related material wherever he happened to be doing field work. A final, exceptional variant was collected in 1935:<sup>18</sup> the basic Finno-Karelian ATU 1148b schema had been adapted to a conventional aetiology of thunder from Elijah's wagon,<sup>19</sup> and the theft of the god's wagon is presented as an aetiology of the hostility of thunder toward devils. It is clear that the narrative was not prominent in the era of collection and had to be actively sought: one account consists of only a few phrases; two others mention memory failing the informant.

The *jyrstimet* ('objects which thunder') are normally not described: in one case these are clearly disk-shaped stones; in another it is a *kone* ('machine'). Only two examples present the circumstances of the theft – while the thunder-god sleeps – and three examples fail to mention the theft entirely. A fear of thunder and associations with rain are rare; only two examples mention hiding the object and locking it in a room. The thunder-god assumes a disguise and becomes the devil's servant. They go fishing and the god displays one or more feats of strength. These take the form of using a tree as a beater or rowing with such strength that the boat breaks in half and the devil must swim to shore. The first of these displays of strength is otherwise encountered in the mythological poetic narrative tradition (cf. Krohn 1928, pp.35-38; 1931, p.126). The second is found in variants of ATU 1087, The Rowing Contest, which Uther (2004 II, p.32) lists only in Finnish, Samic and Scandinavian Germanic traditions. Finno-Karelian ATU 1087 variants fall more or less evenly into two groups: *a*) combinations with ATU 1148b; *b*) a comic series of a mortal hero's adventures (or independent adventure) as a servant of a devil, indexed as a series of tale-types.<sup>20</sup> It seems likely that the latter are adaptations subordinating the episode to

a connection between Samic ATU 1148b and magical practice, but this could be a mistake, misunderstanding or conscious (ideological) misrepresentation of the tradition.

<sup>18</sup> SKS KRA Pulkkinen, Hannes KRK 113, p.197.

<sup>19</sup> SKS KRA Syntytaru card catalogue, group Maailmansynty, sub-group Ukkosenjyrinä, where SKS KRA Pulkkinen, Hannes KRK 113, p.197 is cross-indexed.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. SKS KRA Taipale, Matti 3, p.6, 1859: AT 1005 + 1012 + 1006 + 1115 + 1116 + 1087 + «?» + 1063 + 1091 + 1092 + «?» + 1130.

a new narrative framework as ATU 1148b dropped out of cultural activity (cf. Frog 2010, p.88). The recovery of the instrument exhibits a wide range of variation. The majority express the devil's inability to play the instrument, while the god's playing is characterised by a gradual increase in volume. The narrative climaxes with the devil (and his children, if mentioned) collapsing or being destroyed and may include the destruction of the devil's house.

The Finno-Karelian narratives all exhibit extremely narrow fields of emphasis and concern, normally with one strength test (which leaves the devil looking foolish) and the playing of the thunder-instrument (which may be no more than a strength test). How or why a devil came into possession of the thunder-instrument does not seem to have interested informants. There is rarely any indication of a connection between the instrument and weather or between this narrative and more general patterns of hostility between thunder and devils.

#### 5. ATU 1148b among Estonians and Setus

The richest corpus of ATU 1148b, both in terms of the number of examples and the length and complexity of their manifestations, was documented in Estonia. Oskar Loorits (1932, p.95) stresses that there are remarkably few variants considering the interest of collectors: 25 items (including Setu examples) are identified as ATU 1148b. This corpus is also the most accessible: German translations of 24 examples appear in Loorits (1932) and Anderson (1939). These scholars reduce the corpus to 20 basic examples, with five examples exhibiting dependence on a written exemplar. The Orthodox Setu of southeast Estonia (often treated as Estonian) maintained distinct forms of the narrative, identifying the thunder-god with Ilja ('Elijah'). Additional material (not identified as ATU 1148b) demonstrates the cultural activity of the narrative through its reflection in other genres. A legend recorded in Rõuge (Võrumaa, southern Estonia) claims a devil was witnessed fleeing from the thunder-god with a stolen *piibar* ('flute'), which the god immediately recovered (Loorits 1949–1957 II, pp.23-24). Variation (or perhaps fixity) in the conception of the thunder-instrument – normally *pill* ('instrument') (§1) (Loorits 1932, pp.109-111), allowing it to remain unresolved in the social transmission – may have been more common in southern Estonia (Võrumaa and Setumaa). Estonian tradition exhibits consistent conceptions of this as a blown instrument. According to Loorits (1949–1957 II, pp.26-27), the god's instrument is only presented as a drum in variants of ATU 1165, where it reflects the Swedish or

Germanic ‘Drum-Beater’ Thórr (see §9), and in ‘Die Donnertrommel’ (‘The Thunder-Drum’), an anonymous text published in *das Inland* (1858), the earliest preserved example of Estonian ATU 1148b, where German *trommel* may be a translation interpreting the ambiguous *pill*, particularly considering that a ‘drum’ does not necessarily accord with the description of the devil’s attempt to play the instrument in the text.

Loorits shows that ‘Die Donnertrommel’ is a German translation or adaptation of an item presented to the Learned Estonian Society by Johann Lagos in 1835 (Loorits 1932, pp.50-51), most probably already influenced by Lagos’s conceptions of an ideal Estonian mythology (Loorits 1932, pp.102-108). If Loorits is correct, the original was provided to Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (with whom Lagos worked closely) for his publications of Estonian folklore, and subsequently disappeared. Kreutzwald published two versions of ATU 1148b in 1866. One, developed from this text, was two and a half times the length of ‘Die Donnertrommel’ (Kreutzwald 1866, pp.123-126): the expansion and variations are generally attributed to Kreutzwald’s invention. The other was a very different version in the same collection (Kreutzwald 1866, pp.118-122). No sources for either survive.<sup>21</sup>

Kreutzwald’s publication circulated widely and influenced the oral traditions. It is uncertain where his publications introduced ATU 1148b into a community and where these publications may have augmented or reshaped vernacular traditions. U. Masing (1977, p.118) was right to question whether any later documented versions of the narrative were completely free of influence from Kreutzwald’s texts. This issue was augmented by early scholarship (Loorits 1932, de Vries 1933, Anderson 1939) which was not well equipped to deal with these problems when approaching the corpus – e.g. regional patterns in ‘corrupt’ or ‘plagiarised’ variants stood completely outside their field of vision; correspondences between variants which cannot be attributed to Kreutzwald’s texts were overlooked as superfluous. It must be emphasised that there is a tremendous difference between the published texts introducing ATU 1148b into oral circulation (or simply providing informants with sufficient familiarity to present a summary in response to a collector’s direct question) and the published texts interacting with conventional traditions already established in circulating discourse. In the latter case, the publication may have augmented an existing tradition, introducing complementary and alternative motifs, sequential arrangements and interpretations or meanings, or it may have done little more than assert the tradition’s

<sup>21</sup> Walter Anderson (1939, pp.17-27) proposed that the second version was entirely the invention of Kreutzwald.

value and a particular form or forms, stimulating the tradition as individuals in the communities responded to the concretised narratives in printed form. Estonian and Setu examples of ATU 1148b must be approached with caution and reserve, but it is nonetheless possible to develop a general overview of certain sets of characteristic features.

Devils’ fear of thunder or thunder’s pursuit of a devil is often mentioned if not emphasised at the beginning of the narrative. The theft is accomplished while the thunder-god sleeps. A number of variants provide the devil with an assistant, raised to the sleeping thunder-god on the devil’s neck and who accomplishes the theft. This is combined with setting a louse to bite the god so that he will move his arm or head from the instrument without waking. The scenario is similar to the Germanic myth of the theft of Freyja’s necklace by Loki (Jónsson “Vihjálmsón”, pp.98-100) and thus suspected to be Kreutzwald’s invention (Loorits 1932, pp.100-101; de Vries 1933, p.108; Anderson 1939, pp.19-20). The devil takes the instrument to his realm (the bottom of the sea, Hell) and may specifically lock it away. The thunder-god disguises himself and takes work as a servant, most often with a fisherman (developed or maintained in relation to the Estonian devil’s strong predilection for hiding in water). The fishing sequence results in the capture of the devil in the net and gaining an invitation to a wedding which the devil is holding. At the celebration, the devil brings out the *pill* and he (and perhaps all present) are unable to play it. The fisherman suggests that the disguised thunder-god be allowed to try. The thunder-god plays and destroys all of the devils. One version (in two examples) presents the motif of increasing volume (§4) (cf. Anderson 1939, p.52). In a few variants, the thunder-god asks his companion to get onto his back (cf. §3).

## 6. A uniquely Livonian tale

The Livonians are a Finnic linguistic-cultural group in Latvia whose language is almost extinct. Their traditions were closely related to those of southern Estonia. Information on Livonian thunder traditions is limited, and ATU 1148b is unattested (see Loorits 1926, pp.49-56, 252-253). A remote parallel may potentially be found in a popular and well-attested narrative which appears otherwise unique to Livonian tradition. Comparison is practical for discussion rather than any relationship being demonstrable. The narrative describes a fisherman and his companion fishing, of whom (as in ATU 1148b) only one observes a mythic being (not the devil). The being invites him to an undersea wedding where he (rather than the thunder-god) serves as a musician. (Loorits 1926, pp.143-163, 261-262; 1949–

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1957 II, pp.249-252; III, p.342.) This tale exhibits correspondences in narrative pattern and motif-systems to Estonian ATU 1148b without the thunder-god and conflict over the instrument.<sup>22</sup> If it were more widely known, this tradition could have provided material which was synthesised into the fisherman-companion of Estonian ATU 1148b. However, if the parallels are not merely typological, the system of narrative material from ATU1148b may have been radically revised into a new narrative where the subordinate figure became the protagonist, as in Sámic examples (§3).

### 7. ATU 1148b among Latvians

Only one Latvian variant of ATU 1148b has been identified (LFK 765/587; Balys 1939, p.36), which Aldis Putelis has generously helped me to investigate. The example was recorded in the Ilūkste region (southeast Latvia) in 1933 from the collector's mother, who purportedly heard it from her parents. The account says that God laid down his lighter / tinder box and his trumpet and went to sleep. A devil takes these and tries to play them for seven years, during which time there is neither thunder nor lightning in the world. When God wakes up, he has no work without his instruments and takes employment as a shepherd. No employer is mentioned. One day while herding, he notices a passing devil and follows him into a cave where he finds his instruments and all of the devils trying to play them. God asks to try, and the collector (presumably) notes, 'we must assume he looks like a simple shepherd'. There is thunder and lightning, all of the devils flee, and God returns with his instruments to work in the sky.

The pattern of seven years without thunder or lightning generally accords with the Estonian and Setu traditions (§5), where the *need* to take different employment is also encountered, albeit less often. The instrument is a 'horn' in a variant from Setumaa, where Ilja serves as a shepherd, and conceptions of thunder as a shepherd of clouds are reflected in the legend from Rõuge (Võrumaa). It is noteworthy that there is a congregation of devils rather than just one or one and his family. Balys (1939, p.51) emphasises that this variant presents the thunder-figure as 'God' rather than a secondary figure such as Ilja, but overall it falls in neatly with the Setu material. However, the variant offers no indication of emphasis or significance in the telling, and one variant does not offer insight into the broader Latvian tradition.

<sup>22</sup> A fuller discussion of how this narrative tradition relates to and contrasts with other traditions in the Circum-Baltic that associate water-spirits with music and musicians playing for supernatural beings is beyond the scope of this article.

### 8. ATU 1148b among Lithuanians

The first five examples of Lithuanian ATU 1148b presented by Balys (1939, pp.34-35) were collected by students on questionnaires in 1925 and 1935 in the Marijampolė District (southwest Lithuania). One variant collected by students reports that a devil stole Perkūnas's *pypkė* ('pipe [for smoking]'), and rather than 'thunder', the account claims that anyone who looks at Perkūnas dies. This begins as an aetiology of Perkūnas hunting the devil, then the devil raises a man with a mirror on his back (cf. Kreutzwald's text); the devil dies on seeing Perkūnas, Perkūnas dies on seeing his reflection, and the man goes home. Two examples, collected in different parts of the Vilkaviškis Municipality, report that God quarrelled with Perkūnas and threw him out of heaven, variously because Perkūnas stole God's axe, knife and *dviratis* ('two-wheeler' [bicycle, chariot]) (1935), or Perkūnas took these (and a goat) when being cast out of heaven (1925): the 'theft' of the thunder-god's attributes (§1) present an implicit aetiology of their association with Perkūnas while maintaining the basic theft scenario of ATU 1148b. The knife is not an attribute of Perkūnas: it is stolen from him by a devil as an aetiology for why Perkūnas throws his axe at devils. The collection of two versions of this account across ten years implies some type of underlying conventional form which warrants comparison with the apparent reorganisation of ATU 1148b's motifs (cf. §3). A student also collected an aetiology of Perkūnas's hostility toward the devil in an account of a devil stealing an axe (not associated with thunder) shared between Perkūnas and his brother. Balys (1939, p.36) compares this to a local legend about two giants who share one axe, into which the schema of the theft as an aetiology of hostility has been synthesised. The most peculiar of this group is an account in which the devil disguises himself as a beautiful woman, so that when Perkūnas kisses 'her', his lips knit shut;<sup>23</sup> now as soon as he sees the devil, 'he immediately opens his mouth, and the roar which is released is called thunder' (Balys 1939, p.34). It is unclear whether this should be identified with ATU 1148b or is an unrelated aetiology of thunder. Balys (1939, p.35) presents two additional Lithuanian examples. One, collected in central Lithuania in 1935, presents an aetiology of the Pleiades in an account of a sieve, hung in the sky by the Virgin Mary, stolen by the devil and recovered by Perkūnas. The other, collected in northeast Lithuania in 1935, is another aetiology of hostility, owing to the theft of a stone intended for Perkūnas's house. Of the examples presented by Balys, six appear to be evidence of ATU

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the Thórr-myth involving his wife and an aetiology of his hammer in which Loki's lips are sewn shut (Faulkes 1998, p.41-43).

1148b traditions. Four present thefts of a thunder-weapon object (axe, stone), but in the two examples where the axe is identified as a weapon, the devil steals another object.

Jūratė Šlekonytė found four additional narratives not listed by Balys catalogued as belief legends (Kerbelytė 1999–2002 III, p.178) and one as an aetiological legend (Kerbelytė 1999–2002 III, p.21). Three of these describe a devil refusing to return money borrowed from Perkūnas,<sup>24</sup> which may be the result of interference from Lithuanian ATU 1165 (§9). The fourth is the only variant which mentions that Perkūnas was asleep when a devil stole his guns/bullets,<sup>25</sup> clearly identifiable as the thunder weapon (Vėlius 1987, p.131; Laurinkienė 1996, pp.18-19). The aetiological legend states that the devil stole Elijošius's ('Elijah's') and Einokas's ('Hananja's') axe, chisel and hammer, explaining that when Elijošius travels, it thunders.<sup>26</sup>

### 9. Preliminary overview: from Lapland to Lithuania

The motif of sleep during the theft is reflected to varying degrees in all ATU 1148b traditions. The god appears immediately aware of the identity of the thief, otherwise encountering the adversary/instrument is accidental. From Finland to Latvia, the theft is followed by a period of disguise in which the god takes employment of low status, working for the devil (§4), or for the figure invited to the devil's celebration (§5), or without specification (§7). The Finnic traditions (§4-5; cf. §6) associate service with a fishing adventure. Finnic traditions and the Latvian example present an inability of the devil or community of devils to play the instrument, which is then unwittingly provided to the thunder-god who plays it effectively. Playing the instrument incapacitates, destroys or drives off the devil and the devil's community. Fundamental to this narrative is an underlying conception of a) the thunder-instrument as an object which a devil can obtain, but b) not get to function properly; the instrument can also c) be presented to the disguised thunder-god as though d) appropriate use or playing is not in itself dangerous and may even be positive and desirable. Conceptions of thunder and attributes of the thunder-god (§1) must therefore be considered a factor in the cultural activity of ATU 1148b.

Estonian and Setu traditions (§5) appear to be the most vital: they are the most well-attested in the number of examples, the examples are generally longer and more

<sup>24</sup> LTR 832/489/, 1935; LTR 832/492/, 1936; LTR 3116/4312/, 1947.

<sup>25</sup> LTR 1627/174/, 1938.

<sup>26</sup> LTR 1813/13/, 1937.

complex narratives, and they clearly participate in the communication and maintenance of aspects of the conceptual system and belief traditions to which they are connected (cf. §7). This includes the correlation between the thunder-instrument and rain (or its absence), which maintained currency, and also the relationship of thunder and devils. The latter included devils' fear of thunder and the power of thunder to overcome or drive away devils.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Finno-Karelian examples (§4) are few, short, and simpler narratives, almost all of which are preserved owing to the work of one enthusiastic collector. However, the Finno-Karelian examples are relatively widespread and the short, simple form was consistent and clearly conventional. The only explicit aetiological use is in the unusual example in which ATU 1148b was mapped over the widespread aetiology of thunder from God's wagon. Other examples express the power of thunder to overcome or destroy the devil, but fear is merely characteristic of the 'stupid devil' who is intimidated by feats of physical strength. Finno-Karelian ATU 1148b appears to have become dislocated from conventional conceptions about the aetiology of thunder. Although ATU 1148b is one of many Circum-Baltic narratives about thunder and the devil (§1), and it both affirms the power and significance of thunder as well as the inferiority and stupidity of devils, it is not connected to the hostility between thunder and the devil (which otherwise both emerges in and as aetiological legends): the Finno-Karelian ATU 1148b tradition appears primarily oriented toward humour and entertainment (cf. Frog 2010, pp.235-236).

Each Finnic tradition exhibits culturally specific social patterns in how ATU 1148b was used and of its significance in society: they reflect shared sets of conventions in its cultural activity *per* linguistic-cultural group. Insofar as these shared sets of conventions can be considered inherited through processes of social communication, it is reasonable to suggest that social patterns of use shaped the narrative's evolution as an historical process – i.e. that patterns of social conventions are not arbitrary within a culture but rather they are conditioned by the history of conventional applications, and as innovations, deletions and strategies in application become socially established as conventional, they become part of that historical process.

The evolution of the tradition can be considered according to scales of probability through correlations of social patterns of use, relationships to other material in the tradition ecology and in the broader conceptual system, and to the corresponding traditions in

<sup>27</sup> On hunting or chasing as a motif in this context, see Vėlius 1987, pp.126-139; Ajkhenvald *et al.* 1989, p.158; Laurinkienė 1996, p.23; Valk 1996.

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other cultures. This does not mean that questions can be simply and readily resolved. Comparison of Finno-Karelian (§4) and Estonian/Setu (§5) traditions implies that either: a) the Estonian/Setu tradition underwent an *accumulation of information* as a consequence of interest in and the significance of the narrative, expanding the thunder-god's service to the devil and the fishing adventure through the introduction of the fisherman who is invited to a wedding (cf. §6); or b) the Finno-Karelian tradition underwent a *loss of information* as a consequence of dislocation from belief traditions and increased emphasis on adventure and humour, reducing the devil and the fisherman with whom the thunder-god enters service to a single figure and consequently eliminating the celebration in the devil's home as grounds for inviting guests (see §11.4, §12).<sup>28</sup> Comparison of only these two traditions cannot resolve which is more probable.

Lithuanian sources (§8) are, for the most part, highly problematic. Nonetheless, they reveal that there was a tradition of the theft. They also reveal that in the culture where the thunder-god hunting devils was most pronounced, the tradition of the theft maintained conventional value as a social resource for the aetiology of Perkūnas's hostility. Comparison with other Circum-Baltic traditions presents a high probability that Lithuanian ATU 1148b underwent a tremendous loss of information: the narrative is reduced to the schema of the theft, 'losing' the identification of the stolen object with the god's loss of the sound or power of thunder, as well as 'losing' narrative material dependent on that identification (i.e. everything which follows on the initial episode).<sup>29</sup> This loss of information appears directly related to variation in the object stolen (knife, wood axe, tools, building stone, pipe, unreturned money) and the emphasis on the act of theft as the aetiology of hostility and pursuit. This contrasts sharply with the development of ATU 1148b in Sámic traditions where no theft appears. Sámic examples place emphasis on the relationship between the god and rain, and the god who embodies that power (rather than an attributed instrument) is locked away, apparently in a loss of information synthesising motifs associated with the theft and recovery into a single episode.<sup>30</sup> The Sámic tradition exhibits different priorities, such as the maintenance of a god-rain relation rather than a god-devil rela-

tion, and developments related to emphasis on different ATU 1148b episodes (theft versus recovery). More strikingly, synthesis with the Magic Flight presents the liberated god fleeing from the devil rather than pursuing him. This is a Sámic development in the evolution of ATU 1148b which does not seem like it could be possible in Lithuania, where Perkūnas's hostility and pursuit of the devil appears more central than his association with thunder or rain. Sámic and Lithuanian examples both reveal the maintenance of indexically associated systems of motifs mapped over new objects and adapted to new contexts. The evolution of each appears conditioned by the broader tradition ecology and conceptual system in which it participates. I propose that there is a correlation in the cultural milieu between social patterns of use and broader conceptions of the thunder-god and the aetiology of thunder, and that these impact the evolution of the narrative tradition.

The loss of information does not mean that the narrative material simply ceased to exist. Linda Dégh (1995, pp.97, 125-127, 218-219) emphasises that compelling narrative elements continue to be adapted to new contexts and applications even when the narratives or genres with which they are associated move toward extinction (cf. Frog 2010, pp.72-102). Although the recovery of the thunder-instrument is not exhibited in Lithuanian ATU 1148b, the thunder-god shows up as a musician at a different wedding – in ATU 1165, 'The Troll and the Baptism', a popular Circum-Baltic narrative.<sup>31</sup> ATU 1165 commonly represents a man required to invite a troll or devil to his child's baptism; the man dissuades the devil's attendance by mentioning mythic figures in attendance, culminating in 'Drum-Beater' (the thunder-god / Thórr), in response to which the devil declines the invitation (cf. Balys 1939, p.158; Vélius 1987, p.131), often mentioning a past injury. Lithuanian and Latvian ATU 1165 clearly follow the common pattern, one example even mentioning the drum (Balys 1939, pp.140-141), but the celebration is a man's *wedding*; a devil has loaned money to the groom (cf. §8); and the devil flees the wedding because the thunder-god is present *as a musician* (Laurinkienė 1996, p.23; for variants, see Balys 1939, pp.137-161). This unusual form of ATU 1165 could be related to a synthesis of narrative material associated at some earlier period with the recovery of the thunder-instrument, much as examples of Lithuanian ATU 1148b (§8) appear fused with other material. This potential reuse of narrative material is interesting for comparison with the Livonian tale of a fisherman attending a wedding as a musician (§6), as another potential example of an episode finding renewed social value.

<sup>28</sup> On accumulation and loss of information, see Frog (2010, pp.119-121, 178-179, 190-191, 310, 314-315).

<sup>29</sup> See also Vélius (1987, pp.127-128) for an overview of aetiologies of hostility and other associations of the devil with a 'theft'.

<sup>30</sup> There is also a possibility that the Sámic tradition reflects a synthesis of ATU 1148b traditions with an established tradition of the captured thunder-god (cf. Anderson 1939, p.72n).

<sup>31</sup> Balys 1939, pp.137-161, 213-216; Uther 2004 II, pp.57-58; cf. Barag *et al.* 1979, p.270.

## 10. The Greek analogue of Nonnos

The only clear example of ATU 1148b outside of the Circum-Baltic cultural area is the Greek myth of Zeus and his great opponent Typhoeus in the *Dionysica* of Nonnos of Panopolis, composed in the fifth century A.D.<sup>32</sup> Nonnos combines ATU 1148b with a corresponding myth about the theft of Zeus's sinews, attested elsewhere. These have been discussed in detail by Uku Masing (1944; cf. Masing 1977, pp.124-129) and William Hansen (1995; 2002, pp.305-314). In Nonnos's poem, Zeus lays aside his lightning in order to go to bed with Pluto ('sleep') and Typhoeus accomplishes the theft (*Dionysica* I.145-162). The weight of the lightning makes it difficult to wield and it does not resound as it should (I.294-320). Typhoeus then hides the lightning in a cave. Zeus disguises a man as a pipe-playing shepherd. Typhoeus challenges him to a playing match (I.362-480), in which Typhoeus will play the lightning, described as an *ὄργανον αὐτοβόητον* ('self-playing instrument') (I.432). This competition does not take place. Nonnos abruptly introduces a parallel tradition about Zeus's stolen sinews: the shepherd claims Zeus burnt away the strings of his seven-stringed lyre (*κιθάρα*), but that if only he had the sinews of Zeus, he could play a tune that would affect the whole world (I.486-508). Typhoeus provides the sinews, the shepherd conceals them in a rock (they are never mentioned again) and resumes playing his pipes. Meanwhile Zeus recovers the hidden thunder-instrument without conflict (I.507-II.41). The peculiarities of Nonnos's account avoid the competition of playing music in which the thunder-god of ATU 1148b would demonstrate his ability and destroy his adversary (presented as a separate conflict). This analogue provides evidence of the potential age of ATU 1148b, presenting: a) the theft during 'sleep'; b) thunder as a 'self-playing instrument' which nonetheless c) requires strength to play, d) should be played appropriately, and e) cannot be played by the 'devil'; f) hiding the instrument; g) a god-servant relation with h) a disguise as a shepherd; and i) a challenge of playing which results in j) the 'devil' offering the/a stolen power attribute of the god (sinews) k) for a musical instrument l) to play for him as entertainment.

## 11. Approaching ATU 1148b in Norse Germanic cultures

Sources for the Germanic tradition are early, limited, and problematic. Two eddic poems recorded in the 13th century have been central to discussions of Ger-

manic traditions of ATU 1148b. *Þrymskviða* (*Þkv*)<sup>33</sup> describes the theft and recovery of Thórr's hammer, and *Hymiskviða* (*Hkv*) is conventionally treated as an authoritative presentation of Thórr's fishing expedition. Finally, evidence of ATU 1148b reflected in Thórr's adventure to the home of a giant called Geirrǫðr will be considered.

### 11.1. *Þrymskviða* and ATU 1148b

*Þkv* is the only versified tradition of ATU 1148b,<sup>34</sup> with its descendents in later Icelandic *rímur* poetry and Scandinavian ballads;<sup>35</sup> there is no evidence of a corresponding prose tradition (cf. Liungman 1961, p.267), and *Þkv*'s relationship to tradition has been subject to much debate.<sup>36</sup> *Þkv* opens with Thórr waking up to discover that his hammer has disappeared. He sends a subordinate figure (Loki) to search for it, and the thief, a giant called Thrymr, demands the goddess Freyja in exchange for the hammer. Thórr travels with his companion Loki to Thrymr's home for the wedding, with Thórr disguised as the bride and Loki as 'her' handmaiden. Thórr astounds the giant Thrymr with a display of appetite rather than strength, for which Loki offers excuses. Thórr's hammer is brought out and placed in Thórr's lap to consecrate the bride, at which point Thórr uses it to kill everyone.

*Þkv* exhibits the principle system of ATU 1148b's motifs: theft during sleep, a servant, disguise, infiltrating the household of the adversary/thief, a wedding celebration, feats which impress the host, the thunder-instrument unwittingly given to the god, and the destruction of the adversary with the instrument. There are also noteworthy contrasts; Thórr resists rather than makes the plan and disguise; his thunder-god appetite threatens his disguise (as the goddess of sexuality) rather than threatening or impressing the devil; the disguise is not one of service and explicitly humiliates the god. A man assuming a woman's gender role, particularly in sexual relations (an implied con-

<sup>33</sup> All eddic poems are cited according to the Neckel and Kuhn (1963) edition by poem title, stanza number and line number within the stanza, e.g. *Þkv* 17.3-4 = *Þrymskviða*, lines 3-4 of stanza 17.

<sup>34</sup> Krohn (1922, pp.205-206; 1931, p.126) suggested that the Finno-Karelian tradition may have had an earlier verse form, largely based on an unwarranted assumption that the authoritative form of mythological narratives should be versified. Nonnos represents the tradition in verse, but there is no reason to believe that this reflects a conventionally versified narrative tradition for ATU 1148b.

<sup>35</sup> On the later traditions, see Grundtvig 1853, p.1-7; Bugge, Moe 1887; Jónsson 1905-1912, pp.278-289; Nielsen 1911; Liestøl 1970, pp.15-18; Bertell 2003, pp.53-61.

<sup>36</sup> See de Vries 1928; Hallberg 1954; Jakobsen 1984; Magerøy 1991 (1956); von See *et al.* 1997, pp.509-575; McKinnell 2001; Bertell 2003, pp.53-61; Thorvaldsen 2008; Frog 2010, pp.213-216.

<sup>32</sup> Cited according to Rouse's (1940) edition; on Typhoeus, see West (2007, p.257-258).

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sequence of the wedding) was the highest possible offence in early Norse culture (Meulengracht Sørensen 1983). In *Þkv*, Freyja states that the proposed union would be offensive to her because of implications of excessive female sexual appetite (*Þkv* 13). This establishes the offensive quality of the role which Þórr is compelled to fill in his disguise, concerning which he objects: ‘*Mic muno æsir / argan kalla // ef ec bindaz læt / brúðar líni*’ (*Þkv* 17.3-6) – the offensive sense of which is roughly equivalent to modern English ‘The gods will say I was out to get f\*\*\*ed up the arse if I let them do me up in a wedding dress’. Where Freyja’s objection succeeded, Þórr’s fails. Þórr’s initial attempt to trade Freyja for his hammer is contrary to his role as defender of the gods’ realm and their women from giants (Clunies Ross 1994). Moreover, he fails to give the goddess to those he should protect her from, and he is subjected to the role which she rejected. Þórr’s appearance in a wedding dress is contrasted with the storm raised by his goats and chariot on his journey to meet Thrymr (*Þkv* 21), his appetite (*Þkv* 24-26), and the furious blazing of his eyes when Thrymr tries to kiss him (*Þkv* 27-28). The phallic farce of castration through losing his hammer while he slept (which Margaret Clunies Ross [2002, p.188] suggests would have been understood in terms of homosexual rape) comes to a climax when the hammer is placed in the lap of the emasculated Þórr-bride, and he rejoices at the return of what is his, using it on everyone (*Þkv* 30-31; Clunies Ross 2002, pp.188-189).

*Þkv* is purely concerned with the adventure of the hammer’s recovery by Þórr and Loki: Thrymr does not threaten the gods, their domain, and there is no indication that he would otherwise take Freyja by force; there is no mention of Þórr’s hammer as an object which the giants feel in any way threatened by, nor that they are intimidated by thunder (the chariot splits cliffs with thunder and lightning), and there is no indication that the hammer was associated with thunder or rain at all. The priority of presentation appears to be on making Þórr look foolish, humiliating him through gender transgression. Although individual motifs of *Þkv* are traditional, there is no support in early sources for the narrative as a whole, the name of the adversary, nor for individual mythic events depicted (for example, the bursting of Freyja’s necklace, Þórr borrowing it, or any association of Þórr’s hammer with brides).<sup>37</sup> A number of features of *Þkv* as a composition

<sup>37</sup> Þórr’s remark about what the gods will say about him makes it seem remarkable that the event is never referred to in insult exchanges with other gods (*Lokasenna*, *Hárbarðsljóð*). The placement of the phallic hammer in the bride’s lap would very possibly threaten her sexuality or nullify the hammer’s masculine power (Itkonen 1946, pp.212-213; Salo 2006, pp.38-41), which in this case turns

are unconventional, and moreover unconventional in ways that associate the composition with later traditions of poetic narrative.<sup>38</sup> The lack of evidence for the *Þkv* narrative in early sources contrasts sharply with its later translation and persistence in those later poetic traditions – Icelandic *rímur* poetry and Scandinavian ballads – where it exhibits no connection to belief traditions. Among *rímur*, this is one of three preserved ‘mythological’ narratives, the others being *Lokrur* (Jónsson 1905–1912, pp.290-310), adapted directly from Snorri Sturluson’s parodic account of Þórr’s visit to Útgarða-Loki (Jónsson 1905–1912, p.290), and *Skíðaríma* (Jónsson 1905–1912, pp.10-42), a beggar’s comic Christian visionary journey to Valhalla. The corresponding ballads were recorded in Norway, Denmark, Sweden and the Færoe Isles into the 19th and 20th century. This distribution is more remarkable because it is the only known Scandinavian ballad based on a ‘pagan’ mythological narrative (Liestøl 1970, p.18). Features of *Þkv*’s composition associate it with changes taking place in the poetic tradition across the 13th to the 15th centuries while the narrative, for which there is no early evidence, thrived in the later Christian cultural milieu.

## 11.2 Þórr’s fishing expedition and ATU 1148b

In contrast to *Þkv*, Þórr’s adventure of fishing for the world serpent exhibits tremendous early populari-

the bride into an angry man who kills the groom. The tendency to identify any reference to a hammer or axe in any way connected to a wedding with *Þkv* (e.g. ATU 1165; Motz 1997, p.335) requires comprehensive reassessment, particularly considering that the examples derive not from Iceland, but primarily from Sweden, the function of the instrument may not be bound to weddings *per se*, or even strictly associated with the thunder-god (Lindow 1994, p.490; Siikala 2002a, p.293), a possibility which becomes still more prominent when the motif is framed in a Circum-Baltic context (§1).

<sup>38</sup> E.g. *Þkv* exhibits limited end-rhyme (avoided in eddic verse), over-alliteration (cf. Aðalsteinnsson 2009), and uses of parallelism and repetition more characteristic of later *rímur* poetry and ballads; parallelism includes the use of terms for the two classes of gods (*Æsir* and *Vanir*) as mutually equivalent in parallel lines (*Þkv* 15.1-4) – and apparently also the placement of Þórr’s hammer to bless the bride with the blessing (*vígja*) by the hands of the mysterious (alliterating) goddess Vár (*Þkv* 30.5-8) – inconsistent with eddic poetry but consistent with *rímur*; correlations in the verbal text and motif-constellations of *Þkv* with other poems are uncharacteristic of eddic poetry and appear intended to generate intertextual references for contrast after the manner of parody rather than summary or conventional uses of common poetic themes; these correlations coupled with over-use of archaic-sounding expletive particles (Fidjestøl 1999, pp.207-230) would be consistent with a strategy to ‘sound’ eddic in the generation of parody (cf. Fidjestøl 1999, p.228).

ty.<sup>39</sup> Þórr disguises himself as a youth and enters the household of the giant Hymir. In *Hkv*, this visit is motivated by the acquisition of a mythic cauldron rather than the thunder-instrument. *Hkv* is uniquely connected to another poem, *Lokasenna*, in manuscript prose (Neckel, Kuhn 1962, p.96): it precedes the drinking feast of the giant Ægir, lord of the sea, for which Þórr fetched the brewing-kettle – although *Lokasenna* presents Þórr arriving after the feast has begun. In *Hkv*, Þórr enters the household of the giant through association with a companion and is subject to a series of strength-tests. The final strength test is moving the cauldron: Þórr's companion attempts twice and fails; Þórr succeeds and the accomplishment is identified with a ringing noise (*Hkv* 34). Among the strength tests is the fishing expedition, from which the companion (not attested in any other source) is absent and only Þórr and the fisherman-giant participate. In the prose account of Snorri Sturluson, Þórr makes this visit to Hymir alone, the challenges in the hall are absent, and the motivation for the adventure is awkwardly linked to the preceding narrative, which describes a celebration in Útgarda-Loki's hall (Faulkes 1982, pp.42-45) (§11.4). The rowing challenge (ATU 1087) is associated with this fishing expedition, but rather than breaking the boat through strength of rowing (§4), Þórr's foot or feet go through the bottom of the boat in raising the serpent (Meulengracht Sørensen 2001 [1986], pp.63-64).

### 11.3. Visiting Geirrøðr and ATU 1148b

Þórr's visit to the giant Geirrøðr was also popular (Mogk 1924; Simek 1986; McKinnell 1994, pp.57-86). The instigating event is uncertain, but Þórr makes a dangerous journey with a companion and without his hammer; he engages in a series of games or strength-tests in the giant Geirrøðr's hall, concluding with slaying the giant (and everyone else). In the earliest example, the allusive skaldic poem *Þórsdrápa* (ca. 1000 A.D.), Þórr is mysteriously in possession of his hammer at the conclusion of the adventure (Faulkes 1998, pp.29-30). Alfred Vestlund (1911, pp.109-112) and Jan de Vries (1933, pp.64-65) argue that this adventure concerned the recovery of Þórr's hammer, although the aetiology of the hammer has also been proposed (Jackson 2005, pp.495-496; cf. Faulkes 1998, p.42). Examples emphasise Þórr's strength and power without clear reference to either rain or 'thunder',<sup>40</sup> al-

though the fear of the giant may be present within the conflict.

Þórr does not appear to make this journey in disguise. However, in a later (15th century) euhemerised account, Thorsteinn bæjarmagn ('Þórr-Stone Mansion-Might') enters the hall of Geirrøðr as the invisible companion of a giant, who, with his entourage, has been invited to a celebration. Thorsteinn lends invisible aid to his companion in the series of strength tests until he is revealed as the servant of this giant. His companion gives him as a gift to Geirrøðr (allowing Thorsteinn's companion to depart safely), who wishes to see a display of the Thorsteinn's ability. (Jónsson, Vihjálmsón 1943–1944 III, pp.405-412.) Thorsteinn has a magical stone (*hallr*) of three colours with an accompanying metal spike (*broddr*); when the different colours of the stone are pricked with the spike, different varieties of weather are produced;<sup>41</sup> the parts will hit anything they are thrown at and return to Thorsteinn's hand (Jónsson, Vihjálmsón 1943–1944 III, pp.400-402). Jacqueline Simpson (1966, pp.5-8) has discussed this peculiar object in relation to corresponding objects called 'Thor's hammers' in later Icelandic tradition: these were used in magic by pricking the hammer with its accompanying spike. Thorsteinn refers to the product of this object as *leikinn* ('playing' [either a game or musical instrument]). Geirrøðr is entertained and encourages Thorsteinn to generate different weather until Thorsteinn performs something called *svipuleikr* ('whip-play', perhaps 'whip-song' [cf. Cleasby, Vigfússon 1896, p.611]). This throws fire and sparks in the eyes of Geirrøðr, who laughs and asks for more. Thorsteinn gradually increases his playing and concludes by throwing the two parts of his object into the eyes of Geirrøðr and fleeing, the object's parts returning to him thereafter. (Jónsson, Vihjálmsón 1943–1944 III, pp.412-413.)

### 11.4 Overview: ATU 1148b in Norse Germanic cultures

Thorsteinn bæjarmagn is attributed with a weather-producing object in two parts, comparable to the (always plural) Finno-Karilian *jrystimet* (§4). Like the thunder-god of ATU 1148b, he enters the hall of the giant in a deceptive manner, presenting himself as a servant although he orchestrates the action. The giant expects entertainment without the possibility of harm when the two-part object is used in a performative ac-

daughters with *fulmina* ('lightning bolts') (Ollrik, Ræder 1931, p.243). Saxo's handling of material is so free that it is unclear whether this reflects tradition, invention, or an interpretation of Þórr's weapon or power as a *fulmen*-symbol for the Latin text.

<sup>41</sup> This is exceptional for weather magic (Simpson 1966, p.6).

<sup>39</sup> See Meulengracht Sørensen (2001 [1986]); on the early loan into Finno-Karelian, see Setälä (1932).

<sup>40</sup> The poem *Þórsdrápa* is so allusive that it is ambiguous. Saxo Grammaticus presents this myth in his *Gesta Danorum* ('History of the Danes') as a sort of guided tour of Geirrøðr's hall by human adventurers (tourists) long after the battle. Saxo states that Þórr destroyed Geirrøðr's

tion described as ‘playing’, appropriate to a musical instrument. This performance is accompanied by the motif of gradual increase (§4-5), and Geirrøðr appreciates this performance in spite of its violent products. Thorsteinn throws the two parts at the giant (as Thórr uses his hammer), killing him. The property of these parts to return to the hero is identical to the description of Thórr’s hammer (Faulkes 1998, p.42), to which it is somehow equivalent. This increases its probable identification as a thunder-instrument within a motif-complex and narrative pattern paralleling the recovery episode of ATU 1148b, even though the theft and recovery of the object are absent. This account has been manipulated by the saga author and is clearly intended to be entertaining, but these correspondences make it appear that the material being manipulated included some form of ATU 1148b. This consequently increases the probability that the apparent acquisition of Thórr’s hammer after his arrival in the hall in *Þórsdrápa* (four or five centuries earlier) also reflects some form of ATU 1148b.<sup>42</sup> However, this does not eliminate the possibility of an aetiology of the hammer, or interaction and variation between ATU 1148b and an aetiology of Thórr’s hammer.

*Hkv* presents a narrative which has potentially mapped ATU 1148b over another mythic object held by a giant. John McKinnell (1994, pp.57-86) points out that the ‘games’ or strength tests in the giant’s hall related to acquiring the cauldron appear to follow the same story pattern as in the visit to Geirrøðr’s hall. In *Hkv*, the mythic object acquired is accompanied by a sequence of one figure failing before the god succeeds with a resounding noise. Although a ‘disguise’ does not generally appear in the visit to Geirrøðr, it was associated with Thórr’s fishing expedition. In *Hkv*, Thórr’s fishing expedition is embedded in the story pattern discussed by McKinnell, presenting the possibility that the episode has undergone a (potentially unique) accumulation of information, through which material from an adventure to a giant’s hall for the acquisition of a mythic object exhibiting a common pattern with ATU 1148b has accumulated around Thórr’s adventure with the fisherman.

<sup>42</sup> A conventional form of ATU 1148b may be parodied in an episode of the burlesque *Bósa saga*, where it would have been mapped over a bridal-quest narrative: the stolen object is a princess, the adversary is named Guðmundr (the name of the positive companion in adventures where the adversary is Geirrøðr), the hero and his companion enter the wedding feast in disguise, the hero plays a harp which magically affects people and objects alike, the adversary is struck senseless and the hero escapes with the instrument (in which the princess is concealed, notably for a companion, not for himself) (Jónsson, Vihjálmsón 1943–1944 II, pp.487-491).

This accumulation of information may reflect a loss of information from a longer narrative sequence – i.e. if Thórr’s adventures in the service of the giant-fisherman was a means of advancing to the home of another giant for the acquisition of the lost thunder-instrument (§5, §9). The possibility is not unreasonable considering that this basic schema appears in Óðinn’s adventure for the acquisition of the Mead of Poetry: Óðinn first engages as a reaper in the service of one giant, gains audience with the possessor of the mead through that association, and eventually accomplishes the theft (Faulkes 1998, pp.4-5). A loss of information could have resulted in the identification of the fisherman with the lord of the hall and a synthesis of distinct narrative sequences. This would parallel the potential loss in Finno-Karelian ATU 1148b (§4) resulting in the god’s service with the thief rather than a fisherman (§9).

This possibility is augmented by Snorri Sturluson’s connection of Thórr’s fishing expedition to his adventures with Útgarða-Loki. Snorri presents these narratives in a fictional dialogue, which the Útgarða-Loki narrative is carefully constructed to reflect and comment on (Lindow 2000). The narrative itself is a burlesque which repeatedly shows Thórr deceived and defeated by his adversaries (see Tolley, forthcoming). McKinnell (1994, pp.57-86) shows that this narrative is developed according to the same story pattern as the visit to Geirrøðr, of which it is the only example where Thórr fails to defeat his adversary. Its reception as a burlesque is emphasised by the direct translation of the written narrative into *rímur* poetry (§11.1). Snorri’s (unique) connection of the fishing expedition to this narrative is as peculiar and clumsy as the connection of *Hkv* to *Lokasenna*: he presents it as a revenge action for the humiliation Thórr suffered in one specific challenge, with the additional jibe that Thórr succeeded in deceiving the (stupid) world serpent with his fishing hook ‘no less than Útgarða-Loki had made a mockery of him’ with illusions of cosmological proportions (Faulkes 1982, p.44). There is at least the possibility that Snorri connected these two scenarios on the basis of a conventional association. This possibility may find some small support in that both Snorri and *Hkv* (37-38) link this cycle to the myth of the laming of Thórr’s goat, which might also be paralleled in the wagon accident on the departure from the Geirrøðr adventure in Book VIII of Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum* (Orik, Ræder: 1931, p.243). It is possible that these three narratives formed a (variable) system or cycle in which the fishing expedition was associated with ATU 1148b.

All Germanic examples are concerned with action-adventure scenarios, expressions of power, and all engage in varying degrees of humour. It is not clear

how any of these examples may have related to belief traditions – except possibly *Pkv*, with its orientation toward parody. If Germanic ATU 1148b were a system of narratives including the Geirrøðr adventure and fishing expedition, there are some noteworthy inconsistencies: a) the companion on the visit to Geirrøðr is never the giant-fisherman, it is normally Thórr's servant; b) Thórr's hammer appears to be absent from the fishing adventure but then is used in the climactic conflict with the world serpent; c) Thórr is disguised for the fishing adventure but (apparently) not for the visit to Geirrøðr; d) only the parody *Pkv* presents the theft during sleep. There is the possibility that ATU 1148b had already splintered into separate narratives which had developed conventional forms divorced from the unifying thread of the stolen thunder 'instrument'. Factors involved in this process may have included the interaction of Thórr's fishing expedition with traditions of Christ/God fishing for Leviathan (Gschwantler 1968) and the stimulation of and changes in the cultural activity of Thórr's hammer/axe in response to the parallel cultural activity of the Christian Cross (Capelle 2005).<sup>43</sup> In other words, the tradition of the fishing expedition may have been subject to radical changes in both form and cultural activity in relation to the rise of Christianity. The splintering of Germanic ATU 1148b would be comparable to its (aetiologically oriented) evolution in Lithuanian (§8). The Geirrøðr adventure (§11.3) may also have developed from ATU 1148b as the latter waned in cultural activity, without ever being associated with the fishing adventure itself. The diversity in the sources (including evidence of a potentially unified theft scenario parodied in §11.1 and §11.3) persisting in tandem could be a consequence of the majority of sources being documented in Iceland: Iceland was a colony of migrants from across Scandinavia and beyond, who brought their diverse traditions with them – a plurality of conventional forms which may have been as inclined to compete as to synthesise into a unified form (see §13).

## 12. Perspectives on ATU 1148b

The service with the fisherman shared across Finnic and Germanic traditions (§4-5, §11.2, cf. §6) is paralleled by service as a shepherd in Setu, Latvian and the Greek examples (§5, §7, §10). A Sámic example (§3) and the legend from Võrumaa (§5) betray a concept of the thunder-god herding clouds ('service' is not exhibited in Lithuanian examples). It is not possible to make any determination about the significance (or lack

<sup>43</sup> This should not be confused with conscious semiotic 'protest' as has sometimes been done (cf. Nordeide 2006, p.222), although such conscious competitions were no doubt significant in some cases or areas.

thereof) in the herdsman versus fisherman disguise/occupation. The Finnic-Germanic isogloss may be partly an illusion following from the paucity of sources and the variant forms of the traditions encountered in more peripheral cultural areas. Nonetheless, Germanic parallels make it more probable that Estonian traditions of the thunder-god's service with a fisherman are related to an early Germanic form. This supports that Finno-Karelian traditions underwent a loss of information, but the process of loss remains ambiguous. The majority of the early Germanic examples were documented in Iceland (West Norse), and traditions in Germanic cultures on the Baltic Sea (East Norse) may have maintained markedly different, distinct traditions (§1). The loss of information may have happened already in a Germanic tradition (cf. §11.4) potentially introduced into the Finno-Karelian traditions (§4) – or vice versa – superseding conventional ATU 1148b or reshaping the narrative pattern according to new priorities (cf. §5).

The early Greek example of ATU 1148b (§10) provides an interesting point of historical reference, even if it is not entirely certain when or within what horizons the underlying tradition may have been conventional, nor even that the tradition manipulated by Nonnos was indeed linguistically or culturally 'Greek' (cf. Rouse 1940, p.xiii; Tolley 2009, pp.93-102). The Greek example emphasises that *Pkv* is most likely a uniquely Germanic or uniquely Germanic Scandinavian adaptation of ATU 1148b (§11.1), of which other cultural forms are independent. There is strong evidence of a Germanic ATU 1148b tradition which shared many features with Finnic ATU 1148b traditions. This further increases the probability that *Pkv* was a conscious (parodic) adaptation of ATU 1148b intended to make fun of Thórr in the wake of the process of conversion to Christianity, founding a new tradition of ATU 1148b which persisted into the 20th century. This implies that any relationship to Finnic traditions predates the 13th century. The *Pkv* tradition with its history of conservative maintenance of the narrative for a minimum of six centuries emphasises that the evolution of a tradition such as ATU 1148b may have been characterised by fits and starts of radical (and socially relevant) transformations rather than being a slow, gradual and fluid progression.

The deeper roots of the tradition remain obscure. The conception of the thunder-instrument on which the narrative is dependent (§1, §9) correlated with conventional conceptions in Estonian/Setu traditions (§5, cf. §7) where thunder was conceived as 'blown' on an instrument. However, this does not mean ATU 1148b developed around this particular conception. Norbertas Vėlius draws attention to a correlation between the devil's fear of thunder and the devil's fear of the sound

of a mill (grinding stones) in Baltic traditions. He proposes that this is not simply typological but reflects some form of historical association of mills or milling with the thunder-god. (Vélius 1987, pp.132-133.) This finds some support in the Latvian term *milna* ('stick; handle of a hand-mill') for Pērkon's club (Mühlenbach, Endzelīn 1923–1932 II, p.627), etymologically related to both *Mjöllnir* (Thórr's hammer) and terms for 'mill' and 'milling' (West 2007, pp.253-254), and Finno-Karelian *jyristimet* appearing as two stones like those of a mill.<sup>44</sup> An underlying aetiology of 'thunder' from a mill may be supported by a Komi-Zyryan<sup>45</sup> aetiology of thunder from a 'self-grinding' mill worked with great effort (like the 'self-playing instrument' [§10]?) by a goat that lives with the supreme sky-god (Konakov *et al.* 2003, p.96). Although ATU 1148b is not attested in Komi, the role of the goat is striking because evidence of ATU 1148b is distributed across precisely those Indo-European mythologies (Baltic, Germanic, Greek) in which the thunder-wielding god is associated with goats (West 2007, pp.240, 248, 250). Like the Estonian blown instrument, the aetiology of thunder from a mill is non-percussive, and once 'thunder' is identified with 'music' there is no reason a 'mill' might not be 'played' – in which case, Estonian conceptions could thus be rooted in the ambiguity of the term *pill*.

Similarly, the Norse term *hamarr* ('hammer') had a conventional meaning of a stone wedge or cliff (see Motz 1997) and Thorsteinn's curious instrument involved striking with a spike (§11.3). These might be compared to traditions of the 'nail'-star's association with fire-striking (§1) (Tolley 2009, pp.275-276, 281), which is connected to the technology of iron-working and the use of iron in fire-striking (cf. Salo 1990; 2006). Indeed, evidence of ritual fire-striking artefacts in the Circum-Baltic from the beginning of the Iron Age have been identified with thunder-god worship, and even the rise of the thunder-god to dominance in the region (Salo 1990, pp.119-129; Kulmar 2003, pp.28-29; Salo 2006, pp.33-48) (cf. §1). If the associations of grinding

<sup>44</sup> *niinkun leipäkakkaraa vaan* ('just like pancakes') (SKS KRA Krohn, Kaarle 2201. 1884); Finno-Karelian aetiologies of thunder from god's wagon describe it as coming specifically from its wheels grating against stones in the heavens (e.g. SKS KRA Valkonen, Jaakko TK 112:393. 1961). It is interesting to consider that an accumulation of information from ATU 1148b could explain the mysterious motif of sleep in the epic theft/recovery of the Finno-Karelian *sampo* from the otherworld, or perhaps even, in some archaic and remote cultural stratum, the *sampo*'s identification as a 'mill' (see Frog forthcoming).

<sup>45</sup> The Komi are a Finno-Ugric culture which was still in direct contact with Finnic cultures in the first millennium of the present era; linguistic evidence suggests a primary direction of exchange from Finnic to Komi languages (Laakso 2001, p.202).

and striking stones across these cultures are relevant, it is very possible that ATU 1148b formed under a corresponding aetiology of thunder which held currency in an early period, probably long predating the earliest documented example from the 5th century (§10). However, these conceptions in any given culture at any given time are so diverse and stratified, entangled in their long and unique histories of transmission, re-interpretation, synthesis and rejection, spanning both genres and cultures, that the conceptual foundations of the identification of 'thunder' with an 'instrument' recedes like a Minotaur into the shadows of a labyrinth, and seems to have long since become irrecoverable, leaving the emergence of ATU 1148b, as the theft of a thunder 'instrument', a mystery.

### 13. The evolution of ATU 1148b as a historical process

The single Greek example suggests that ATU 1148b was subject to significantly more cultural activity across other regions and linguistic-cultural groups in an earlier period. This emphasises that ATU 1148b traditions only persisted in the Circum-Baltic area. In this light, a possible connection between ATU 1148b and the Komi goat-mill does not seem inherently unreasonable, even if it remains ambiguous. It is also more remarkable that ATU 1148b persisted among Sámic, Finnic, Baltic and Germanic linguistic-cultural groups as an isogloss in spite of the radical transformations to which it was subject in each culture. Within this isogloss, transformations appear to have been more radical or to have begun earlier in cultures at the periphery (cf. Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Wälchli 2001, pp.638-640) – Sámic, Lithuanian and earlier Germanic. There appears to be a correlation between persistence of ATU 1148b in any one linguistic-cultural group and its persistence among one or more adjacent populations.

In their survey of linguistic developments through historical contact in the Circum-Baltic, Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Wälchli (2001, p.622) emphasised the culturally dynamic history of this area. The cultural dynamism of this history also seems relevant to understanding narrative traditions such as ATU 1148b. The persistence of ATU 1148b across all of these diverse linguistic-cultural groups appears to be at least partially dependent on their history of contact and interaction. Persistence was supported, maintained and conditioned within the system of traditions related to thunder and the thunder-god found in each of these cultures (§1, §9). However, we should not underestimate that the system of beliefs, conceptions, rituals and narrative activity associated with thunder was also supported and maintained through ongoing contact with adjacent

cultures which had corresponding traditions. The significance of adjacency in the persistence of traditions is poorly understood. It appears to be relevant to aesthetic compositional priorities such as alliteration (Roper 2009, pp.90-93; Frog, Stepanova 2011, pp.209-211; cf. Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Wälchli 2001, pp.638-640). On the level of genre, adjacency has been considered a factor in the persistence of oral epic traditions, such as Slavic *byliny* and kalevalaic epic in Karelia (Bailey, Ivanova 1998, p.xxxvii; Frog 2010, p.235). It may also be relevant to the lamentation traditions addressed by Eila Stepanova (this volume), who demonstrates the genre's intimate connection with belief traditions. The evidence of ATU 1148b suggests that adjacency and a history of cultural contact is not only relevant to conceptions and beliefs related to thunder in the Circum-Baltic, but also to the persistence of individual narrative traditions associated with those conceptions and beliefs.<sup>46</sup>

Interpersonal contact is implicit in this process. It has been observed that introducing individuals from outside of a community or generating temporary communities of individuals (e.g. for work, travel or trade) has a stimulating effect on performance activity in different oral genres (e.g. Dégh 1969, 1995). A similar phenomenon has been observed in patterns of population movement which brings together diverse communities: this appears to have a more general stimulating effect on oral traditions (Siikala 2002b, pp.41-42; Frog 2010, pp.234-235). Such interactions on the level of isolated individuals and larger social groups were ongoing around the Baltic Sea for thousands of years, and it is reasonable to assume that this interaction had a stimulating effect on different traditions.

In the introduction to thunder-god traditions in the Circum-Baltic (§1), attention was drawn to Ülo Valk's address of probable Indo-European cultural influences in Estonian traditions of thunder slaying the devil. Valk (1996) stresses that these influences are most likely heavily stratified and that 'the influence has been mutual rather than one-sided since the very beginning of the relations' (Valk 1996, p.20). The impact of interaction may not be merely one of simple transference as early 20th century scholarship was inclined to assume, particularly if corresponding traditions are already established in the other culture (Valk 1996, p.20). This was emphasised when addressing the potential impacts of Kreutzwald's published texts on Estonian and Setu oral traditions (§5), and also in the changes undergone by both Thórr's fishing expedition and the cultural activity of his hammer as a symbol in response to corre-

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Lina Būgienė's (this volume) discussion on beliefs in a supernatural 'milk-stealer' emergent in a system of narrative legends.

sponding Christian traditions (§11.4). Contact appears to stimulate sensitivity to the value and significance of traditions, as well as presenting options and alternatives of form, contents and applications. Stimulations, revaluations and transformations of ATU 1148b in Circum-Baltic cultures appear to have been part of that process. The persistence of ATU 1148b in these cultures, its maintenance and transformations, appear to be the product of patterns of interaction to such a degree that it becomes impossible to reduce its history to a simple linear model of origin in one culture and transmission to the next, and to the next, and to the next, and so forth. The Greek example implies that ATU 1148b was not limited to the Circum-Baltic, and the conceptions on which the instrument is founded may be extremely archaic, yet in the Circum-Baltic, ATU 1148b evolved through processes of cultural contact involving stimulation, response and exchange to such a degree and over such a history that this tradition is most reasonably approached as belonging, not to an isolated mythology of any one culture, but to a common Circum-Baltic mythological heritage.

#### Abbreviations

ATU – Aarne-Thompson-Uther tale-type (Uther 2004)  
LFK – The Latvian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art  
LTR – The Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore  
SKS KRA – The Folk Poetry Archive of the Finnish Literature Society

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## BENDROJI BALTIJOS REGIONO MITOLOGIJA? GRIAUSTINIO INSTRUMENTO PAGROBIMAS (ATU 1148B) KAIP BENDRASIS BALTIJOS REGIONO MITAS

### Frog

#### Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariamas naratyvas apie mitinius santykius: Griaustinio instrumento pagrobimas (ATU 1148B). Trumpa teksto santrauka:

*Velnius/milžinas pavagia miegančio Griaustinio instrumentą – muzikos, mechaninį ar simbolinį – ir paslepia jį savo valdose ar buveinėje. Dievas, apsimesdamas tarnu, stoja tarnystėn pas vagį arba pakliūva į jo namus kartu su savo šeiminku. Pagroti Griaustinio instrumentu niekas nesugeba. Iššūkį priima šeiminkas ar dievas (tarpininkaujant jo šeiminkui). Neįtardamas klastos ir tikėdamasis teigiamo rezultato (pasilinksminimo), vagis įduoda dievui instrumentą. Užgrojęs dievas užmuša vagį, jo šeimyną ir/ar kito pasaulio bendruomenę.*

ATU 1148B siužetas daugiausia aptinkamas abiejose Baltijos regiono indoeuropiečių ir finougrų kalbinėse-kultūrinėse grupėse. Šis faktas leidžia manyti, kad viena kultūra siužetą perėmė iš kitos arba jis buvo pasiskolintas iš bendro kultūrinio sluoksnio. Kad ir kaip būtų, ATU 1148B siužetas akivaizdžiai kertasi su kalbinėmis-kultūrinėmis ribomis: tokių pavyzdžių aptinkama individualiose samių (skolto, [galimai] inari), finų (suomių, karelių, estų, setų), baltų (latvių, lietuvių) ir germanų (islandų, fareriečių, norvegų, danų, švedų) kalbų šeimų tradicijose. Tačiau ATU 1148B siužeto nerandama slavų grupėse, kurios vis didesnę įtaką bendram Baltijos regionui darė tik pastarąjį tūkstantmetį. Šiaip ATU 1148B siužetas dar aptiktas vienoje ankstyvoje graikų poemoje, kur jis sukomponuotas kartu su pasakojimu apie Dzeuso jėgos pagrobimą. Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Wälchli (2001, p. 622) teigia, kad vienas iš įdomesnių bendrojo Baltijos regiono aspektų yra tas, jog „jis niekada nebuvo suvienytas, bet visada pasižymėjo kaip ypač dinamiška teritorija, nuolat persidalijanti ekonomines, politines, religines ir kultūrinės dominavimo sferas“. Pateikiant bendrą įspūdį apie ATU 1148B siužetą, siekiama panagrinėti, kaip ilgalaikiai kultūriniai kontaktai, per kuriuos komunikavimo procesas vyko ir buvo palaikomas, darė tiesioginę įtaką mitologijos, tikėjimų ir pasakojamosios tradicijos mainams.

Publikacija pradeda trumpu įvadu apie Griaustinio dievą bendro Baltijos regiono tradicijose (§1) ir supažindinimu su darbo pobūdžiu (§2). Šis tyrimas suskaidytas pagal kalbines-kultūrinės grupes. Anksčiausias tokio pobūdžio pavyzdys yra Edos poemoje Prysmskviða (iš maždaug 1270 m. rankraščio); jis dažniausiai traktuojamas kaip autentiškiausia ar pati patikimiausia mito forma, iš kurios radosi kitos formos. Tačiau germaniški šaltiniai šiame tyrime dėl tam tikrų problemų aptarti paskiausiai. Pirmiausia aptariama samių medžiaga (§3), nagrinėjamos rytinės Baltijos jūros pusės tradicijos, ir iš čia tyrimas pajuda nuo šiaurės į pietus: suomių-karelių (§4), estų ir setų (§5), latvių (§7) ir lietuvių (§8) medžiaga. Lyginimui ir analizei taip pat pasitelkta unikali lyvių pasakojamoji tradicija (§6). Po šios tyrimo dalies eina preliminarus apibendrinimas (§9). Paskui pristatomas graikiškas pavyzdys (§10), kartu gretinant ir atitinkamą germanišką medžiagą (§11). Tyrimas baigiamas ATU 1148B siužeto apžvalga šiose kultūrose (§12), pateikiami baigiamieji svarstymai apie atskiras ATU 1148B siužeto tradicijas ir ryšius tarp jų (§13).

Bendrojo Baltijos regiono kultūrų mitologija apibūdinama per Griaustinio dievo iškėlimą į aukščiausią poziciją indoeuropiečių ir finougrų kultūrose. Tai susiję su tarpkultūriniais ryšiais, suformavusiais stratifikuotas mitologines sąvokas (§1). Šio proceso aspektus atskleidžia Griaustinio etiologijos įvairovė. Ją patvirtina archeologiniai duomenys apie tam tikrus ritualinius veiksmus, atskleisdami, kad įvairiais laikotarpiais besikeičianti etiologija buvo nevienodai reikšminga (§9, §12). ATU 1148B siužetas figūroja šiose stratifikuotose sampratose. Šio naratyvo pagrindą sudaro užslėpta Griaustinio instrumento samprata: a) objektas, kurį velnias gali gauti, bet b) nesugeba tinkamai panaudoti; objektas, kuris c) gali būti atvaizduotas kaip esantis Griaustinio; d) jo tinkamas panaudojimas pats savaime nėra pavojingas ir netgi gali būti pageidautinas (§9). Griaustinio instrumentas ATU 1148B siužete neatskleidžia dominuojančios Griaustinio etiologijos, išskyrus estų tradiciją (§12). Todėl Griaustinio samprata ir Griaustinio dievo atributai (§1) čia yra traktuojami kaip skirtingų kultūrų ATU 1148B siužeto kultūrinės veiklos veiksnys ir jo istorinė plėtotė (§9, §12). Aptariant istorinės raidos procesus, taikoma informacijos sukaupimo koncepcija – telkiami motyvai, įvaizdžiai ar naratyvinė medžiaga kaip šaltinis, praturtinantis naratyvą (šiuo atveju) ir leidžiantis tirti naratyvo potencialią reikšmę, plitimą bei raidą. Informacijos sukaupimo koncepcija gretinama su informacijos praradimo koncepcija – motyvų, vaizdinių, asmenų ar kitos tradicinės medžiagos praleidimu ar sumažinimu.

Bendrojo Baltijos regiono izoglosos ribose ATU 1148B siužeto transformacijos pasirodo esančios esminės

## II

BALTIC  
WORLDVIEW:  
FROM  
MYTHOLOGY  
TO FOLKLORE

arba prasidėjusios anksčiau periferinėse kultūrose. Samių tradicija šiaurinėje periferijoje prarado informaciją neįtraukdama „instrumento“ ir vaizduodama tik patį Griaustinio dievą, tuo tarpu pavogtą (pagrobtą) objektą čia atgauna jo kompanionas (§3). Pietinėje periferijoje, lietuvių tradicijoje, taip pat prarasta informacija: Griaustinio dievo dingęs daiktas nustotas tapatinti su griaustinio šaltiniu ar dievo ginklu ir buvo priskirtas kitiems naujiems objektams (§8). Naratyvas pratęsė savo egzistenciją kaip kūrinys, paaiškinantis priešiško kumo tarp Griaustinio dievo ir velnių kilmę, tačiau pavogto objekto atgavimas tapo nereikšmingas. Tačiau gali būti, kad kita pasakojamoji tradicija (ATU 1165), atitinkamai sukaupdama informaciją, perėmė šio nutikimo motyvus (§9). Ši plėtotė skirtingose tradicijose tiesiogiai sietina su etiologija ir griaustinio samprata bei Griaustinio dievu, tuo tarpu ženklus lyginamųjų duomenų kiekis leidžia manyti, kad ATU 1148B siužetas rutuliojosi iš griaustinio kaip girmų ar panašaus instrumento kuriamos „muzikos“ sampratos (§12). Samių ir lietuvių variantai patvirtina, kad indeksiška susijusios motyvų sistemos pasitelkė naujus objektus ir pritaikė juos prie naujų kontekstų.

Ankstyvasis graikų ATU 1148B pavyzdys (§10) suteikia įdomios istorinės informacijos apie galimą šio siužeto datavimą ir paplitimą ankstyvuojų periodu. Jame pasakojama apie: a) vagystę miego metu; b) griaustinį kaip savaime grojantį instrumentą, kuris, nepaisant to, c) reikalauja grojimo įgūdžių; d) turi būti deramai valdomas ir e) juo negali groti velnias; f) instrumento paslėpimą; g) dievą-tarną, kuris h) užsimaskuoja kaip piemuo ir i) meta iššūkį siūlydamasis pagroti, kas baigiasi j) velnio dievui atiduodamo pagrobto galios atributo k) muzikinio instrumento, l) kad palinksmintų grodamas. Uku Masing (1944) pažymėjo, kad atitikimas tarp graikiško pavyzdžio ir estų bei setų medžiagos prieštarauja hipotezei, jog finų ir suomių tradicijos gavo siužetą iš germanų, kurie šį viduramžiais perėmė iš *Þrymskviða* tradicijos. Poema *Þrymskviða* išsiskiria dominuojančiu karikatūrinio aprašymo vaizdiniu, kaip dievas Toras, norėdamas atgauti milžino pavogtą kūjelį, persirengė moterimi ir įgavo milžino nuotakos pavidalą. Šiame tyrime supažindinama su anksčiau nepastebėta aplinkybe, kad germanų tradicija yra artimesnė finų ir graikų medžiagai (§11.3). Publikacijoje *Þrymskviða* išryškėja kaip unikalus germanų kultūrų kūrinys, kartu pažymima, kad sukarikatūrintas ATU 1148B siužetas adaptuotas ir liaudies dainuojamojoje tradicijoje (§11.1), kur besikeičiančioje (krikščionių) kultūrinėje aplinkoje naratyvas įgavo naują reikšmę ir svarbą (§11.4). Kaip ir samių bei lietuvių ATU 1148B siužetų raidos atveju, panašu, kad *Þrymskviða* susiformavimui įtakos turėjo platesnė tradicijos ekologija ir konceptuali sistema, kurioje ji funkcionavo. Mano

nuomone, kultūrinėje aplinkoje yra koreliacija tarp socialinių vartojimo modelių ir platesnių Griaustinio dievo bei griaustinio etiologijos koncepcijų, tarp naratyvo tradicijos evoliucijos ir istorinių procesų (§12).

ATU 1148B siužeto kilmė išlieka neaiški ir negali būti aiškiai priskirta nei indoeuropiečių, nei finougrų kultūriniam paveldui. Taip pat neaišku, ar jis galėjo būti perimtas iš išnykusios kalbinės-kultūrinės grupės, ar galbūt susidarė kaip etiologija, susijusi su rankinių girmelių, kaip naujausios technologijos, įsisavinimu (paraleliai su etiologijomis, kurios kilo iš geležies apdirbimo technologijų). Kad ir kaip būtų, šios tradicijos susiformavimas indoeuropiečių ir finougrų kalbinėse-kultūrinėse grupėse yra aiškiai susijęs su šių populiacijų kontaktais ir tarpusavio sąveika. Mano nuomone, kultūriniai kontaktai ir tradicijų panašumas gretimose kultūrose tiesiogiai nulėmė ATU 1148B siužeto išsilikimą bendro Baltijos regiono kultūrose (§13). Atrodo, kontaktas paskatino labiau vertinti tradicijas ir jų svarbą, taip pat ir formas, turinio bei pritaikymo pasirinkimą ir alternatyvas. ATU 1148B siužeto duodami stimulai, vis naujos interpretacijos ir transformacijos bendro Baltijos regiono kultūrose yra šio proceso dalis. ATU 1148B siužeto išsilikimas, gyvavimas ir transformacijos šiose kultūrose yra rezultatas tarpusavio sąveikos, vykstančios tokiu lygmeniu, kad tampa neįmanoma jos istorijos supaprastinti iki linijinės kilmės vienoje kultūroje ar perdavimo vis kitai kultūrai modelių. Graikų pavyzdys leidžia suprasti, kad ATU 1148B siužetas neapsiriboja vien bendru Baltijos regionu, o instrumento sukūrimo koncepcijos gali būti ypač senos. Bendrame Baltijos regione ATU 1148B siužetas plėtojosi dėl kultūrinių kontaktų, įskaitant stimulus, reakciją ir mainus tokiu lygmeniu ir tokiais istorinės raidos aplinkybėmis, kad ši tradicija įtikinamai atrodo ne kaip esanti kokios nors kultūros izoliuota mitologija, o kaip bendro Baltijos regiono mitologinis paveldas.

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