AMONG THE ISLANDERS OF THE NORTH

An Anthropology of the Faroe Islands

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Edited by Firouz Gaini

fróðskapur
Faroe University Press
Tórshavn 2011

Firouz Gaini: AMONG THE ISLANDERS OF THE NORTH
An Anthropology of the Faroe Islands
© Fróðskapur · Faroe University Press and the author
Typesetting: Føroyaprent
Cover photo: Ólavur Frederiksen
Printed in the Faroe Islands at Føroyaprent
Published by Fróðskapur – Faroe University Press, Tórshavn 2011

ISBN 978-99918-65-34-8

NORÐURLENDSKT UMHVØRVISMERKI
Svanamerktur prentlutur 541 705

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Preface

The Faroe Islands is composed of eighteen small islands located between Scotland, Norway and Iceland. In geographical terms, it is a quite isolated community, with 350 kilometres to its nearest neighbour, Shetland. The total land area is only 1,400 square kilometres, but the Faroese territorial waters cover 274,000 square kilometres. The Faroese, also known as the Faroe Islanders, inhabit this basaltic Atlantic archipelago, about 650 km from the Norwegian west coast. The total Faroese population counts around 60.000 people, of which a quarter live outside the Faroe Islands. The main diaspora is based in Denmark. The rest of the Faroese abroad, probably fewer than 1,000 persons, are primarily located in Norway and Iceland. The native language of the Faroe Islanders is a West-Nordic language, closely linked to Icelandic. The Faroese language is rooted in ancient Norse, which belonged to the Germanic language group. The Faroese are Christians in faith, of which more than three-quarters are members of the national Lutheran Protestant church. The Plymouth Brethren, an evangelical Christian community, is the most important of several free-churches in Faroese society.

The Faroe Islanders are descendants of Vikings from Western Norway, who settled in the islands in the early ninth century. Irish monks searching for solitude had inhabited the remote islands for short periods in earlier centuries, but they escaped before the Vikings colonized the islands. The Faroese have through language, place-names, architecture and traditions close cultural bonds to the Norwegian peasant and fishing communities of their Viking ancestors. The Faroe Islanders have lived in small autonomous village

communities spread out on seventeen of the eighteen islands until the modern era. They were mainly sheep farmers until the nineteenth century's industrial fishing venture turned a poor feudal agricultural society into a modern industrial society.

The Faroe Islanders never had an independent state, but were, because of the peripheral location and small size of the islands largely self-ruling during long periods of the medieval era. The Danish influence on the Faroese culture and society has been very profound over the last 200 years. In the 1880s the Faroese national movement, with the landowner and politician J. Patursson as leading figure, started its national "awakening" project that mobilized Faroese people to defend their culture and language against Danish "imperialism". In 1906 the movement also got a political dimension, when the Independency party was established as a countermeasure against the new pro-Copenhagen Unionist party. In 1948 a home-rule resolution was passed for the Faroe Islands.

The Faroese have a strong cultural identity with the language in its inner circle. The Faroese are usually considered relatively homogeneous culturally, even if there are important subgroups delineated by affiliation to village/region, family, religion and lifestyle. The rich cultural heritage from the premodern era is mainly preserved through oral traditions as the written Faroese language was not systematically developed until the mid-nineteenth century. The oral traditions consist of tales, poems, ballads and songs that have been transmitted from one generation to the next for many centuries. More than 90 percent of the Faroese population belong to the Lutheran Evangelical Church, which has been dominating as belief system on the islands since the eleventh century. The Faroese often split into binary poles regarding belief: on the one hand there are the so-called "believers" who belong to a myriad of evangelical free-churches; on the other hand there are the "non-believers" who are modern "passive" members of the National Church. Paganism, the belief in the old Nordic mythology, has no function among the Faroe Island-

ers today, even if many people identify with heathen Vikings when describing the roots of their cultural identity.

Modernisation and industrialisation came very late to the North Atlantic region; the Faroe Islands were an ancient feudal remnant on the north-western outskirts of Europe until the end of the nineteenth century when fishing from cutters started. The large-scale fishing adventure began when Faroe Islanders bought old British cutters – called "slupp" – used for pioneering fishing ventures in Icelandic and Greenlandic waters (Joensen 1987). The Royal Danish Trade Monopoly in the Faroe Islands was abolished in 1856, opening the way for free commercial activities and market capitalism. The physically tough but economically rewarding fishing project on the banks of Iceland and Greenland represents the first step towards the industrialisation of the fisheries. In the 1950s and 1960s, the fishing industry became the main economic enterprise in the Faroe Islands, employing people from all families and regions. After World War II, investments were made in old British trawlers, a ruinous venture, leading to the economic crisis of the 1950s. In the 1960s, a new modern fleet of fishing vessels was established, making Faroese fisheries among the most efficient and profitable ones in the world. The Faroe Islands are heavily reliant on the fisheries as around 95 percent of the annual export income stems from fish products. The economic structure is, however, quite diversified, and the levels of public services in education, health and social security are high (Apostle 2002).

The Faroese, a small hidden ethnic group and community in a misty Northern corner of Europe, lived a silent life without extensive interaction with continental power centres for centuries, but that is not the case anymore. The economic crisis that hit society 1989-1994 changed the Faroe Islands radically, linking the local economy closely to global financial structures. The 1990s were marked by a restructuration of the collapsed economy, as well a growing cultural globalization following the presentation of new electronic media in the Faroe Islands.

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An anthropology of the Faroe Islands, as worded in this original collection's subtitle, suggests an anthology that from different anthropological angles explores key elements and spheres of the culture of contemporary Faroe Islanders. The Faroe Islands, an insular society in the North-Western corner of Europe, has often been described in investigative texts composed by travellers, poets, historians and political administrators, but social and cultural anthropologists have very seldom shown scientific interest in the Faroe Islands that is, according to some of the texts in this anthology, traditional and modern at the same time. The texts in this anthology, five articles by three anthropologists, attempt to present new empirical and theoretical perspectives on the culture, identity and values of the Faroe Islanders. The texts are characterized by their rich and detailed cultural historical summary that from a (source) critical approach is revised and analysed in a complex contemporary empirical context. The intention of the anthology is to introduce the Faroe Islands to a wider academic audience that, hopefully, can connect the culture of the relatively peripheral archipelago to larger global discussions on culture and identity in the age of globalization.

This book is the result of a process that started in the spring of 2010 when the editor contacted several anthropologists and ethnologists that have done extensive fieldwork in the Faroe Islands in recent years. The idea of publishing an original book on Faroese anthropology stems from the growing academic interest in Faroese cultural issues abroad combined with a lack of articles based on new empirical research available in English language. Only five articles were carefully chosen for this anthology, which can be regarded as the first of its kind published in the Faroe Islands. The articles are, as a whole, intended as a resource for anthropologists and other readers interested in the Faroe Islands. It is our hope that the articles can work as an inspiration for further research and studies.

Firouz Gaini

Eg Oyggjar Veit?

Views, Overviews, and Oversights

Jonathan Wylie

Anthony Trollope remarked: "That a great deal may be learned about them by inquiry is, no doubt, true; but then so few people do make inquiry about the Faroe Islands" (Trollope 1878: 12).

A great deal has been learned about the Faroes since Trollope passed through Tórshavn in the summer of 1878. I wish to suggest some topics that might reward further inquiry.

The visitor's eye

Increasingly frequent scheduled transportation brought a growing number of visitors to the Faroes in the late nineteenth century. Most were on their way to Iceland, and spent only a few hours in and around Tórshavn while the *Diana* or the *Arcturus*, the *Laura*, the *Valdemar*, or the *Botnia* offloaded goods and passengers. They sometimes made an excursion to Kirkjubøur (this was a regular thing as early as the 1870s) or chanced upon a particularly curious scene: the Frenchman Noël Nougaret and the American Elizabeth Taylor have fine descriptions of ballad-dancing in Tórshavn in 1866 and threshing on Nólsoy in the 1890s (Nougaret 1866: 115-16; Taylor 1901: 453). Some fared more widely. The English journalist and Norse scholar George Dasent took part in a *grindadráp* in Vestmanna, went on a gannet-catching expedition to Mykines, was weather-bound there,

missed *Arcturus'* return sailing, and was eventually taken to Shetland aboard a "half-decked yawl" (Dasent 1864: 328)[1].

Unfortunately, little of this writing can be recommended for its literary qualities. The reader may still enjoy spending time with Nougaret, a companionable fellow with a dry sense of humor; but Dasent's ponderous wit soon grows wearisome, and one is relieved to part ways with that garrulous busybody Mrs. Disney Leith (1897). Nor can travelers always be trusted in matters of fact. It is not true that Stóra Dímun was "entirely tenanted by sixty members of a single family," that "the language of the Færoes is not purely Norse" because many of the "natives of the southern isles are of Finnish extraction" (Birley 1891: 266-67), or that "Christian IX, King of Denmark, came in person to consecrate the suppression of [the trade monopoly]" (Leysbeth 1897: 20). Sometimes they were led astray by the lure of a good vignette. Andrew Symington was one of several passengers from the *Arcturus* who "being invited, entered several fishermen's houses" in July 1859. He remarked matter-of-factly that in one house, "[we] observed a savoury pot of puffin broth" (Symington 1862: 21). His companion Charles Forbes could not resist conjuring up an improbable repast:

> curiosity prompts me to inspect a seething cauldron in which the family supper is simmering under the care of the good wife.... Divining my intent, she kindly seeks to throw a light on the subject by offering me a home-made dip, and with a good-natured smile raises the lid and circulates the contents: first, amid a sea of grease, hot water, and turnip-tops, came a puffin with his beak on; then great nubs of whale, together with cormorants and seagulls ad lib. It was evidently not a fast-day; but, internally uneasy, I make a rapid exit. (Forbes 1860: 18-19)

The travel literature nevertheless rewards a modern reader in several ways. As well as illustrating the changing tourist experience, it offers fresh views of scenes, customs, and figures that are often overlooked, slighted, or prettified in other sources: rituals of greeting ("on a shelf

under a small two-paned window is a bottle of brandy and [a] solitary glass, with which he offers hospitality"); where photographs might be purchased; how people dressed; the higgledy-piggledy alleyways of Tórshavn, its feral cats ("encouraged as necessary to keep down the…rats"), and, above all, its stench (more than one Englishman was moved to paraphrase Shakespeare: "a very ancient and fish-like smell"); public drunkenness at Ólavsøka ("the whole holiday consists of schnaps-drinking"); the Catholic mission (which doubled as a sort of hostel) and the library (notable in the mid-1880s for "a chill of phenomenal and deadly dampness"); popular reaction to Hammershaimb's orthography ("the natives, on seeing his book, observed, 'That is not our talk'"); Jóannes Patursson's new pride and joy, a plow, resting in "the long grass of the aisle" of the ruined cathedral at Kirkjubøur; fishermen's departure for Iceland ("ashore, the women waved their handkerchiefs by way of adieu; the men aboard were content to smile at this last sign of love"; having drunk a good deal, they later got up a "national dance" in *Laura*'s cabin despite the captain's objections); and the use of fish as a medium of exchange:

> At the entrance [to a building where a dance was being held] a woman was seated on a stool; this was the ticket office. Upon entering, each person gave her a dried fish or two, and put them down according to their size; she threw them into a barrel placed by her side. As we did not have any of this local currency, we each gave her a Danish mark (forty centimes) and declined the several herrings that we were given back in change for our coin. (Nougaret 1866: 115)[2]

Another instructive feature of the travel literature is its repetitiveness. Everyone was awed by the landfall.

> The deck of the ship was decidedly fashionable, as everybody had turned out to enjoy the scenery, which was most impressive. The bold abrupt precipices, which rose clear out of the sea, many of them at least 800 feet in height; the stern wild character of

> the coast; the countless seabirds, and the general feeling of utter desolation, attracted every one. (Waller 1874: 24)

Everyone was on the lookout for Vikings.

> Time seemed to have gone back a thousand years: just such a spot as Suderö Fjörd must have been the home of the Norsemen. It was a living picture from the past, the only modern thing about it our steamer. The small boats that swarmed about us were built on the lines of the Vikings' ships, with high pointed stem and stern. The rowers…remind one forcibly of the Norseman as he is depicted to us – ruddy, with curly flaxen hair and beard. (Anon. 1899: 385)

And everyone soon began to notice differences in building styles. The same visitor noted that in a village on Suðuroy

> the best [houses] are of wood built on small piles of stone [but] many of the inhabitants live in one-roomed turf cabins innocent of chimney or window…. The houses [in Tórshavn], invariably built of wood, are in the poorer quarter merely one-roomed hovels, with a window which does not open. The better houses, on the outskirts of town, are light and airy. (Anon. 1899: 386-87)

Visitors who entered Faroese dwellings were able to exercise a Victorian eye for household appurtenances. Symington found fishermen's houses "dark, smoky, and dirty." In the house where a puffin broth was simmering, the cooking was being done

> on a turf fire built open like a smith's forge, the smoke finding only a very partial egress by the hole overhead; on the wall hung a number of plucked puffins and guillemots; several hens seen through the smoke sitting contentedly perched on a spar evidently intended for their accommodation in the corner of the apartment; a stone hand-mill for grinding barley, such as Sarah

> may have used, lay on the floor; reminding one of the East, from whence the Scandinavians came in the days of Odin.

Even in such "hovels," however, there was

> generally a guest-room, comfortably boarded and furnished. In such apartments we observed chairs, tables, chests of drawers, feather-beds, down coverlets, a few books, engravings on the walls, specimens of ingenious native handiwork, curiosities, &c. This juxtaposition under the same roof was new to us, and struck every one as something quite peculiar and contrary to all our previous experiences.

He was rather differently surprised at the home of Anna Sofie Løbner, the widow of a previous governor, where he had been invited to "drink tea."

> We were ushered into a charming old-fashioned room with [a] low panelled roof; everything in it was neat, scrupulously clean, and primitive. A valance of white Nottingham lace-curtain ran along the top of the diamond-paned lattice windows; while a row of flower-pots, with blooming roses and geraniums, stood in the window-sill. There were cabinets with rich old china-ware; several paintings on the wall, two of which were really excellent…. At tea we had preserves, made from rhubarb grown in their own garden; a silver ewer of delicious cream highly creditable to Faröese dairyship; and buns, tarts, almond-cakes &c., baked by the one baker of Thorshavn, and quite as good as could be had in London…. [O]ur kind hostess wound up a musical box, at the same time expressing her regret that the piano-forte, which I had observed standing in the room, was under repair. She also showed us a folio of her own drawings, and many engravings. Here was a lady of cultivated mind, and who had mingled in good society, [who] is happy and content to dwell in this remote isle.

The next day, after church, he found a different style of cultivation at the home of the postmaster and natural historian H. C. Müller.

> His wife and daughter were hospitable and kind; and as usual on a visit here, tarts, cakes and wines were produced. His home resembles a museum, containing many stuffed birds, eggs, geological specimens and other natural curiosities collected in these islands.[3]

Stratification and mobility

Travelers seldom had any very clear idea of the basis of social distinctions among Faroese. Their persistent observation of them, however, invites the modern reader into an area that has been little explored by more serious students of the Faroe scene. How stratified was Faroese society? How sharply were its ranks distinguished? How much mobility was there between them?

The principal distinction until the mid-nineteenth century was, of course, between freeholders and king's farmers. King's farmers were generally better off than freeholders, but the differences between them were more nuanced than is commonly supposed. (See Table 1.) In the Norðoyar in 1813, a small upper stratum of well-to-do king's farmers had a good deal of freehold land in addition to large tenancies. (In fact, king's farmers owned two-thirds of the freehold land.) Most tenancies were more modest, however, and poor-to-middling king's farmers overlapped with better-off freeholders, who in turn shaded off into the virtually landless poor. We do not know whether, or to what extent, the same pattern prevailed on Suðuroy and Vágar, where large tenancies were rare, or on Streymoy, where they were more common. Nor is it clear to what extent people might improve their lot, or by what means they might hope to do so – marriage? inheritance? more or less formal exchanges of property?

Relatedly, we do not yet have any very full understanding of life at the bottom of the social scale. Servants included young men and women of varied backgrounds who were serving the terms of labor or apprenticeship required of them, until 1846, before they could marry; older hired hands and maidservants who, having failed

to marry, had become semi-itinerant laborers; and, as Sandur's census-taker in 1801 called three members of his own household, "old, now useless servants" (Madsen 1999: 46). These overlapping types themselves overlapped with folk "with a little rented land," with *uppsitarar* who had given up their land in return for room and board, and with people who lived on charity. How did the size and composition of the lowest levels of Faroese society change as the fishery developed?

The uppermost level of Faroese society likewise deserves further inquiry. Because Lutheran ministers and high secular officials were much intermarried with each other and with the families of the prosperous king's farmers and minor officials from whose ranks they were partly drawn, there was a certain amount of mobility at the high end of the social scale. This mobility seems to have increased in the first decades of the nineteenth century, extending to Tórshavn's artisans and others of relatively humble origins. A case in point is the widow Løbner whose cultivation so impressed Symington when he took tea with her in 1859. A cooper's daughter, she had married, in 1814, the Danish commandant of the little Tórshavn garrison Emilius Løbner. He became acting Governor in 1816 and Governor in 1821. She stayed in Tórshavn with their infant daughter Henriette when he was recalled to Denmark in 1825. Henriette was still single when Symington got to know her. She later married a certain Napoleon Nolsøe. His grandfather had been a middling farmer on Nólsoy; his father was Jacob Nolsøe, who had risen through a series of minor posts to become the Monopoly manager in 1831 and was one of the leading Faroese intellectuals of his generation; and Napoleon himself was a doctor. He became the islands' first native-born chief medical officer in 1858.

But native-born high officials were now a dwindling breed. (See Table 2.) The Faroes' ministers and high secular officials had long been both Faroese and Danish. Thus there had been no sharp social or cultural break between the native-born and Danish segments of the islands' elite, the more so, as Danes who were posted to the Faroes served long terms, often married Faroese women, and were supported by large estates connected to their offices. The islands'

resident officialdom became increasingly foreign-born during the nineteenth century, however, and served shorter terms in the Faroes – a development that no doubt sharpened officials' estrangement from local society as well as reinforcing the previously tenuous identification between officialdom and Denmark. Caroline Birley remarked that Danish officials "too often regard[ed] the Faeroes as a land of cruel exile," and went on to paint a sad little picture of the Lutheran minister's wife in the "straggling, poverty-stricken village" of Kvívík:

> after a short visit, the 'minister's lady' put on a cloak, hat, gloves and black-lace veil elaborately, and showed us round her bright and well-kept garden, in which double-pink campion, London Pride, and globe-flowers were conspicuous. But the absence of trees and shrubs in this small enclosure made it seem but a dreary resort for one who answered our inquiry, 'Do you walk much?' with 'Only in the garden.' (Birley 1891: 321, 323)

Nelson Annandale observed a few years later that such "anti-Danish feeling" as there was in the Faroes was

> chiefly kept alive by the contemptuous behavior of the Danes of Thorshavn, who not only look down on the islanders as 'mere peasants' but refuse to believe that anything belonging to the 'peasants' can be of interest, and are indignant at the 'peasants' asserting themselves in any way. *Amtmand* [sic], judge, apothecary, and other officials have generally been Danes, people of education and often of refinement; but when in 1897, for the first time in history, a native was appointed *Amtmand*, some subordinates refused to call upon him, alleging for their rudeness that his people were peasants.... Sometimes...amateur theatricals are got up among the Danes or the richer natives. Once at least a play was written by a Faroeman in his own dialect, and acted by his friends in the Danish clubhouse; but this disgusted the Danes. (Annandale 1898: 245, 260)

The objects of this contempt were hardly peasants. The native *amt-maður* was Christian Bærentsen. His father, the son of a large king's farmer, had given up his inheritance in order to pursue a commercial education in Denmark; he became a well-to-do merchant. Christian himself was a lawyer who had already embarked upon a brilliant career in the Danish civil service when he was appointed Governor in 1897. (Like Napoleon Nolsøe forty years earlier, he was a rare exception to the rule that the Faroes' highest officials were Danish.) The playwright was undoubtedly Rasmus Effersøe. His grandfather was an Icelander who had married the daughter of a king's farmer, become a teacher, and worked for the Monopoly under Jacob Nolsøe; his father was the sheriff of Suðuroy; his mother came from a long line of ministers, sheriffs, and king's farmers (her brother was the postmaster H. C. Müller, who was also a sheriff); and Rasmus himself was the editor of *Dimmalætting*, a poet, a printer, and the provincial government's first agricultural advisor.

As these examples suggest, there was a good deal of continuity between the upper ranks of early nineteenth-century native society and the larger, more varied one that had emerged by the time Annandale visited the Faroes. The new elite owed its existence primarily to a single decisive event. On 1 January 1856, when the royal trade monopoly was abolished, the Faroes acquired a new avenue of social mobility. Interestingly, the new mercantile middle class was drawn more from the middle or upper-middle ranks of traditional society than from its uppermost ones. This was especially true in the villages. (See Table 3.) Twenty-four (23 percent) of the 102 men and one woman who took out merchant's papers between 1856 and 1858 were king's farmers – about the same proportion as in the population as a whole. Their tenancies averaged 5.4 marks (*merkur*) in size – not a great deal larger than the figure for king's farmers generally (3.8 marks). In other words, the Faroes' freshly minted merchants were not disproportionately king's farmers, and those who were king's farmers were not disproportionately the richest ones. A rather larger number of the new merchants (thirty-four, or 33 percent) were freeholders, "householders," and the like.

The expansion of the Danish educational system opened another

route to social mobility. In the Faroes, a decisive moment was the passage, in 1872, of a law establishing local governments. It stipulated that each `commune´ should have a public elementary school. Most of the Faroes' new teachers were supplied by a teachers' training school that had recently been founded in Tórshavn. Its first graduating classes hailed from somewhat broader segment of Faroese society than the merchants of the late 1850s. Among those whose parentage is known, 24 percent were the children of king's farmers (whose tenancies averaged 3.2 marks). Forty-eight percent were from fairly well-off backgrounds, the children of merchants, artisans, teachers, a couple of sheriffs, and a "skipper." The fathers of the rest (29 percent) were fishermen or freeholders.

One would like to know a great deal more about how Faroese society became more mobile and more complexly stratified in the second half of the nineteenth century. I suspect that until the 1880s the process took place principally in the relatively small fields of commerce and education, and then expanded to produce a more graduated continuum with a considerable – perhaps even growing – distance between its extremes.

This matter bears directly upon a central topic in Faroese historiography[4]. It has often been pointed out that the Faroese nationalist movement was led largely by members of the islands' ascendant intellectual and mercantile elite. Their opinions were shaped partly by the middle-class and national-cultural ideals to which they were exposed when, in growing numbers, they went to Denmark for education in an increasing variety of fields, and partly by the local, now principally Danish authorities' attitude toward "peasants." What's sometimes glossed over is that nationalism had few proponents in the Faroes until the late 1880s. The likes of Bærentsen's father, Müller, and even V. U. Hammershaimb believed to varying degrees that the way toward improving the Faroes' lot lay through a continuing close association with Denmark. It was their sons – some of them – who abandoned this more or less progressive provincialism and actively promoted the nationalist cause.

A parallel generational shift seems to have been taking place at less exalted levels of Faroese society, where a long-standing

but inchoate disaffection with the Faroes' official establishment acquired a nationalist guise. In Skopun, for example, the Right (or pro-establishment) candidate had four supporters in the Folketing election of 1890. All but one of them were in their sixties and seventies. The Left candidate had ten supporters. All but two of them were in their thirties and forties. A certain Jóhan Hendrik Poulsen was still only twenty-one years old. The son of a merchant who had previously supported the Right candidate, he had attended folk high schools in Denmark, where he studied carpentry. It was he who was a founding member of the Føringafelag and helped to organize, in the mid-1890s, some of the first *fólkafundir* through which the Føringafelag's ideals were widely and successfully disseminated. After the turn of the century he became a teacher and a leading figure in the Self-Rule party.[5] Surely one reason for the nationalist movement's success was that more young Faroese of relatively modest origins – Jóhan Hendrik among them – were being educated in Denmark, where they picked up national-romantic ideals. Perhaps another reason was this rising generation's ambiguous status in an increasingly fluid society.

A nation of villages

A visitor's passing observation offers some insight into a related matter. In 1889, Caroline Birley found Tjørnuvík to be a

> miserable hamlet…, shut in by an amphitheatre of hills which exclude the sun in winter, and give it, even on a summer day, a gloomy, cheerless look. The land around is especially poor and barren; and fishing, often hindered by bad weather, is the sole resource of the inhabitants, who suffer much from poverty, as in other out-of-the-way villages. Two of them, wretched and dirty, unlike other natives, came to beg money from us, a thing unparalleled in our Færoese experience. (Birley 1891: 322)

This is curious. Many visitors noted the Faroes' poverty, and Tjørnuvík may have been especially poor; but they rarely mention beggary. Birley herself was surprised by it. Following her eye, however, we

soon find evidence that the Faroes' poverty was deepening around the time she was touring the islands. *Dimmalætting* reported hunger in several northern villages in February 1888. *Føringatíðindi* reported in February 1890 that

> this windy winter is making things hard for poor people, because getting to sea has been almost impossible. The harvest was ample, but for many people there will soon be little left of it.... In Tórshavn, there has been little work available, and thus the situation of many people who must seek a livelihood from others has indeed become rather pinched. At one time, the bakers were selling well under a third less bread than usual.

The number of people supported by poor relief, which had fallen from 103 in 1860 to thirty-six in 1880, increased to 134 in 1890 (*Folketællingen* 1860, Table C; *Sammendrag* 1918, Table 13B).

Behind these reports lies another story whose general outlines are well known but whose details deserve further attention. In a sense, Birley's "unparalleled experience" in Tjørnuvík suggests how the Faroes' course of socioeconomic development diverged from other countries'.

The Faroese population was fast outgrowing the carrying capacity of the traditional economy as early as 1800. Villages were able to absorb more people because their existing resources were worked harder and because the relaxation of trade restrictions, followed by the Monopoly's abolition in 1856, allowed a village-based commercial fishery to be grafted onto the age-old subsistence fishery. Village population growth was spurred by a rising birth rate, and because there was little migration to Tórshavn or abroad. Tórshavn's population rose only from 841 in 1850 (10.3 percent of the total population) to 984 in 1880 (8.8 percent). The net emigration rate declined from 0.6 per thousand in the 1850s to 0.1 per thousand in the 1860s. It rose to 1.5 in the 1870s, however (*Sammendrag* 1918, Table 2).

This slight increase suggests that population pressure was increasing again. In this respect, the Faroes resembled the other

Scandinavian countries, where rural poverty was forcing migration to the cities and, especially, to overseas destinations. Sweden's emigration rate peaked at 12.1 per thousand in 1881, Norway's at 14.2 in 1883, and Iceland's at 25.0 in 1888.[6] By contrast, the Faroes' rate hovered around 1.0 through the first decade of the 20th century. Oliver Djurhuus, of Kollafjørður, who had set himself up as an agent for the British Dominion Line, evidently found few takers for an advertisement he placed in *Føringatíðindi* offering cheap tickets to Canada (*Føringatíðindi*, December 1892).

The Faroes were unique among the countries of the North because the hope expressed in *Føringatíðindi*'s editorial response to Djurhuus' advertisement proved well founded – that "Faroese will devote all their energies to making progress at sea and ashore…so that people can have a good future before them in their homeland" (*Føringatíðindi*, February 1893). A "good future" was possible because the Faroese economy was acquiring an additional, industrial economic base just in time to forestall the spread of poverty.

The heyday of the Faroese deep-water fleet's expansion was between about 1885 and shortly before 1910. The fleet consisted of about fifteen ships in the late 1880s; there were 142 ships in 1908. Each ship crewed twelve or thirteen men, as a rule, so that the number of ship-fishermen rose from perhaps 200 to over 1,500. The number of ships then leveled off, apparently because the industry's export side had developed to a point where it was vulnerable to global business cycles: the sharp recession of 1907 and 1908, followed after a brief recovery by the long interwar depression. There were about 150 Faroese ships through the 1930s. The industry's productivity (in the sense of aggregate catch levels) was maintained by manning the ships with larger crews. There were upwards of 3,000 ship-fishermen during the 1930s, or over twenty men per ship. This was evidently some kind of upper limit. Meanwhile, the most obvious demographic consequence of the ship-fishery's expansion was the rise of deep-water ports, most notably Tvøroyri and Vágur, on Suðuroy, which had begun growing more rapidly than the villages during the 1880s. Villages nonetheless continued to grow through the first decade of the new century. Their growth practically ceased after

1920, probably largely because of migration. Tórshavn's share of the total Faroese population crept up from 11.7 percent in 1911 to 14.0 percent in 1935, while the Faroes' emigration rate reached as high as 5 per thousand as the depression deepened in the late 1920s.[7]

Here we begin to venture onto new ground. On the one hand, it is well known that the ship-fishery's critical demographic feature was its demand for seasonal labor. Villages remained demographically viable as the ship-fishery expanded because young people (mostly) could "sail out" or work as "fish-girls" in the developing deep-water ports for part of the year. They lived in their home villages, however, where families could support themselves by commercial or subsistence inshore fishing combined with a variety of age-old subsistence pursuits: fowling, whaling, animal husbandry, some agriculture. As much of the traditional economy survived, so did much of traditional village culture. Thus the native middle class whose expansion the ship-fishery also fostered found a living basis for its own national-cultural ideals. As Joensen puts it, "features of the peasant culture could be encapsulated in the emergent national culture" (Joensen 1989: 18; cp. Joensen 1992: 156-57). Ideologically as well as demographically, the Faroes remained a nation of villages despite the fishery's industrialization – indeed, because of it.

On the other hand, much remains unknown about the demographic underpinnings of this distinctive feature of Faroese society. It would be particularly interesting to learn more about ship-fishermen and fish-girls – how old they were, where they hailed from, and what became of them. The scanty available data suggest a plausible hypothesis. It seems likely that most ship-fishermen were young and therefore unmarried. They presumably sought other work when they grew too old for the rigors of distant-water fishing and were looking to settle down. During the period when the ship-fishery was expanding rapidly, most of them were able to support themselves and their families in their home villages. This kept the rate of male emigration from the villages low, and by the same token kept the birth rate high. After around 1910, however, villages were able to accommodate fewer of the growing number of young men who were now ready to settle down. Thus the male emigration rate rose

despite the ship-fishery's still increasing demand for labor. The critical variables in this hypothetical scenario are the age-structure of ship-fishermen and the occupational opportunities available to them in their home villages.[8]

Published data from one village – Kirkja – partly confirm this hypothesis and suggest several amplifications of it. Table 4 investigates the proposition that individuals' fates were shaped by prevailing economic conditions when they were ready to settle down, a moment that may be rather arbitrarily set at their twenty-fifth birthday. Did they decide to leave Kirkja, marry and stay there, or remain there unmarried?

To begin with, we must acknowledge several methodological difficulties. Some features of Kirkja's development surely reflect local idiosyncrasies rather than general trends, the sample size is so small that statistical analysis is problematic, and there are awkward gaps in the data. The village was undoubtedly slow to recover from the loss, in 1818, of its eight-man boat and six men; the large number (six!) of women born between 1831 and 1864 who failed to marry may be a statistical blip; and the published sources do not record exact dates of marriage and/or emigration, or give total population figures between 1901 and 1921. Some of these difficulties could be overcome by consulting unpublished sources, and some by enlarging the sample to include other communities. Here a further difficulty arises. How typical was Kirkja? Did other communities accommodate their growing populations in other ways? A cursory comparison between Kirkja (where freeholdings predominated) and neighboring Hattarvík (where tenancies predominated) reveals that the two villages had markedly different patterns of growth in the early nineteenth century (Hansen 1971: 39, 117). The population of Kirkja grew from thirty-one (in seven households) in 1801 to forty-nine (in eleven households) in 1855. That is, household size was nearly constant: 4.4 persons per household in 1801, and 4.5 persons per household in 1855. Kirkja grew by adding more households. Meanwhile, Hattarvík's population grew from twenty-six (in six households, or 4.3 persons per household) to fifty (in seven households, or 7.1 persons per household). Hattarvík grew principally by enlarging existing

households. The correlation between types of land-tenure and patterns of population growth seems to have held true throughout the Norðoyar during this period. It had largely vanished by the end of the nineteenth century, however. Kirkja had 5.2 persons per household in 1890, while Hattarvík had 5.4. More extensive study of household composition in the nineteenth century might reveal how a commercial fishery was grafted onto an economy in which fishing had been a subsistence activity, and how the industrial ship-fishery was in turn grafted onto it.

So much said, a few (probably) general trends do appear in the data. First, women were always far less likely than men to "marry in" the village. Overall, only 22 percent of Kirkja's women did so, compared to 57 percent of its men. This was – and is – a widespread phenomenon. Intercommunity marriage in the Faroes is customarily virilocal – that is, a bride usually marries to her husband's village. One cultural corollary is that each village has retained an agnatic core as generations of women circulate from one community to another, and thus that lineage (*ætt*) affiliation is preferentially reckoned patrilaterally. Another corollary was "a tendency for land to pass into the hands of non-residents, especially the heirs of women marrying out of the village" (West 1975a: 339) – a tendency that contributed to the fragmentation of landholdings that was reaching a critical level as early as the 1830s. Demographically, one wonders if male and female migration had different destinations. I suspect that women usually moved from one small place to another, while men more often moved to centers of economic opportunity.[9]

Second, men who came of age during the ship-fishery's rapid initial expansion were about as likely to stay in the village as their fathers had been. The emigration rate for the generation that turned twenty-five between 1856 and 1889 was 22 percent; the rate for the generation that turned twenty-five between 1890 and 1909 was 26 percent. I take it that both the rise of commercial fishing and the expansion of ship-fishing enabled most of Kirkja's increasing number of young men to stay in the village. The emigration rate doubled, to 52 percent, for the much larger generation that turned twenty-five

after 1909. Clearly, Kirkja was no longer able to accommodate all its grown sons.

The trend among women is not so clear, presumably because married women seldom had paying work; where a woman went when she married was thus less constrained by economic factors. It is striking, however, that about three-quarters (76 percent) of the women who came of age in the decades around the turn of the century left the village, compared to less than half of those who had come of age between 1856 and 1889. Did female migration quicken throughout the Faroes as fish-girls met potential husbands from more places? (But the rate in Kirkja fell back to 56 percent among women whom came of age after 1910. Was this also a general trend?)

Migration is a quantifiable index of the changes Kirkja and many another community were undergoing in the decades around the turn of the century. Several unquantifiable aspects of these changes also await further study. In general, as Joensen has pointed out, ship-fishing preserved villages at the cost of straining village society.

> The changes in the village community, [including] migration to find employment in the larger villages[,] caused upheaval in society. The community on board the sloops was composed of fishermen from very different villages and created ideal opportunities for the spread of political and religious influences. The same applies to the big working places in the larger villages and Tórshavn, where many young girls came to find employment in the klipfisk manufacture. This all gave rise to a new consciousness of social differences and a need to define one's own identity in relation to other Faroese in a new context. It has not been easy. (Joensen 1989: 18-19)

The "political influences" to which he refers included the nationalism whose leading vectors were the likes of Skopun's up-and-coming Jóhan Hendrik Poulsen. But to what particular strains and to what particular segments of village society did the Føringafelag's brand of nationalism promise relief? (The very existence of figures like

Jóhan Hendrik was surely one problem.) How else did villagers experience and respond to "social differences" among themselves?

A couple of bodies of evidence might help us to answer these questions. The minutes of the *grannastevnur* in which issues relating to land usage were deliberated would shed light on the pressures facing the land-based economy, and hence on villages' capacity to retain their young men (West 1975a, 1975b). The satirical ballads called *tættir*, many of which were being composed even as the heroic ballads (*kvæðir*) were falling out of fashion in the late nineteenth century, would surely illuminate how villagers conceptualized strains on their collective life. For whereas

> the *kvæðir* are composed about men and events far away in time and, in general, far away in the world, the *tættir* take their subject-matter from the present and from Faroese village life. They often concern silly feats, incompetence and misadventures. They are in the solemn style of *kvæðir*, and awaken laughter from the mismatch between *kvæðir's* heroes and their feats on the one hand, and on the other hand the unfortunate fellow the *táttur* is about and his conduct in everyday Faroese life, ashore or at sea. (Matras 1935: 24-25)

In other words, *tættir* mark the bounds of acceptable behavior within the village. Their popularity suggests that determining what was acceptable was becoming increasingly problematic. What sorts of deviance were threatening to get out of hand? What norms and values was some "unfortunate fellow" violating?[10]

One problem in dealing with such sources is ethnographic and ethical as well as historiographical. Seeking evidence of social strain, we are bound to uncover tales of discord: disputes over land, personal grudges, overweening behavior, famously harsh words, sales of land for liquor, brothers no longer on speaking terms, resentment at people's chronic indebtedness to shopkeepers.... Such things are scarcely unknown in Faroese villages. But since villages have few institutionalized mechanisms for dealing with discord, it is relegated to an oral netherworld of things that should not be written down.

Those of us whose business is writing things down must tread warily here, the more so, as the very survival of villages has ensured that villagers have long memories. As a local historian has recently written about something that happened in the late 1850s:

> The story…is both exciting and interesting and could easily be the framework for a good crime story. The plan was…to have a brief summary of it here; but after an appeal from some of [the central figure's] descendants, this piece has been left out. (Hentze 2004: 38)

Politics and the problem of scale

Nineteenth-century visitors were quick to notice the small scale of Faroese society. An Englishman who was briefly in Tórshavn in 1872 remarked that "the size of this imposing city (about as large as a little English village) made one feel inclined to smile" (Waller 1874: 26).

What a visiting Frenchman called "the Paris of the archipelago" (Labonne 1887: 392) now has some twenty thousand inhabitants. Its streets are no longer so narrow that "by comparison the alleyways of Constantinople would pass for boulevards" (Nougaret 1868: 115), its atmosphere is scented by diesel fumes instead of "foul fishy smells" (Metcalfe 1861: 32), and a bus will whisk you off to see the ruins at Kirkjubøur. But the Faroes are still diminutive by European standards; and in a nation no larger than a provincial town, most of whose people live in communities no more imposing than Tórshavn was a century ago, the problem of scale may still bemuse us. Indeed, it has taken on new dimensions. Some of them become apparent when one considers political developments during the interwar years. This was a critical but still poorly understood period, when despite the depression or because of it, a complex society was fast taking shape within the Faroes' small compass.

Again, the general outlines of the story are well known. The ship-fishery grew more antiquated as the Faroes struggled through two decades of depression. Villages remained viable because much of the traditional subsistence economy survived; but Tórshavn and

the fishing ports were now absorbing almost all of the increase in the Faroese population, and the economy as a whole was diversifying. About 12,000 people were supported by primary production – mostly fishing – in 1945 as in 1911, but this represented a decline from 66 percent to 43 percent of the total population. The numbers supported by crafts and industry rose from 1,671 (9 percent) to 6,265 (21 percent), by transportation from 657 (4 percent) to 2,827 (10 percent), and by administration and the liberal professions from 352 (2 percent) to 1,196 (4 percent).[11]

The political scene became more varied as well. The Løgting election of 1906 had been contested by the recently formed Union and Self-Rule parties. They were joined by the Social Democratic party in 1928 and by the Economic party in 1936. In 1939, the latter joined a dissident faction of the Self-Rule party to form the People's party. Thus the Faroes emerged from the depression with the rudiments of the present party system in place. The parties are conventionally described in terms of their positions along two ideological axes: unionist vs. nationalist, and left vs. right. Roughly speaking, the Unionists stood on the unionist right, the Social Democrats on the unionist left, the Self-Rulers on the nationalist left, and the Economic and People's parties on the nationalist right. Organizationally, the parties were alike. In effect, they were political clubs, whose memberships consisted for the most part of locally prominent residents of the islands' scattered communities. Party members elected central committees whose business included drawing up or confirming slates of candidates for the Faroes' seven electoral districts. The electorate at large was not organized along party lines, however; nor did parties put up candidates for communal elections.

One question suggested by this bald narrative concerns the relationship between economic and political developments. Did the increasing complexity of Faroese politics mirror the increasing complexity of Faroese society?

We would like to find out, first, if there was a correlation between politicians' socioeconomic status and their ideological predilections. Immediately we face one problem of scale. Statistical analysis is doubtful because the number of variables is large (four or five par-

ties, two ideological axes, and many possible occupational categories, not to mention factions within each party and shadings along each axis), and the sample size is small – the more so, as in our present state of knowledge we cannot add unsuccessful candidates to the roster of those who, having won election to the Løgting, are listed by occupation in the published sources. At least among successful candidates, however, two trends were clearly underway. (See Table 5.) First, *løgtingsmenn* were becoming socioeconomically more diverse. Half of the men elected in 1906 were from the traditional elite: king's farmers, sheriffs, and high officials. Just one man – a freeholder – was from the working or lower middle classes. By contrast, only 16 percent of the men who were elected between 1924 and 1940 were from the traditional elite, while 36 percent were freeholders, fishermen, artisans, minor civil servants, clerks, and so forth. Second, the correlation between socioeconomic status and political inclination was growing stronger. There was little or no correlation in 1906.[12] It became somewhat firmer between 1908 and 1920, and much firmer between 1924 and 1940. In general, officials, king's farmers, and merchants tended strongly toward the right and rather less strongly toward unionism, the professional middle class and skilled workers tended strongly toward the left and somewhat less strongly toward nationalism, and men with lowlier occupations tended strongly toward unionism and less strongly toward the left.

Now a rather different problem of scale arises. I can find no evidence that voters were sorting themselves out ideologically along the same socioeconomic lines that the men they were voting for did – that, for example, agricultural communities tended to vote unionist while fishing ports tended to vote to the left.[13] Indeed, the community-by-community election returns appear to reflect a vast confusion. In 1940, Tvøroyri and Vágur delivered majorities to the Social Democrats; but the other major port, Klaksvík, divided its vote evenly among all four parties. Among the minor ports, Vestmanna strongly favored the Self-Rule party, but Fuglafjørður favored the Union party by a small margin while Sandavágur divided its vote between the Self-Rule and People's parties. Among the larger villages, Sandur just barely favored the People's party over both the Social

Democratic and Self-Rule parties while Eiði delivered a comfortable majority to the Union party. Among the small villages lying around the edges of the Faroes, Lopra and Víkarbyrgi gave large majorities to the Social Democratic party, Mykines gave one to the Union party, both villages on Fugloy (which as we have seen were in some respects quite different places, Hattarvík being a predominantly tenant village and Kirkja a predominantly freeholding one) gave small majorities to the Self-Rule party, and neighboring Svínoy divided most of its vote between the Union and People's parties. Moreover, voters within a single community sometimes crossed party lines in odd ways. In Kvívík, a Unionist fisherman from another village won majorities in 1918, 1920, and 1924. The Kvívík postman captured half the Unionist votes when he ran on the Self-Rule ticket in 1928. A Kvívík merchant recaptured them for the Unionists in 1932.

The problem here is evidently one of a disparity between two levels of the political system. Local, electoral, very small-scale politics seem to have operated on quite different principles from national, party, relatively large-scale politics.

Further inspection of the data suggests what was happening. In 1906, the winning party – whichever party it happened to be – won at least 70 percent of the vote in five of the Faroes' seven electoral districts. In 1920, the winning party could boast such a large majority in only two districts. In 1940, only the Social Democratic party on Suðuroy secured an absolute majority in any district, and it won just 50.7 percent of the vote. The more detailed figures available from 1920 onwards indicate that this fragmentation was increasing everywhere, and was spreading from larger, more complex communities to smaller ones. In 1920, the winning party took 60 percent of the vote in Tórshavn, 74 percent in the fishing ports, and 82 percent in the villages. In 1940, it took 36 percent in Tórshavn, 52 percent in the ports, and 60 percent in the villages. Evidently the Faroes' socioeconomic diversification was raising more, and more diverse, men to local prominence, who, if they entered politics, aligned themselves ideologically in accordance with their socioeconomic status in Faroese society as a whole. But a candidate's local constituency was not ideologically partisan; it was presumably formed on the

basis of some feature of his status in local society: leadership in a local labor union or evangelical congregation, a reputation for being good at paperwork or in dealing with outsiders (schoolteachers and merchants would enjoy an advantage here), an extensive kinship network, embroilment in some purely local dispute (or, more likely, having avoided taking sides in it)…

This kind of disjunction between local and national politics is hardly unique to the Faroes. It has been described in any number of studies in any number of places. In complex societies, a series of institutions rises like a sort of ladder from a level where many-stranded, relatively egalitarian relationships are paramount to one where statuses are more narrowly defined and – not so coincidentally – power is concentrated. The system as a whole is integrated because the ladder is populated by a series of figures that stand with one foot on a lower rung and one foot on the next rung up. In a small society, however, the ladder is very short. There are few institutional rungs, in the Faroes, between villagers chatting at a kitchen table and politicians debating on floor of the Løgting.

This aspect of smallness has not only shaped the course of events in the Faroes; it also calls into question what concepts are appropriate for understanding them. West notes, for example, that fishermen's strikes were averted in the years around 1920 in part because "the ship-owners were not usually unidentifiable agglomerations of anonymous share capital, but known individuals or groups of individuals." He goes on, "the scale of the industrial working groups and of the community as a whole were so small that generalisations about the nature of industrial society need to be examined with care before they are applied to Faroe" (West 1972: 135, 137). The matter is further complicated because influential figures have sometimes acted upon inappropriate "generalisations." Some – often Danes – have, like tourists, found the Faroes' small size quaintly cultural or, from an economic planner's point of view, irrational. In 1969, an economic advisory board attached to the Danish Prime Minister's office remarked: "The approval of these loans [for road construction] is in compliance with a Faroese wish to create better contact between stagnating little villages and the larger urban

society" (*Investeringsbehovet* 1969: 16). The board knew perfectly well that the `urban society´ in question was Klaksvík, population ca. 4,400. Richard Mikkelsen, the Danish banker who was brought in to rescue the Faroese banking system in the early 1990s, made a similar point.

> In a small society like the Faroes', there [is] a risk of a conjunction between political, commercial and personal interests. Kinship relations can play a role in this conjunction. It requires courage and strength to withstand the pressure that can result from this, and to hold out, alone, for the good and prosperity of the financial institution. (Mikkelsen 1996: 259)

Much aggrieved, he missed a couple of larger, cultural points. First, smallness is a value as well as a fact, which had been reinforced by the Faroes' survival as a nation of villages and in turn informed policies intended to preserve them. Mikkelsen's services were needed in part because the road-building project near Klaksvík had been one of the first in a long, increasingly expensive, ultimately uneconomical series of efforts to sustain the Faroes' cultural heartland.

The second point is more fundamental. Here as elsewhere in Scandinavia, the supposed virtue of a small society is that its members get along well together because they know each other closely and variously, as individuals whose idiosyncrasies are constrained by enmeshment in networks of "persons who accord each other approximately equal status" (Barnes 1954: 45). In other words, smallness is both normal and desirable because it sustains what has been called the "Scandinavian version of egalitarian individualism," in which individual autonomy is valued but equality is construed as likeness.[14]

Maintaining a social order that fits these premises is not always easy. For one thing, it involves keeping up dense networks of relationships, including the "personal" and "kinship" ones Mikkelsen found so exasperating. (His "holding out alone" against this aspect of the Faroes' smallness sounds suspiciously akin to emigrant girls' reasons for leaving the islands: wanting to get away from a place

where “everyone knows everyone else” so that they could “be themselves” [Andersen 1971: 27, 45].) The excessive individualism that is rather ambivalently celebrated in *tættir* is a related, chronic problem; so are the social stratification and mobility characteristic of complex societies. More to the present point, it inevitably happens, most notably in politics, that people occupy (even vie for) superordinate statuses, portentously proclaiming their differences to be matters of high principle. A partial solution to this problem is to insulate political activity from “normal,” everyday life – an expedient that sometimes produces juxtapositions as odd, to the visitor’s eye, as Symington found the presence under the same roof of a furnished parlor and a primitive kitchen. Thus the floor and caucus rooms of the Løgtingshús and the editorial pages of the newspapers are venues for the open jockeying for power, partisanship, and disagreement over matters of principle that would be grossly out of place around a kitchen table. Politics are insulated from everyday life at the local level as well. Coming from New England, where open town meetings are the norm, I was surprised to find during my field work that the communal council met behind closed doors and its minutes were considered confidential. Having reached some understanding of why this was so, I was pleased to learn that *grannastevna* meetings used to be followed by a dance held expressly to bring together men who had been at odds. The dance dismantled their own differences and the difference between them and everyone else.

There are several ethnographic issues here. Everyone of course finds out what goes on in council meetings; but what seem to an outsider to be perfectly reasonable disagreements about, say, enacting a new zoning ordinance or enlarging the cemetery are matters of sometimes scandalized gossip. The ethnographer who repeats such scandal would be guilty of betraying his informants’ trust. It is probably impossible to write a satisfactory political ethnography of a Faroese village.

Second, the main theme of the gossip that did reach my ears was that “some people” were acting self-interestedly in favoring the new ordinance or opposing the cemetery expansion. That is, they were guilty of excessive individualism. But no gossip suggested, and my

informants universally denied, that council members' positions had anything to do with party politics. "Some people" were not acting as Social Democrats, while others acted as Unionists. Local politics are intensely personal – "small" in the sense that they are unattached to large-scale institutions or grand ideologies. In this respect, the Faroes are unlike many other places, where factions within a community are associated, at least in name, with parties outside it. Any political sociology of the Faroes must take account of this peculiarity, which is culturally deeply rooted as well as a product of how parties are organized.

Third (and here I find myself on very thin ice indeed), there is reason to suspect that rival constituencies – "factions" is perhaps too strong a term – nonetheless do exist within the village; that they are formed principally by activating normally solidary kin relationships; and that their leaders are often activists in national parties. None of this is surprising, and it accords well with our conclusions about voting patterns in the 1920s and 1930s. By the same token, it suggests a further aspect of the "personal" politics Mikkelsen found exasperating. Politicians themselves straddle the gap between local and national politics. One wonders how they keep their balance. Perhaps they find footholds in non-political institutions that provide more rungs on the ladder – in the unions, religious congregations, cultural clubs and other voluntary associations whose abundance is another striking feature of the Faroes' complexity (cf. Andreassen 1992: 205-54, esp. pp. 245-47). These merit attention as institutions whose members' likeness in one defining respect – concern for workers' rights, shared religious convictions, or an interest in traditional dance, the theater, music, or athletics – make some degree of ranked differences permissible.

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I have suggested several matters that deserve further inquiry. Some are underutilized sources: the travel literature, land-tenure records, *grannastevna* minutes, and *tættir*. Some are understudied periods: the politically quiescent decades following the introduction of free

trade, and – especially – the interwar depression years. Others are sociological or demographic topics: social stratification, social mobility, household structure, internal migration, political sociology. Yet others are areas where the Faroes might fruitfully be compared to other countries: their long-delayed, then sudden acquisition of a middle class, their having remained a nation of villages, and their combination of smallness and complexity. All have cultural dimensions recommending them to anthropological attention.

But perhaps we should leave the last word to Trollope, taking his parting remarks as challenge.

> As I drank my little drop of whisky and water before retiring I could not help feeling how strange it was to have seen an entirely new country since tea-time. Had I lived for two years in the capital, I might perhaps have known the people better and have had a clearer idea as to their habits of life. But it really seemed to all of us that we knew the Faroe Islands better than we should have done by reading all the books that could have been written about them. (Trollope 1878: 17)

Notes

1. Some nineteenth-century writers, including Dasent, made several visits to the Faroes. A few took a more than passing interest in them. Taylor came back several times after her initial visit in 1895, and lived in the Faroes between 1900 and 1905 and again between 1914 and 1919 (Vogt and Korbeck 1997: 167-68). Nelson Annandale, an English zoologist with ethnological interests – he was principally a Malaysianist – visited the Faroes six times between 1896 and 1903. He wrote a substantial book about the Faroes and Iceland (Annandale 1905) as well as the rather scholarly travel essay cited below (Annandale 1898). Another sort of tourism got underway at the end of the century. The first cruise ship to call in the Faroes was, I believe, the American Line's S. S. Ohio, whose expedition to witness a total eclipse of the sun off Spitzbergen in 1896 proved so successful that she was taken off her regular transatlantic run the following June for a seventy-day "summer cruise to the land of the midnight sun" (*New York Times*, 3 June 1897; Flayhart 2000:241-42). She called briefly in Tórshavn, probably in mid-June (*Føringatíðindi*, 15 July 1897).
2. The herrings are a bit too good to be true. Many writers described the scene aboard the steamer. Leclercq (1883: 32) found photographs for sale at H. C. Müller's store. It is not clear where Mrs. Disney Leith (1897: 10) bought photographs; the photographer, however, was evidently Else Birgitte Debes. Practically everyone described people's dress and the look and smell of Tórshavn. The ritual of greeting is noted by Forbes (1860: 18); compare a fuller description from some thirty years earlier: "As soon as a Faroese sees that a stranger is nearing his house, he approaches him at once, offers him his hand and says "Welcome!" then leads him into the house, goes silently to the liquor bottle, pours a full glass, drinks a little from it, refills it and offers it with a repeated welcome" (Graba 1848[1830]: 20; 1987[1830]: 44). The other quotations here are from: Birley (1891: 268 [cats]); von Geyr-Schweppenburg (1900: 51 [drinking]), Edwardes (1886: 537 [library]); Metcalfe (1860: 16 [Hammershaimb]); Edwardes (1885: 125 [plow]); and Leysbeth (1897: 30-32 [fishermen]). Von Geyr-Schweppenburg is one of several German travelers who described the Catholic mission in particular detail. He noted that drinking at Ólavsøka declined greatly between his first visit in 1877 and a return visit in 1882, thanks to the formation of a temperance society.
3. Symington (1862: 24-25, 21-22, 31). See J. P. Joensen (1985) on the advent

of parlors. Many a traveler met H. C. Müller. Postmaster, sheriff, steamship agent, merchant, and perennial member of the Løgting and of the Danish parliament (and much else besides), Müller was for many years a kind of one-man tourist bureau, chamber of commerce, and scientific society. He used to have himself rowed out to meet the steamer, resplendent in "a braided hat and a frock-coat adorned with buttons bearing the imprint of the royal crown" (Leclercq 1883: 31). He was an aficionado of fowling and pilot-whaling, and it is no doubt thanks to him that many an otherwise undistinguished description of the Faroes, based on a hasty visit, contains an accurate account of these activities.

4. A matter of definition must be noted here. An "ethnic group" may be defined as a segment of a state's citizenry claiming or accorded a special political status by virtue of distinctive cultural attributes. By this definition, the Faroese were only marginally an ethnic group for most of the nineteenth century. Faroese culture was indeed distinct, but with a few exceptions (most notably the Løgting, which was an anomalous institution by the standards of "Denmark proper"), the Faroes were weakly distinguished from Denmark's other provinces. The immediate aim of the movement that took root in the Faroes after 1888 was to assert the Faroes' ethnicity – that is, to claim a special status within the Danish state based on cultural attributes recognized as politically relevant by the Danish state itself, first and foremost a distinct written language (cf. Wylie 1987: 103 and Nauerby 1996). I have called this movement `nationalist´ with considerable hesitation. If nationalism is defined as a claim to sovereign statehood based on cultural attributes, then few Faroese were nationalists. The movement of the late nineteenth century clearly tended toward nationalism, however, not least in the minds of those who feared just such an outcome. For this reason, and because a more accurate term like "ethnicism" lacks currency, I have simply used `nationalism.´ Another alternative, "separatist," was pejorative in contemporary usage and in any case stresses the political implications of what was still a primarily cultural movement.
5. The Right candidate was Thomas Thomsen, a Faroe-born lawyer in Copenhagen. The Left candidate was the Suðuroy merchant and freeholder J. H. Schrøter. Their local supporters are given in *Dimmalætting*, 22 February 1890. The supporters' ages are from that year's census returns (*Optællingsliste* 1890). For a brief biography of Jóhan Hendrik, see *Lærarafólk* 1976, s.v. Poulsen, Jóhan Hendrik. For his enthusiastic appreciation of Danish folk high

schools, see *Føringatíðindi* May 1891 and 1 February 1894. The first *fólkafundur* he helped to organize is reported in *Føringatíðindi*, 7 June 1894. He tried to smooth things over when disaffection with the nationalist leader Jóannes Patursson – the Faroes' richest king's farmer – surfaced at a *fólkafundur* held the next year on Nólsoy (*Føringatíðindi*, 4 July 1895). This was an early indication of divisions within the nationalist movement, among whose later results were Jóhan Hendrik's expulsion from the Self-Rule party in 1929 (Mitens 1966: 32, 39-40) and Patursson's own defection from it in 1938.

6. Rothenbacher (2002, Tables DK4, IS4, N4, S4). Denmark was a special case, being already more urbanized and benefiting from massive land-reclamation projects. Its emigration rate peaked at only 5.0 per thousand in 1888.
7. On the size and prosperity of the fishing fleet, see Patursson (1961: 45, 83, 343, 400). The number of ships is inconsistently reported, probably because inactive vessels are sometimes included in the tally. The estimated numbers of ship-fishermen are from Patursson (1961: 48, 348-49). This account of the fishery's development is greatly oversimplified. It ignores, among other things, a shore-based, open-boat, summer Iceland fishery to which men and their boats were often transported by the same steamers that brought tourists to the Faroes. This fishery got underway at about the same time (the mid-1870s) as the ship-fishery properly speaking. It engaged about a hundred men in around 1880 and sometimes "as many as 6-700 men" at the end of the decade (Patursson 1961: 61), but declined as the fleet of fishing ships grew. Faroese historical demography is a much-neglected field despite the pioneering work by Rolf Guttesen (1970, 1971). For the early figures used here, see *Sammendrag* 1918, Table 2. Later ones are calculated from *Folke- og Boligtællingen* 1975, Bilag, Table 1. The latter source, at least, tallies only migration to and from Denmark.
8. On fish-girls in (mostly) the interwar period, see J. P. Joensen (1982: 425-51). Joensen (1975: 51) found that in 1924 some 70 percent of the crewmen on thirty Tórshavn-based sloops were between sixteen and thirty years old. No information is given about their marital status. During the period 1906-1915, men's median age at marriage was about twenty-seven while women's was about twenty-five (*Sammendrag* 1918, Table 10A; the figure cannot be calculated exactly because age-groups are inconsistently given).
9. Some did so by way of the Faroese and Danish educational systems, which provided access to the increasing variety of occupations that were opening up

as Faroese economy became more diversified. Social stratification within the village probably affected which men found themselves able to follow an educational route to geographic and social mobility. Kirkja's schoolteacher and leading citizen in the late nineteenth century had four sons. The eldest, born in 1880, remained in Kirkja. The others sailed out as youths, went to the teachers' school in Tórshavn, and then pursued further studies in Denmark. One, born in 1884, became a doctor in Klaksvík and then in Tórshavn; one, born in 1887, became the schoolmaster in Klaksvík; the other, born in 1890, became head of the Faroes' telephone company. Women's occupational opportunities were more limited. Interestingly, however, one of these men's five sisters succeeded their father as Kirkja's teacher (Hansen 1971: 81-83; *Lærarafólk* 1976: 279-81). For early nineteenth-century evidence of the fragmentation of landholdings, see *Tillæg* 1911:346-48, 349ff.

10. *Tættir* have of course been much studied as a folk-literary genre, and it has often been noted that forcing a *táttur's* subject to dance to it was a means of controlling deviance (e.g., Andreassen 1992: 127ff.). So far as I know, there has been no thoroughgoing study of the sorts of deviance they controlled (but cf. Gaffin 1991, 1996).
11. No census was taken in 1940. These figures, from *Statistisk Aarbog* 1924, Table 156.A.2 and 1955, Table 307.4, are for general comparisons only. Occupational categories were substantially redefined for the 1945 census, which reflects wartime developments as well as those that had taken place during the 1920s and 1930s. An increase in public-sector spending financed largely by the Danish state undoubtedly contributed to the Faroes' economic and political diversification during the depression. The political ramifications of the Faroes' economic dependency on Denmark deserve study, not least as a point of comparison between the Faroes and similarly colonial or semi-colonial societies. Mørkøre (1991, 1993) has proposed that – if I read him correctly – Faroese political partisanship has arisen partly from rivalry among "interest groups" over the disposition of Danish subsidies. This seems plausible. It is not clear, however, just what he means by "interest groups" or in what sense politicians and parties represent them; nor does he concern himself with electoral politics.
12. The main determinants of *løgtingsmenn*'s party affiliation in 1906 were age and place of education. Debes (1982: 309) notes that "the conservatives were on average considerably older – most of them by almost a generation – than

the Self-Rule men," and that none of the Unionists had been educated abroad, compared to six of the eight Self-Rulers.

13. The following discussion is based on the election results given by Waag (1967). Community types are defined according to the number of registered ships (Patursson 1961: 122). Tórshavn was in a class of its own. The major ports were Klaksvík, Tvøroyri (Froðba *sókn*), and Vágur. The minor ports were of two types, which I have conflated here for simplicity's sake: existing ones (Vestmanna, Fuglafjørður, and Sandavágur), and developing ones (Nes, Sjógv/Strendur, and Sørvágur). Other places are classed as villages.
14. The formulation here generally follows Gullestad (1991); for a similar one, see Wylie (1989).

Table 1. Landholdings in the Norðoyar by size, type of holding, and type of landholder, 1813[1]

1.1 Size of landholdings, in marks										
	Land less	≤1	1.0-1,9	2.0-2,9	3.0-3,9	4.0-5,9	6.-7,9	≥8	total	ave. size
Land held in tenancy										
King's farmers	-	4	7	14	5	14	6	7	57	4,0
All holdings										
King's farmers	-	0	1	9	8	16	9	14	57	6,2
Other[2]	12	17	19	15	5	1	0	0	69	1,4
Total	12	17	20	24	13	17	9	14	126	3,6

1.2 Types of holdings, in marks										
	Type of holding									
	Landholders		Tenancy		Freehold		For others		Total	
	No.	%	Size	%	Size	%	Size	%	Size	%
King's farmers	57	45%	230,6	100%	100,5	67%	19,6	29%	350,7	78%
Other	69	54%	-	-	49,2	33%	47,6	70%	96,8	22%
Total	126	100%	230,6	100%	149,7	100%	67,2	100%	447,5	100%

1.3 Total holdings by decile (N & %)										
1 Land-less	2 0.06-0.84m	3 0.88-1.19m	4 1.25-1.94m	5 2.00-2.50m	6 2.56-3.13m	7 3.25-4.44m	8 4.50-5.50m	9 5.56-8.37m	10 ≥ 8.63m	Total
12	13	12	12	13	13	13	12	13	13	126
0%	1.5%	2.7%	4.3%	6.6%	8.1%	10.9%	13.3%	19.0%	33.5%	100%

1. Tabulations exclude Depli, Múli and Klaksvík (Biskupsstøð), for which no data are given. The minister (who had a living of 12 marks) and his predecessors´s widow (4 marks) are tallied as king´s farmers.
2. Includes land "held for others." These were generally freeholdings owned by individuals living in other villages, from whom they were rented under a sharecropping arrangement

Source: Calculated from Hansen, J.S. (1971-1981)

Table 2. The appointive elite, 1700 – 1900[1]

2.1 Persons in office at 25-year intervals									
	Date								
	1700	1725	1750	1775	1800	1825	1850	1875	1900
Born in Faroes	6	5	3	9	4	2	3	4	2
Born elsewhere	5	7	10	4	9	10	9	7	9
Total	11	12	13	13	13	12	12	11	11

2.2 Date of first appointment								
	1700-1749	1750-1774	1775-1799	1800-1824	1825-1849	1850-1879	1875-1899	Total
Born in Faroes N	7	13[2]	4[3]	2[4]	2[5]	4	3	35
Born in Faroes Average tenure	27.3 yrs	26.5 yrs	27.3 yrs	16.0 yrs	18.5 yrs	14.8 yrs	19.3 yrs	22.9 yrs
Born elsewhere N	20	7	13	18	23	24	23	128
Born elsewhere Average tenure	16.9 yrs	12.0 yrs	11.0 yrs	12.1 yrs	9.9 yrs	9.3 yrs	7.5 yrs	11.0 yrs

1 Includes the Faroes´ seven Lutheran ministers and high secular officials: The Løgmaður (from 1769, when the post became appointive, until 1816, when it was abolished), the Governor (from 1816), the bailiff, the *sorinskrivari*, the Monopoly manager (1709-1855; combined with the bailiffship, 1709-1715), the commandant of the Tórshavn garnison (combined with the governorship, 1816; abolished 1865), and the official doctor. "Other" place of birth generally indicates Denmark. Figures for the eighteenth century exclude Danes who failed to come to the Faroes after their appointments as ministers, and include a few assistant ministers. Figures exclude acting and temporary appointees, most of whom were Faroese.

2 Includes one man born in Denmark but raised in the Faroes.

3 Includes one man born in Denmark but raised in the Faroes.

4 Includes Jacob Nolsøe (sorinskrivari, 1810-1812; Monopoly manager, 1831-1850)

5 Excludes Jacob Nolsøe (see note 4)

Source: Carøe, K. (1917), Dansk Biografisk Leksikon, Degn, A. (1945), Grohshenning, M. & Hauch-Fausbøll, T. (1914-1932), Heilskov, C. (1919), Madsen, H. (1990), Nedergaard, P. (1951), Nielsen, C.F. (1879 [1960]), and Øssursson, J. (1963)

Table 3. Social origins of new merchants & teachers, 1856-1858 & 1871-1890

The persons engaged in "commerce" who took out licenses in 1856-1858 were mostly former Monopoly employees, together with a few individuals with commercial experience or expertise (e.g., the Tórshavn innkeeper´s widow) and a couple of agents for Danish firms interested in establishing Faroe branches.

	Total	King´s farmer	Other agr+ fisherman	Com- merce	Artis- an	Teacher	Minor official[6]	Other	Un- known
3.1 Occupations of persons taking out merchant´s lisenses 1856-1858									
Tórshavn	21	0	1	10	6	1	2[7]	1[8]	0
Monopoly outstations[9]	18	2	5	7	1	1	0	1[10]	1
Other villages	64	22	28	21[11]	2	3	1	0	6
Total	103	24	34	19	9	5	3	2	7
Percent	100%	23%	33%	18%	9%	5%	3%	2%	7%
3.2 Occupations of fathers of teacher´s school graduates, 1871-1890									
Tórshavn	7	0	0	2	2	0	2[12]	1[13]	0
Former outstation[14]	6	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0
Other villages	33	9	11	2	3	3	1	0	4
Total	46	10	12	6	7	3	3	1	4
Percent	100	22%	26%	13%	15%	7%	7%	2%	9%

6 Sheriffs unless otherwise noted

7 One "pilot" and one "lieutenant" of Tórshavn garrison

8 One "seaman"

9 Klaksvík, Vestmanna and Tvøroyri

10 One doctor

11 Includes one man who was also a king´s farmer

12 Includes one man who was also a merchant

13 One "skipper"

14 Plus Vágur (Suðuroy), which was now also a deep-water port

Sources: Joensen et al. (1955: 95-102) and Johannesen, M. (1976: 285 et passim)

Table 4. Fates of children born in Kirkja, 1775-1915[15]

				Stayed in village				Emigrated	
				Married		Single			
	Date of birth	Date at age 25	Total cohort	N	%	N	%	N	%
Females	1775-1830	1800-1855	21	5	24	0	-	16	76
	1831-1864	1856-1889	18	4	22	6	33	8	44
	1865-1884	1890-1909	17	1	6	3	18	13	76
	1885-1915	1910-1940	41	11	27	7	17	23	56
F Total			97	37 22%		16 16%		60 62%	
Males	1775-1830	1800-1855	16	14	88	0	-	2	13
	1831-1864	1856-1889	18	12	67	2	11	4	22
	1865-1884	1890-1909	19	12	63	2	11	5	26
	1885-1915	1910-1940	42	16	38	4	10	22	52
M Total			95	54 57%		8 8%		33 35%	
Total	1775-1830	1800-1855	37	19	51	0	-	18	49
	1831-1864	1856-1889	36	16	44	8	22	12	33
	1865-1884	1890-1909	36	13	36	5	14	18	50
	1885-1915	1910-1940	83	27	33	11	13	45	54
T Total			192	91 47%		24 13%		93 48%	

15 Excludes individuals who died young. Includes individuals born elsewhere but raised in Kirkja (foster children, etc.)

Source: Hansen, J.S. (1971: 41-99)

Table 5. Members of the Løgting by occupation, party affiliation, and ideological predilection, 1906-1924

In the period 1906-1920, the Union party was unionist and generally rightist while the Self-Rule party was nationalist and became increasingly divided between rightist and leftist factions. In the period 1924-1940, the unionist parties were the Unionists and the (relatively moderate) Social Democrats, while the nationalist ones were the (relatively moderate) Self-Rulers and the Economic and People´s parties; the rightist parties were the (relatively moderate) Unionists and the Economic and People´s parties, while the leftist ones were the (relatively moderate) Self-Rulers and the Social Democrats.

The sample includes all representatives elected during the stated periods, including five replacements (all in 1924-1940) for men who died in office or resigned their positions. The sample excludes non-elected members of the Løgting (i.e., the Governor and the Dean). Occupation and party affiliation are as of an individual´s first election during the stated period.

Table 5.1 Members of the Løgting by occupation and ideological predilection, 1906-1940

	1906 Self-Rule vs. Union parties			1908-1920 Self-Rule vs. Union parties		
	Self-Rule	Union	Total	Self-Rule	Union	Total
Traditional elite[16]	4	6	10	5	7	12
Commercial middle class[17]	0	2	2	2	6	8
Professional middle class[18]	3	4	7	5	8	13
Clerical middle class[19]	0	0	0	2	2	4
Skilled working class[20]	0	0	0	3	1	4
Fishermen and freeholders	1	0	1	2	2	4
Total	8	12	20	19	26	45

16 King´s farmers, sheriffs, Lutheran ministers, and high civil servants (incl. 1 postmaster)

17 Merchants, businessmen, ship-owners (incl. 1 `dockyard manager´ and 1 `confidential clerk´)

18 Teachers, lawyers, and journalists (incl. 1 archivist/historian, 1 architect, 1 national librarian, and 1 telephone company manager)

19 Clerks, acountants, minor civil servants (incl. 1 postman, 2 lighthouse-keepers, 1 `communal secretary´, 1 `fish-inspector´ and 1 harbourmaster)

20 Skippers and artisans (incl. 1 truck-driver)

Table 5.2. Members of the Løgting by occupation and ideological predilection, 1924-1940[21]						
	1924-1940					
	Nationalist vs. unionist			Left vs. right		
	Nat´list	Union	Total	Left	Right	Total
Traditional elite	3[22]	7[23]	10	3[24]	7[25]	10
Commercial middle class	5	9	14	2	12	14
Professional middle class	10	7	17	12	5	17
Clerical middle class	1	5	6	4	2	6
Skilled working class	9	4	13	10	3	13
Fishermen and freeholders	1	3	4	2	2	4
Total	29	35	64	33	31	64

21 The sample includes all representatives elected during the stated periods, including five replacements (all in 1924-1940) for men who died in office or resigned their positions. The sample excludes non-elected members of the Løgting (i.e., the Governor and the Dean). Occupation and party affiliation are as of an individual´s first election during the stated period.

22 Includes M.A. Winther. Lawyer in Tórshavn to 1916, sheriff in Sandur as of 1918; and the king´s farmer Jóannes Patrursson, People´s party as of 1940

23 Includes A. Samuelsen, lawyer in Tórshavn to 1912, sheriff in Fuglafjørður as of 1914

24 Includes M.A. Winther. Lawyer in Tórshavn to 1916, sheriff in Sandur as of 1918; and the king´s farmer Jóannes Patrursson, People´s party as of 1940

25 Includes A. Samuelsen, lawyer in Tórshavn to 1912, sheriff in Fuglafjørður as of 1914

Source: Waag, E. (1967)

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Visiting

Jonathan Wylie

My wife and I lived in Álvabøur (pronounced AWL-va-bö-vur) from June 1971 to April 1972. It is a fishing village, with a bustling little harbor and about five hundred inhabitants.

Álvabingar say it is a "living village," a "young village," a "little place." They mean that it is busy, with an active fishing fleet and its own processing plant, that it was founded as recently as the 1830s, and that it has a small population and not much land. They are also asserting their values. Álvabøur is "living" because Álvabingar work well together, as fishermen must. It is egalitarian because unlike "old," agricultural villages, it has never had any great king's farmers. And because it is small, Álvabingar know each other closely and variously as neighbors, as kinfolk, and, above all, as individuals, each of whom is distinguished by a particular array of talents, quirks, and habits. Álvabingar claim – rightly, on the whole – that people get along well in such a community. They say, for example, that in old villages people do not call on each other so casually; but *here* anyone may visit anyone else at any time. You just "come in onto the floor" (*koma inn á gólvið*): walk in the door, sit down at the kitchen table, and have a chat, a cup of tea, and a bite to eat.

Susanna and I found this way of doing things took some getting used to. Not only were we accustomed to making a date or calling ahead, or at the very least knocking at the door, but „just come in onto the floor" proved to be a deceptively simple prescription.

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It was largely through our neighbors the Davidsens that we began visiting people: Niels and Helena, their son Regin, and, when she moved in with them in October, Regin's fiancée, who was also named Helena. "Little Helena," as we called her between ourselves, hailed from Klaksvík. She and Regin were going to be married in the spring, when their new house across the street was finished.

"How long will you be here?" Niels asked one evening in early September. He and I were watching a truck-load of gravel being dumped along one side of what would some day be Regin's yard. The house itself still consisted only of a poured-concrete foundation, the joists and a few floorboards, and the framing for the walls. This was the first time I had done more than exchange greetings with Niels. "Do you like it here?" he asked. "What about your wife?"

I said we'd be here until April, and we liked it fine. "But," I added, trying out a conditional sentence that strained my command of Faroese, "I think my wife would like it better if she could talk to people more."

Niels replied kindly that my Faroese was getting better, and asked if we went to people's houses to *práta* (chat, converse, talk) or if people came over to *práta* with us. I allowed that we seldom went visiting; but since several other people had asked the same question, it occurred to me that they were inviting us to call on them.

Regin, Niels, and Big Helena's brother Sigmundur were raising the roof on Regin's house a couple of days later. The weather was gray, with the last rain-squalls from a storm that had blown up overnight still blustering through the village. I went over to see if I could help. Fifteen triangular roof-trusses were lying on the floor, already nailed together. We got the last one up as the afternoon was ending in a steady drizzle. When the last truss was in place, we passed a wreath and a Faroese flag up to Sigmundur. He nailed the flag to the peak of the roof at one end of the house, and the wreath at the other. There was no ceremony involved. I asked why they did it. Niels said rather testily, "It's just a custom." He and Sigmundur went home. Regin and I clambered about the joists while he showed me the layout of

the house. When the rain began to pour down, we took shelter in a shed in the corner of the yard. Regin repeated something his father had said earlier: Susanna and I were to come over to their house around seven o'clock.

No one had mentioned eating, so Susanna and I had a snack before we went next door – a light snack, luckily, since it turned out that this was a dinner invitation. We got along famously with the Davidsens, talking about all sorts of things during dinner at the kitchen table and for several hours sitting in the parlor afterwards: the difference between American and Faroese pancakes (Faroese *pannukakur* are like French *crêpes*), the whereabouts of our other next-door neighbor, Elias (he was fishing in Greenland), the post-cards Regin had collected from around the world (he turned out to be a short-wave buff), the notion that *gluggi* (window) and *royna* (try) are "better Faroese" than the more common danicisms *vindeyga* and *prøva* (Elias's wife was nicknamed Glugga-Lisa because she was always sitting at her window), and the fact that I had not been in the army. (This was tricky to explain, since the Faroese terms for "conscientious objector" and "medical deferment" were not in my basic vocabulary, if indeed they exist at all in Faroese.) But mostly we talked about our families. The Davidsens learned that Susanna had a younger sister and I had a younger brother; that both our fathers were professors (which made us cousins, Niels joked); that Susanna's mother was an only child, but the rest of our parents had siblings; that one of my grandfathers had been a Protestant minister, while the other had been in the lumber business; and that a friend of my parents who is interested in genealogy had reckoned that my brother and I turn out to be eighth cousins if you trace our descent separately though our father's and mother's lines. Laughing, Niels remarked that I should just write that *everybody* in Álvabøur is cousins.

We learned that Niels and Big Helena were cousins themselves (his grandfather and her great-grandfather had been brothers); that her father was the oldest man in the village (surely I'd seen him, walking with a cane? He was eighty-nine years old, and lived with Sigmundur); that Niels was a cousin of the cheery little man who

kept the old-fashioned store next to Álvabøur's diminutive movie theater; and that Niels and Helena had other children besides Regin. It seemed strange to see Regin's kid brother Tróndur, a ten-year old with reddish hair and his father's sturdy build, sitting quietly with us instead of rocketing up and down the street on his bicycle or dashing about with Sigmundur's children. Like the rest of the family, Tróndur was quick-witted and clever with his hands. He had been deaf since birth, however, and communicated with his family and playmates in a home-made sign-language. He had just begun going to a special school in Tórshavn. We never really got to know a third brother, a slim, terribly shy teenager who was usually off fishing with a deep-water ship. I forget if anything much was said that evening about the other two Davidsen children: a deeply retarded boy and girl whom Niels and Helena had kept at home as long as possible but who were now institutionalized in Denmark.

Susanna and I did not get home until after midnight, linguistically exhausted but happy to have found people we got on so well with. Within a few weeks we and the Davidsens were often in and out of each other's houses. Susanna and Big Helena spent many an afternoon together knitting, chatting, or sitting in companionable silence in Helena's kitchen while cups of tea cooled on the table and offerings of cookies went less and less touched. Susanna became an accomplished knitter under her tutelage. I helped Regin roof and floor his new house, and he and Little Helena got into the habit of coming over to our house in the evenings. The four of us sometimes went to the movies on weekend nights, but our principal pastime was playing cards. We experimented with Crazy Eights ("Olsen-Olsen"), gin rummy, and even bridge before settling on the Faroese favorite, *sjavsur*.

Our friendship with the Davidsens was partly personal – a matter of convergent temperaments and general convictions about how the world works. In our various ways, we and they were respectful of learning, impatient with pomp, left-leaning in politics, and unobservant in religion. Susanna disliked casual social contacts and was even more uneasy about meeting new people because of her rudimentary Faroese. Her Faroese improved greatly when she began visiting

Big Helena, who, for her part, probably welcomed a more normal relationship than she had had with her retarded daughter. To much the same effect, Susanna and I offered Little Helena a bit of fresh air in a place she was finding small and dull. Not that this always worked out. One snowy evening when Regin was working late she came over to ask if Susanna wanted to go sledding. Susanna didn't feel like it. I said I'd like to come, but Helena explained that she and I couldn't go together – not in such a small village. It would have been okay in Klaksvík, she remarked rather bitterly.

Our friendship had a local, cultural basis as well. For rather different reasons, both our household and the Davidsens' had become too drawn in upon themselves. Becoming housebound is a particular danger for Álvabøur's women, whose domestic responsibilities tend to keep them at home anyway. There is a type of village woman who allegedly stays home so much that it is feared she is not quite right in the head. Susanna narrowly avoided acquiring such a social character when her habit of visiting next door became known. Big Helena was hardly a recluse, and no one doubted her sanity; but she did spend most of her time at home. This was sometimes understood, if not condoned, as a trait common to hers and Niels's lineage, whose intelligence and reserve (as we appreciated them) were widely seen as bookishness and aloofness. Indeed, although we found the Davidsens close-knit and affectionate at home, they were even more emotionally reserved in public than most Álvabingar. Everyone of course understood that Helena had had "a hard life" with three handicapped children, two of whom required constant care. Still, I was told, it was a pity she visited only with her sister-in-law, Sigmundur's wife Sofía. People were glad when she began to work part-time at the fish-factory toward the end of our stay, and so "came among folk" more often.

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As I became accustomed to visiting with the Davidsens, I felt more comfortable about dropping in on other Álvabingar. At one time or another I probably came in onto the floor of most of the houses in

Álvabøur to collect genealogies, conduct interviews, chat, or deliver the photographs Susanna and I had begun to sell around the village. Even as I overcame my misgivings about just walking in someone's door, however, I encountered unanticipated complications. There was the problem of shoes, for example.

I had brought only one pair of shoes to the Faroes: brown, leather, low-top work boots with smooth uppers – the kind whose laces run around three or four little hooks reaching half-way up the ankle. I found them presentable enough for spending the day in Tórshavn, sturdy enough for strolling down to the dock in wet weather and tramping about the outfields with Susanna on a Sunday afternoon, and suitable – though a bit heavy – for herding sheep. They were obviously no good for working at the fish-factory, however, so when I was hired to help out there on busy days I spent my first earnings on a pair of rubber boots.

But Álvabingar don't wear shoes like mine. Out of doors, women ordinarily wear clogs; men wear clogs, boots, or rubbers. They leave their ordinary footgear just inside the door when they enter a house, and go about in socks or the slipper-socks called *skóleistir*. The only shoes people wear indoors are dress-up ones. For men, these are generally low, light, leather shoes with laces. The problem was that although my shoes were obviously outdoor shoes, they laced up like dress-up ones. This meant that when I called on someone I had to kneel down at the kitchen door to take them off. Seeing me fussing with the laces, the woman of the house would be saying things like "Please don't bother" without much conviction, while I craned around to say things like "It‘s quite all right."

These awkward interludes did not matter much at first. Without really thinking about what I was doing, however, I soon found myself wearing my new rubber boots around the village. I turned down the tops so my feet wouldn't get too hot and so I could slip the boots off more easily. I knew that wearing boots with the tops turned down is a somewhat swaggering style affected by young fishermen ashore, and may therefore have imagined that people seemed at first to find my boots amusing; but soon I caught no quick glances at my feet. The way I was shod seemed to have become as much a part of

the way I was known as my usual sweater, my faulty Faroese, and my friendships with Regin and with several old men from whom I collected genealogies and heard stories about the old days.

Adopting socially suitable footgear was part of the process by which I learned the rules for visiting in Álvabøur. A few of the more practical ones were made explicit, so that I was able to learn them consciously. Such was the case with rules governing *when* you may come in onto the floor. The general rule is that you may do so at any time; but except in an emergency, it would of course be impolite to come visiting after people have gone to bed or when no one is at home. Regin told us there are several ways to advertise that you are not at home for social purposes. After dark you should turn off the downstairs lights. During the day you should stay away from the windows and perhaps even go so far as to lock the door. Niels was respecting these rules early one morning when he came by to fetch me to drive sheep. I was still in the bathroom and hadn't bothered to turn on the light. Thinking I was still asleep, he knocked and called up to the window, although he knew our door was not locked. The only people who routinely broke these rules were the postman and his assistant, who would enter an unoccupied house to deliver the mail. We often came back from a walk or an errand to find a little pile of letters on the seat beside the stove.

The question of locking up is a bit more complicated, since locking your door smacks of unneighborliness. Like most Álvabingar, we locked the front door only if we were going to be away overnight, having been told that drunks might come into an empty house looking for a bottle. A more realistic danger, in our case, was a certain boy who had befriended me. I was told he sometimes pilfered things and might come in looking for loose change or small valuables. When we went to Tórshavn overnight, we followed our neighbors' example of leaving the key on a nail beside the door, too high up for a child to reach but in plain sight "in case someone needs to come in."

Other rules are more complicated and less explicit – for example, those governing what happens after you walk in someone's door. It all depends on the purpose of your visit and how well you know the people you are visiting. The front door opens onto a little hall or

vestibule. Here you find a mat for outdoor footgear, a row of pegs for coats or slicker-tops, and a small shelf above it for hats. If you know the house well, you can probably tell who is home from the shoes on the mat. When Susanna took her knitting-bag next door she might see Regin's boots on the mat, but not Big Helena's clogs. He was probably sleeping late after baiting hooks until all hours last night, while she was probably out shopping or over at Sofía's; so Susanna would just come back home.

The kitchen door opens off the vestibule. If your business is something simple like dropping off a parcel or telling someone he's wanted on the dock, you open the kitchen door, poke your head in, say hello, and state your business. You don't take off your shoes. If your errand is slightly more complicated, you may step into the kitchen and even sit down briefly if there is a seat immediately inside the door. An old peat-box beside the stove served this purpose at our house. You should really take off your shoes before stepping into the kitchen, but if they're not muddy you may leave them on to emphasize you will be staying only for a moment. If so, you come in only as far as the little seat by the door.

You leave your shoes in the hall if your business requires conversation, or if your business *is* conversation. With wet-weather gear as well as outdoor shoes, the general rule is to take off anything that would soil the floor. If the weather is so vile that you are wearing a coat or a slicker, you should hang it on a peg. A man leaves on his everyday cap but removes heavy-weather headgear. A woman may leave on her kerchief. Houses are seldom so warm that it is necessary to take off your sweater. In fact, it would be mildly impolite to do so right away. Then you come into the kitchen. If you find no one there, you may call out, "Is anyone in?" It would be impolite to stay more than a few moments if there is no answer. Nor should you venture farther into the house unless invited to do so.

Usually someone is home, most often the woman of the house. She may ask you to come on in and take a seat, but this is not necessary. You exchange greetings with her and sit down at the kitchen table.

Looking around, you realize that you have entered a rather complicated social space. The kitchen is the heart of the household, the

center of a housewife's domain; but it is neither a room for formal occasions like the parlor nor an entirely private space like a bedroom, since anyone may walk into it at any time. In a way, a kitchen is like the baiting sheds on the dock: a place where work gets done. Accordingly, although a woman keeps her kitchen clean and fairly neat (Big Helena remarked one time that "you can always afford to keep your house clean"), it is not obsessively tidy, and unlike her middle-class American counterpart an Álvabøur housewife is rarely moved to apologize for "the mess." After all, a moderate untidiness is evidence of work in progress. Some breakfast dishes are stacked on the counter, clean diapers wanting folding are piled nearby, a half-finished sweater or a little heap of *skóleistir* with holes in the heels waits on the table for her to find a moment to pick up her needles, the lunch-time potatoes are still in the sink, not yet scrubbed. Some cooking is done on a big, squat, kerosene-burning stove, but most kitchens have a new electric stove. Pots and pans are stowed away in cupboards and drawers. A couple of short, open shelves may carry a set of fancy salt-and-pepper shakers, a few knickknacks, a radio set, a Bible, the almanac, and the inevitable little sheaf of miscellaneous paper: bills to be paid, a postcard to be saved for a little while yet, a cutting from the newspaper, some photographs to be glued in the family album. A calendar or a tide chart is tacked to the wall, perhaps along with a decorative cutting board, a small barometer, a framed bit of needlepoint proclaiming (in Danish, most likely, since that's where the patterns are from) something like "God Bless Our Home" in gothic script, or a piece of wood painted with a Faroese proverb like "No one can say in the morning where he will be a guest in the evening." The table – usually of varnished wood, but sometimes surfaced with formica – stands by the window, with a bench running along the wall on its inner sides and two or three chairs on the outer ones. Each kitchen is a little different, of course. Their smells are likewise variations on a common theme, which I wish I could make sound more attractive, of damp wool, boiled fish, reasty meat, baking bread (especially on Saturdays), and, perhaps, baby.

You are sitting at the kitchen table. The woman of the house bustles about briefly. She may wipe the table or clear away the breakfast

things; but her main business is offering you a cup of tea or coffee and a bite to eat. If she's not home, a man or even an older child may offer you *at drekka* (something to drink), especially if there's a pot already made. The polite way to decline is to say something like "*Nei takk, eg havi akkurát drukkið*" ("No thanks, I've just drunk"). It is impolite to decline something to drink if you'll be staying more than a couple of minutes. Along with the coffee or tea, you'll probably be offered a bite to eat. She gives you a clean mug and a little plate, sees to it that milk and sugar are handy, and on a larger plate sets out some slices of bread with butter and jam, a few store-bought biscuits, or some slices of home-made cake or pastry. People generally prefer milk and granulated sugar with tea, but condensed milk and sugar cubes with coffee.

What you are served and how you are served it depend on how familiar a guest you are. Coffee is fancier than tea, white bread is fancier than rye, and pastries, cakes, or biscuits are fancier than bread. Store-bought items are fancier than home-made ones, a fresh pot of coffee or tea is fancier than what's already in the pot, a cup and saucer are fancier than a mug. A clean table is fancier than one with crumbs and soiled breakfast things. Thus a cup and saucer, freshly brewed coffee, and two or three sorts of store-bought biscuits mean you are an unfamiliar guest, to be treated rather formally. A mug, tea from the pot, and a few slices of rye bread mean that you are a frequent visitor. This whole presentation – and, by extension, the visit as a whole – is called a *drekkamunnur* (literally, "drink-mouthful") or, according to what you are offered to drink, a *kaffimunnur* ("coffee-mouthful") or a *temunnur* ("tea-mouthful"). Once upon a time, male visitors were offered a shot of liquor if they were strangers. This happened to me only once that year, when to my surprise, since I knew he was a teetotaler, a man I knew fairly well but was calling on for the first time unearthed a bottle of Scotch from the back of a cupboard in the parlor. He poured me a small glass while his wife assembled a *kaffimunnur* in the kitchen. You are supposed to drink your liquor in a single swallow and return the glass to your host. He may then take a shot if he wants. This man did not.

Now the woman of the house fills your mug or cup, and invites

you to eat and drink. "*Ver so góður*," she says, or "*Ger so væl*" ("be so good"; "if you please"). Then she resumes her housework or her knitting, probably sitting down only if your business is with her. If you've come to talk with her husband, she may have refilled his mug when she filled yours. If you are a woman, you take out your knitting, darning, or needlework. She joins you, rising from time to time to start the lunch or prepare the baby's bottle. You talk.

The pace of conversation is excruciatingly slow by American standards, particularly among older men. Each utterance is followed by a measured pause, and the breaks between topics are punctuated by exchanges of "*Ja, ja*," "I reckon so" and the like – perhaps as many as four or five of these, delivered with great deliberation about fifteen seconds apart, at a volume midway between an undertone and a normal speaking voice, like a metronome overheard ticking slowly in the background. This leisurely – not to say lugubrious – rhythm got on my nerves at first but it proved virtually impossible to hurry things along, especially with people I did not know well. If I, or an importunate child, broke the rhythm of *ja-ja's* and I-reckon-so's, the interruption would simply be ignored.

The pattern of conversation is equally resistant to change. Susanna and I never rigorously tested our hypothesis that the topics in most conversations follow an A,B,C...C,B,A sequence, with each topic treated more briefly the second time it comes up. It is certain, however, that most conversations begin and end with discussions of the weather, and that weather-talk marks shifts from one topic to another. A complicated conversation, or one involving some business to transact, may wind its way through several other non-controversial topics of general interest – the luck of the fishing fleet, the shortness of the days (or, come spring, their increasing length) – before reaching the main item on the agenda. It is introduced by saying something like "*Nei, tú* [No, you], what I wanted to ask about was...." If, once seated at someone's table, I immediately asked about family history or said that their photographs had arrived, this business would be dealt with at once; but a particularly detailed discussion of the weather or the tides was sure to follow.

At length the conversation winds down into an indeterminate

exchange of *ja-ja's* and I-reckon-so's. You end it by saying something like "Yes, you. [Long pause.] No, I don't know. [Shorter pause.] Yes, yes, we'll see each other, then." He answers, "Yes. Yes, farewell, you." You say, "Farewell." You may say your good-byes at the table or at the door; but in any case you must thank your hostess as you get up from the table. "*Manga takk*" ("many thanks"), you say. "*Væl gagnist*" ("may it do you good"), she replies. This is a required litany. It is omitted only in restaurants and ships' messes, for example. You should also thank a man in this way, if he instead of the woman of the house has been the one to offer you a *drekkamunnur*; but he is likely to respond off-handedly, "*Ja, ja – væl gagnist, tú*."

This has been an ordinary, everyday visit. Some visits are a good deal more formal. Couples often take a stroll around the village on Sunday afternoons, ending up at someone else's house as a matter of family custom or by a standing invitation. You may also be invited to call on someone in the evening. In such cases, you need not leave your good shoes in the hall. Instead of just sitting down at the kitchen table, you will be ushered into the parlor. Having sat down on an upholstered "modern" chair and uttered an "I reckon so" or two in a comfortable, throat-clearing sort of way, you may be left alone for a few minutes to contemplate the bookshelves, bric-a-brac, framed wedding photographs, curtained windows, mementos of foreign travels, decorative bits of Faroeana (models of spinning wheels, whaling knives, or the slat-sided creels called *leypar*), a painting or two, and perhaps an elegantly costumed doll high up in one corner. A few houses boast a parlor large enough for a dinner table at one end. You are invited to sit at this table, or on a couch facing a low coffee table. Here, for a Sunday visit, the good china is already set out, along with spoons for stirring your coffee, a multiplicity of cakes, cookies, and confections, and, if any of these cannot be eaten neatly with the fingers, forks and napkins. Everyone sits down. Grace is said, if that is the household custom. The hostess says "*Verið so góð*" or "*Gerið so væl*."

Things are rather stiff and silent at first, but soon the formality is relaxed. Grandma takes out her knitting. The conversation becomes more general. So-and-so is engaged to a girl from Vestmanna. A

shopkeeper is installing a vending machine so he can sell things all night long. The school bus missed picking up Elisabeth's kids again yesterday – really, it should wait for them, but those kids are always late.... Women do most of the talking. The men sit silently at the table, perhaps taking a second helping of the fruit compote ("Please, eat up," the hostess has said), or, having moved to an armchair or the sofa, peruse the family photograph album with glassy-eyed concentration while enjoying a store-bought cigarette or a duty-free cigar. The women, having first sat down to eat with the men, find themselves moving to and from the kitchen. A couple of sisters lend a hand bringing in more cakes. At length one of them quietly says "*Manga takk*," and moves to take her dishes into the kitchen. Everyone else chimes in, the hostess replies "*Væl gagnist*," and even the American's wife helps to clear the table. For a while you hear conversation and the rattle of plates in the kitchen. Soon it will be time to leave.

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Álvabingar do a lot of visiting. Scarcely a day goes by, I imagine, that at least one member of each household does not pay or receive a visit. Unfortunately, I did not systematically collect information about Álvabingar's visiting habits. But while Álvabingar insist that anyone may visit anyone else and say that their visiting preferences are just a matter of personal likes and dislikes, it is clear that the people one actually visits are few and that cultural factors influence who they are. Regin and Little Helena often called on us, although he would not stay if he came alone and found only Susanna at home. Nor would Little Helena stay if she came alone and found only me at home. We sometimes went to see Niels and Big Helena, and of course Susanna often went next door to knit and chat with her. But she never came to our house. When she went visiting, it was almost always at her sister-in-law Sofía's house. (She had a half-sister-in-law as well, but seldom if ever visited her.) My old friend Pól sometimes came to see me and I sometimes went to see him, and he and two of his nephews with whom he is close often called on each other;

but his wife never came to our house, and to the best of my knowledge she did not visit with their wives. My old friend Tórstein often dropped by his sons' houses, and at least one of them used to call on him; but his daughters-in-law practically never came to see his wife, except perhaps on holidays.

Cultural factors also shape how formalized a visit is. At the level of explicitly stated norms, the sense that frequent visiting is bound up with Álvabøur's character as a young village is expressed in statements to the effect that here, at least, anyone may visit anyone else. This rule holds true even in cases where people are scarcely on speaking terms. I don't know why they originally fell out, but I was not surprised to learn that Tórstein had not spoken with his next-door neighbor for three years. One day, however, the neighbor simply dropped by to ask if he could widen the stub of roadway (which Tórstein owned) leading to his house, so that a truck could get in. Tórstein gave his permission.

At a less explicit level, it is clear that in keeping with Álvabingar's tendency to separate male and female activities, men generally visit men, women visit women, and couples visit couples. Exceptions to this rule are marked by a certain formality. A woman may serve a *drekkamunnur* to an unaccompanied, unrelated male caller; but she seldom shares it with him or even sits down at the table, and the visit will be brief and businesslike.

Differences between male and female visiting habits likewise reflect differences between men's and women's workaday worlds. A man mostly works out of doors with men from other households. His reputation depends chiefly on his work. He may be a "strong" fisherman, or if he has a solitary or indoor job he may be thought of as someone who "has never done anything in his life." Considerable differences between men are accepted as matters of native ability and levels of accomplishment. You would no more expect a "strong" fisherman to be an expert fowler (especially if he is afraid of heights) than you would expect an expert fowler to be a good fisherman (especially if he gets seasick). And of course it takes time to become an accomplished fisherman, fowler, carpenter, shepherd, or whatever. Thus a man acquires his adult statuses gradually, through

a series of apprenticeships; and his reputation depends on engaging in a wide variety of tasks in groups of shifting composition within which his status changes according to the task at hand. Yesterday you were a sub-foreman at the fish-factory, today you are a mere crewman on a fishing trip, tomorrow you will shear sheep or help to build your neighbor's house. In short, a man's position in local society is normally refracted in continually shifting status differentials.

Men's visits are correspondingly informal; for a visit takes place on what is, to them, the neutral ground of the kitchen, where workaday status differentials are irrelevant. If the woman of the house is present, she will offer her husband's visitor a proper *drekkamunnur*; but in her absence a man playing the role of host seldom goes any farther than a cup of what is already in the pot, and both the visitor's thanks and his own acknowledgment are perfunctory. Much the same emphasis on playing down status differentials characterizes other pastimes that are chiefly or exclusively male: games of cards or chess (a fun playing group is one without regular winners or losers), drinking sprees (in which everyone shares whatever liquor is available), and the laconic give-and-take of bantering and yarning in the baiting sheds or "On the Roost." (This is the verge beside the road overlooking the dock. The old men who rest their elbows on the railing there, spinning yarns and passing the time of day, are said resemble chickens on a roost.)

Female visiting reaches the same goal by a more complicated route. For along the way recognition must be paid to a woman's primary status as the mistress of an independent household; and from her point of view, the kitchen and the parlor are anything but neutral grounds.[1]

A woman's reputation, like a man's, depends largely on the work she does. She may be a "strong" knitter, a diligent housekeeper, or an attentive mother; or she may be slipshod or incompetent. By the same token, her kitchen is in some respects very much a public workplace. Like the baiting sheds, the fish-factory, and the fields – and, for that matter, like other places where people meet casually: the streets, the shops, the Roost – anyone may enter it freely, without even knocking. You are not surprised, when you drop by,

to see evidence of a housewife's work, or to find that, so long as a general cleanliness prevails, she feels no more need to apologize for a little heap of *skóleistir* waiting to be darned than a fisherman would apologize for a long-line waiting to be unsnarled in a baiting shed. Finding her busy in the kitchen merely confirms your assumption that her day is as productive as that of a man who works out of doors, in the public eye.

The kitchen is not entirely public, however. A housewife must assert, and the visitor must acknowledge, that it is *her* space as well. You take off your shoes and wet-weather gear in recognition of having entered it and, explicitly, in order not to make unnecessary work for her. (Failing to do so would be as impolite as messing up the tools in a carpenter's workshop or fouling the lines in a baiting shed.) She offers you a *drekkamunnur*, which, if you are a woman, she sits down to share with you. You thank her afterwards: "*Manga takk*." "*Væl gagnist*," she replies. For casual visits, these simple rituals are enough to confirm the visitor's status as a visitor and the housewife's status as a housewife, and, along the way, to submerge the differences between them in a shared pot of tea, a plate of cookies, and a spell of knitting and chatting.

But unlike a man, whose adult statuses are varied, shifting, and gradually acquired, a woman's occupations are bundled together in the more unitary status of housewife, which she acquires all at once when she marries and becomes the mistress of an independent household. The underlying problem with this state of affairs is that the neolocal, nuclear-family household – the normal domestic arrangement in Álvabøur – is an inherently temporary institution. Having been formed from fragments of the wife's and husband's natal households, it is destined to fragmentation when their children marry and set up households of their own. *Some* women's relative statuses therefore change radically at marriage, and so acquire a greater permanence than men's typically have. Sisters, for example, remain as much equals after they marry, as mistresses of their own households, as they had been when they shared a subordinate status within their mother's household. Cousins and unrelated age-mates likewise remain equals. But your mother-in-law's status is diminished

(and yours is enhanced) when you marry; and your own is diminished (and hers is enhanced) when your daughter-in-law becomes the mistress of your son's household. Relations between mothers and daughters fall between these extremes. In your mother's home you can temporarily resume a daughter's status fairly easily, but you find yourself on more awkward ground in your married daughter's home. Sisters-in-law occupy a rather less awkward middle ground; for although your brother's wife broke up your natal household by marrying him, their marriage leaves your own marital household intact.

These considerations shape women's visiting habits. Essentially, a woman has three choices. She may visit (or be visited) frequently and informally; she may visit (or be visited) infrequently and formally; or she may not visit someone at all. As a rule, a woman – or, for that matter, a man – simply avoids visiting people with whom her or his everyday relationship is weak, ambiguous, or problematic. For much the same reason, men seldom visit unrelated women, or vice versa. Such visiting might prompt suspicions of an irregular relationship.

You tend to visit most frequently with women to whom your relationship is *not* problematic. That is, you most often call on women with respect to whom your relative status has changed least: your friends, your sisters, your mother, and perhaps less often, except in the case of women who have "married into" the village, your sisters-in-law. Such visits are informal, since the rituals of asserting and recognizing the hostess's status are readily reduced to a minimum. By the same token, you seldom visit women with respect to whom your relative status has changed most. You are unlikely to drop in on your daughter-in-law, and still less likely to call on your mother-in-law – sometimes to her chagrin. Several women lamented that although they are fond of their daughters-in-law, they seldom see them. When such visits do occur, they are treated rather formally or are subsumed in Sunday gatherings when people go visiting as couples.

Visiting patterns in a household I got to know fairly well illustrate how all this works out in practice. The housewife, Olivia, had a widowed mother, three grown sons, a sister, and three sisters-in-

law (brothers' wives) living in the village, as well as two or three close but unrelated or effectively unrelated friends her own age. Her mother-in-law lived elsewhere; so did her daughters, who had married away from Álvabøur. Olivia was closest to her sister, with whom she frequently exchanged visits. When the sister dropped by, she would sit at the kitchen table knitting, sipping tea, nibbling a bit of home-made pastry, and chatting freely. If Olivia had stepped out for a moment, she would even put a fresh kettle on to boil when I showed up or find a snack for a child who came dashing in after school. Olivia was on less familiar terms with her friends but probably visited them (or was visited by them) a couple of times a week. She sometimes visited her mother, who often came to Olivia's house as well. But when the mother came by, she would sit off to one side of the kitchen, away from the table, taking little or no part in domestic routines and accepting something to eat or drink only when Olivia insisted. Olivia practically never saw one sister-in-law. The other two she visited (or was visited by) rarely if at all, although they would pause to chat when their paths crossed as they ran errands. Olivia's sons dropped by several times a week to see her or their father, but she and their wives practically never called on one another unless it was as part of a formal Sunday visit.

As this example suggests, visits are sometimes formalized. That is, you deploy more elaborate rituals of hospitality with some callers than would be necessary when, say, your sister or your best friend drops by. This is what happens when a (notionally) distinguished stranger like the American or his wife comes in onto the floor for the first time, or, more to the point, when your parents, parents-in-law, or son and daughter-in-law come calling on a Sunday afternoon. The men's presence indicates a mutual recognition that the households are formed by marriage; but their passivity – not to say somnolence – indicates that the visit has little to do with them otherwise.

The hostess, however, is very much a hostess. She ushers her guests into the parlor (for just as Sunday is a day without work, so the parlor is not her workplace), sets out the good china (which is likely a wedding present; much of the parlor furniture is either a wedding present or was bought as soon as a couple set up their

household, the parlor often being the first fully furnished room in a new house although it is the one used least often), and offers coffee and a variety of cakes and sweets. By these means she creates a special time and place in which she is confined to a restricted version of the housewife's role. Her guests are similarly restricted. It is all rather artificial, of course; but the initial formality of the occasion carries off a neat trick. By accentuating a woman's privileged status as mistress of the household and at the same time ensconcing her visitors in the privileged status of guests, it sets up a nice (if rather boring) balance of restricted social responsibilities. One might almost say that in a formal visit, a hostess and her guests meet in the parlor in much the same way that rival soccer teams meet on a playing field, shaking hands, exchanging insignia, posing for a group portrait.

Unlike rival teams, however, a hostess and her guests do not play out their relationship competitively. No one wins or loses a Sunday visit. Indeed, a successful visit consists of dismantling the formality it began with, as if a soccer match consisted of both teams' replacing their uniforms with ordinary clothes and sitting down to chat in the middle of the field. The formality is self-limiting for several reasons. Its purposes are largely served by initial presentations (ushering guests into the parlor, setting out the good china, serving coffee and sweets); it involves playing strictly limited roles (which is difficult to do for any length of time among people who insist on knowing each other so closely and so variously); and, most important, any attempt to keep up the formality would contradict the point of the whole exercise: to assert the primacy of personal, everyday relationships despite the separation of households. The separation is enacted at the beginning of the visit, but a hostess or a guest who tried to keep up the formality would be thought of as putting on airs, violating Álvabingar's egalitarian ethos.

Soon, therefore, the atmosphere is relaxed. Grandma puts aside her knitting to dandle a child. A sister renowned for her wit tells an amusing story about some snafu at the fish-factory. "*Manga takk*," your daughter says at last. Her husband follows suit. "*Ja, ja*," you say offhandedly, "*Væl gagnist*." She rises to help you clear the table. He glances at his watch and drifts into the kitchen to hear the weather

forecast on the radio. He will be going fishing early in the morning. Before long, your guests will be heading home along the darkening streets of the village, nodding hello to other couples they meet in passing.

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No Álvabingur would describe things this way. They say their visiting habits are matters of individual preferences and personalities: "We [two sisters] have always been close"; "We [two sisters-in-law] both like knitting"; "Oh, you know, I don't like to intrude [on a daughter-in-law] – she's so busy with the children"; or, in great confidence, "No, I don't know, you, but So-and-so has such a sharp tongue." Nor would Álvabingar be likely to call coming in onto the floor a ritual – it's just something people do.

But visiting *is* a ritual, albeit a homely one. Álvabingar make symbolic use commonplace items – shoes, the vestibule, the kitchen and the parlor, food and drink, mugs and the good china – to enact norms and values that are vital to their collective existence: the separation of male and female work roles, for example, and the integrity of the household, the basic unit of village society. As visiting brings together individuals from different households, it complements men's working together outside the home and is part of Álvabøur's character as a "young," "living" village. Sunday visiting activates relationships that are intrinsic to the nuclear-family household but have become attenuated as its members have married and established households of their own.

Like rituals in general, visiting also creates an ideal order within a limited space and time. In a "young village," the ideal order is an everyday one in which individuals interact as equals. Maintaining this ideal can be tricky. For one thing, it would be presumptuous for anyone to tell everyone else how to behave – and how do you assert the rules of proper conduct when the main rule is *not* to assert the rules? Thus if the rules of visiting (and of much else) are made explicit at all, they are stated as matter-of-fact, self-evident, or practical prescriptions. You just walk in the door at any time

(with certain obvious exceptions), take off your shoes (so you won't muddy the floor), and (of course) say thank you for the cup of tea and the bite to eat you've (naturally) been offered. In this sense, the significance of what people are doing – their culture, broadly speaking – is as invisible to them as it was alien to me. Visiting and other rituals must preserve this invisibility, since the point of the exercise is to perpetuate the everyday ideal. A related problem is that some inequality is inevitable, even normal. After all, a housewife cannot give up being a housewife just because someone has walked in the door. The ritual process must both recognize such deviations from the ideal and discount them.

Coming in onto the floor resolves these problems by proceeding in stages. A visit begins with a formal stage when differences in status are enacted. The degree of formality depends on the degree of differences (the familiar visitor sits down at the kitchen table; the honored guest is ushered into the parlor). The next stage dismantles the differences (everyone gets to chatting). A bit of formality concludes the process. "*Manga takk*" and "*Væl gagnist*" confirm that when all is said and done the hostess has been a hostess, the guest a guest. Men are very nearly able to dispense with a visit's initial and concluding formalities, since their status differentials are based on what they do outside the home. Women must act more formally, sometimes much more so.

The ritual dismantling of ranked differences is a common feature of Faroese culture.[2] Its many variants typically involve drinking, movement, and talking or, traditionally, ballad-dancing, which combines movement with another kind of oral performance. In one variant, the formal and dismantling stages of the process are consigned to separate venues, as when the Løgting's sitting at Ólavsøka is paired with inchoate revelry and promenading up and down the streets of Tórshavn. Another variant involves excluding from the dismantling stage a figure who cannot relinquish his high-status position. This is what happens when the sheriff takes no part in the visiting, carousing, and, traditionally, the all-night dancing that follow a whale-slaughter. In another traditional variant, inequalities intrinsic to an interhousehold working activity were not dismantled until the

activity ceased, as when parties (*gildir*) were held to celebrate the end of the fishing season or having gotten the hay in.

Other rituals feature reiterations of the process. A funeral, for example, includes elements of visiting along with repeated episodes of movement and various styles of talk as it disengages the deceased from the living and reengages the living with each other. The process begins with a wake attended by close relatives and friends in the deceased person's parlor – a sort of *drekkamunnur* of which the deceased, having been rather ambiguously promoted to a guest of honor in his or her own home, all too naturally does not partake. Come morning, the coffin is borne to the church, followed by a procession of close relatives and friends. The minister leads a service that is attended by "anyone who wants to come" – that is, just about everyone in the village, plus people from out of town. After the service, the mourners "follow" (*fylgja*) in a long procession to the graveyard, which lies some distance outside the village. The minister leads a brief burial rite: "Dust thou art...." Speaking more informally on behalf of the bereaved family, he invites everyone to a *drekkamunnur*. Everyone straggles back to the village. The atmosphere at the *drekkamunnur* is casual and convivial, with much general conversation. There is no speechifying, and the minister plays no special role. Then everyone goes home.

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This basic ritual process is deeply embedded in the egalitarian and individualistic premises of Faroese culture. It is accordingly highly resistant to change. Its variants are more mutable, since they are subject to socioeconomic and technological developments that create new differences between people or diminish old ones.

Revisiting Álvabøur, I've found that the visiting rituals I became accustomed to in 1970 have become much attenuated. Frequent casual visiting was a practical necessity in 1970 because few Álvabingar had telephones; conversation was not yet challenged by watching television; formalities were more readily enacted because the kitchen-and-parlor configuration was only just beginning to give

way to the less strongly marked kitchen-and-living/dining room one; and, perhaps most important, even the women who worked at the fish-factory – about a quarter of the working-age women in the village – were still primarily housewives.

I made my last working visit to the village in the spring of 1999. I came in onto the floor to see Big Helena soon after my arrival. (Niels had long since died.) We caught up on family news and reminisced about old times, and after a while I routinely said "*manga takk*" for the *drekkamunnur* she'd provided. "You don't hear that so often nowadays," she said with a smile. "*Væl gagnist*."

Notes

1. For assessments of women's cultural status and the symbolic character of the household, see Andreassen (1996) and Vestergaard (1981, 1989).
2. And, I suspect, of other Scandinavian cultures, in which "ordinary," "everyday" relationships are normative. See, for example, Gullestad (1984, esp. pp. 61, 74-76; 1985, esp. chapter 6). The former work includes a close study of visiting among working-class Norwegian women.

The Anthropology of Christianity in the Faroe Islands[1]

What the fringes of the Faroese religious configuration have to say about Christianity

Christophe Pons

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1980s, in the remote villages of the small North Atlantic archipelago of the Faroe Islands, some people started talking about Jesus in a different way. They said that Jesus was with them all the time, that he was their fellow, their best friend, that he opened their eyes and their hearts. They claimed that Jesus saved them by offering freedom and that they were doing some new kind of evangelization in a proselytical and agressive way. At first, the Faroese people found them a little strange. But with time, the Friends of Jesus – as we shall call them – became part of the Faroese religious landscape. They came from traditional religious congregations, as well as civil society from across the islands. The elders of traditional free congregations were surprised by this change. They did not know how to react. How could they criticize such strong faith even if it led to excessive behaviour? In fact, they did not anticipate that a religious revival would happen on the islands, their fear having been the general movement of secularization that prevailed throughout

the western world. After the dramatic economic crisis that affected the country in the mid-1990s, the Friends of Jesus built new churches, and some of these were huge. Younger generations were curious to experience the presence of the Holy Ghost, and its power of healing.

This picture could easily fit other places in the world (Buckser 1995, 1996). It illustrates a phenomenon of particular interest for contemporary religious anthropology, that of the recent global expansion of neo-evangelical churches. These churches, especially neo-Pentecostals and so-called "Charismatics", have become markers of a profound change in the history of Christianity. In extremely diverse societies from all five continents, Christianity is no longer associated to colonial powers but has become a tool with which to promote local identities. The second half of the 20th century witnessed profound changes in the history of Christian evangelization. In a large number of remote societies, Christianity used to be seen as an imperialist force of domination that generated resistance; now this same Christianity (but is it still exactly the same?) is used as indigenous property, authentically native, to the point of reversing – especially in the South, Africa, America and Asia – the historical movement of evangelization from the North towards the South, which had been initiated by centuries of colonization (Mary 2008).

This new perspective raises major issues for the anthropology of Christianity. And from the unexpected context of small northern Scandinavian societies, I would like to suggest that the Faroe Islands provides a useful microcosm for examining processes occurring in the world as a whole.

First, this case study directly questions the colonial contexts where, in religion, there is often a reversal in the relations of domination. Christianity often becomes a tool for liberation and the affirmation of identity (Freston 2009). However, it is always after undergoing a few changes from its original colonial form that Christianity can play this role. From this point of view, the phenomenon appeared in the Faroe Islands long before the rise of neo-evangelical movements in the 1980s. Thus, compared to other societies where the process is occurring now, the Faroese society does not conform to the same sequence of history. But the political use of Christianity for inde-

pendence through the development of religious free denominations (Calvinist and Lutheran) remains an instructive pattern. Its foundations were borrowed from foreign sources, and gradually reframed the Faroese society as a whole. However, unlike what happened later with the neo-evangelical revival of the 1980s, this first reframing operation was remarkably contiguous with the traditional way of life in Faroese villages.

This leads us to a second question about changes and continuity that are in the Faroes as well as elsewhere particularly important. To what extent do new forms of Christianity represent a real social change, inaugurating a new relationship to history, culture and world-consciousness? (Coleman 2007) On this point, it has often been suggested that the real change is globalization, that is to say choosing voluntarily to adopt some features precisely because we know they are shared by others throughout the world. The notion of "global consciousness" used by Simon Coleman refers to this combination of intentionality and consciousness, which makes the difference between simple diffusion – or influence – and globalization: "Adopting a stance in relation to others or to external environment" (2000: 232). Somehow, globalization was active very early in the Faroe Islands, right from the foundation of the first independent denominations, which were quick to participate in networks of missionary evangelization. However, these denominations, which made possible the invention of a "native Christianity", were pretty much focused on themselves and on their local congregations as singular examples of divine salvation and grace on earth. And it is as such that they developed contiguously to some local patterns. The breakthrough of "world-consciousness" appeared later, post-1980, with the radical second neo-evangelical religious revival. But this time it was to a larger extent nurtured by a new Utopia concentrated on the individual. The change came to the Faroe Islands through a new conception of personhood, freed from the links that tie the individual to his village, kin group and congregation. Therefore the analysis of historical changes through the study of the local uses of Christianity must rely on a dynamic view of the native category of person. This approach is at the very heart of social anthropology (Mauss

1938). The local concepts of personhood always bear the historical and cultural features that formed them. Now, to capture changes one should also understand continuities (Eriksen 1993). With ideal type profiles drawn mostly from the congregations of the Plymouth Brethren, I shall try to understand some salient features of religious man in the Faroe Islands. Of course, ideal typing inevitably leads to simplification. However, it will probably help us better appreciate recent changes. The Friends of Jesus allowed themselves to act in ways that previously, the "good men" in the congregations would never have done.

Consequently, there are many good reasons for the anthropology of Christianity to stop in the Faroe Islands. The question might be put thus: What has Christianity done to Faroese society, and how has Faroese culture made Christianity its own? The islands have an unusually high rate of believers and this gives them a singular Christian status, both among the secularized Scandinavian[2] societies and further abroad. As a Scandinavian society, the Faroe Islands are indicative of an historical matrix in the sense that it is easy to recognize their principal foundations. But as an island, the magnifying effect of insular society can also be useful for questioning the future of a society where Christianity takes up a lot of space. In the context of globalization, the Faroe Islands are probably as much heuristic as surprising – and largely underestimated – in the study of contemporary neo-evangelical Protestantism (Pons 2009). Heirs of a colonial context that is still not fully clear, with a history of domination associated with a feeling of being for a long time on the very edge of the modern world (Nauerby 1996), the Faroese people and their culture share some features with many other societies which have experienced the same feeling of being marginal peripheries of the world, and to have not participated in a world history centred on the West, the USA and Europe (Robbins 2004). It is important to keep this in mind if we are to understand why and how neo-evangelical Christianity may sometimes become an issue of exceptional magnitude. What is odd, though, is that societies nourishing these feelings are usually located in the South and not in the North among Western people. Of course, we know that the

topic does not rely on ethnic issues but on its relationship to history, to power and domination, and to cultural identities. Nevertheless, in this instance the Faroese anthropology of Christianity is discrete from the resistant North/South dichotomy.

1 Culture through History

Contemporary Religious Configuration

As an example of diversity within unity, the religious configuration in Faroese society is an invitation to anthropological analysis. This society is almost exclusively Christian with a great number of free congregations, each one independent from the others, however, limited to very few denominations.

Officially, the majority of the population, approximately 85 percent, belong to the Faroese Evangelical Lutheran Church. This church was a diocese of the Church of Denmark until recently when it became independent on 29th July, 2007, and it is one of the smallest state churches in the world. It is divided into 14 parishes with a total of 62 churches and nine houses of prayer; there is a bishop, a dean and 21 ministers. There are some organizations and associations attached to the Faroese Evangelical Lutheran Church, among them KFUM (Young Christian Men's Association) and KFUK (Young Christian Women's Association), and also the Inner Mission, or Home Mission, called the *Heimamissión*. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the latter associations enjoy so much autonomy from the state Church that they ought to be considered almost a separate denomination. Apart from some other small denominations, which bring together a few people, usually in the same restricted area (in Tórshavn: the Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, the Seventh Day Adventists, and a recent rise of the Baha'i Faith; in the villages of Leynar and Skælingur: mostly Jehovah Witnesses), the religious landscape of the Faroe Islands is strongly shaped by three main influences that, progressively, throughout history entered the country (Wåhlin 1986).

Initially, the Calvinist influence of the Darbyites[3], also called the Plymouth Brethren, was first introduced in 1865 with the Scottish

missionary William Gibson Sloan (Kelling 1993). Today the Brethren, also called the Community of Brothers and Sisters (*Brøðrasamkoma*), number around 15 percent of the population and are spread all over the country in more than 30 villages (5 congregations in the island of Suðuroy, 7 in Streymoy, 2 in Vágar, 9 in Eysturoy, 2 in Kalsoy, 1 in Kunoy, and 3 in Bordoy) (Sølvará 2010).

The association of the Home Mission (*Heimamissión*) – that we shall call here the "Missionaries" – constitutes the second strongest influence after the Darbyites. Although they are still a part of the state church, they self-rule and have few relations with it. Throughout history, and progressively during the twentieth century, they actually developed independently, mostly grounded in the Grundtvig Pietism influence from Denmark. Their organization is very ambivalent. They do not consider themselves to be churches; they do not have ministers and supposedly do not perform any sacraments but are instead organized and ruled almost like congregations of an autonomous denomination, performing services and rituals. Interestingly, they are spread all over the country with 31 congregations in 30 villages. Their distribution is pretty much the same as the one of the Brethren, that is to say they are found in the same villages and probably count around the same percentage (around fifteen percent of the population), even if there is a lack of data since the Missionaries are, officially, recorded as part of the National Church[4]. The accuracy of this percentage is uncertain but testifies to two aspects. Firstly, the Missionary Community aims to present itself as being as strong as the Community of the Brethren, or at least to be their equivalent[5]. Secondly, they wish to distinguish themselves from the majority of the state church members who "belong without believing" (Riis 1987). In their view, being a Christian is not a question of cultural transmission or background but supposes an everyday commitment of faith. This is actually an opinion they have in common with all the other free congregations, who similarly denounce the secularization of the Faroe Islands. For those who proclaim themselves "true Christians", there is nothing worse than participating mechanically and without faith in the sacraments. However, today a great proportion of the Faroese are Christians by tradition, recorded members of the State Church

from birth, and are loyal to the Christian Lutheran tradition which has been part of their cultural identity for centuries (Debes 1982, 1995). Actually, all Faroese people, even those of the free denominations, have in their kin groups some of these "secular Christians", who never go to church on Sunday and only attend the service at Christmas, for christenings, confirmations, weddings and funerals. "True Christians" tend to say that the seculars are those who go to pubs, smoke and drink alcohol; they have sexual intercourse before marriage; they divorce; they travel to Denmark for abortion, which is illegal in the Faroes. The Christians regret this sinful life and are worried about their morality; they often say that they pray for them. Nevertheless, relationships between "seculars" and "Christians" are quite good. They usually say that they respect each other. During family gatherings they avoid talking about topics that enhance their differences. Why don't they talk about difficult topics? In the Faroe Islands, it is often said there are so few people that they have had to learn the art of living together without provocation, avoiding controversial topics. Each and everyone lives his life his own way. Nevertheless, from a sociological point of view we must take into account the progress of that "secular portion" that, in recent years, has become an important factor in society and interferes with the religious panorama.

Last but not least, the Pentecostals, first of Norwegian influence, have been in the Faroes since the end of the 1920s but only gained significant strength during the revival of the last thirty years. It is difficult to say exactly how many they are, owing to the fact that a lot of free Pentecostal believers attend private religious services at home, so called "basement services" (*kjallarasamkoma*). It is often said that they count around six percent but this rate remains approximate and includes diverse denominations – often youths and moderate Pentecostals – that can be attributed to the category of "neo-Evangelicals" (Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals and Charismatics), who appeared in the third post-1970s wave of religious revivals (Freston 2001: 290). In all, there are 13 churches[6]. What is important to note is that all these churches are increasingly influential, now playing a key role in the local religious panorama. They focus on

the intimacy of their relationship with Jesus on the one hand and on a theology of personal success on the other. In addition they have provoked some dramatic changes in the way locals conceive of personhood, what it means to be a person (Pons 2012).

Thus the rate of 85 percent of the whole population belonging to the Faroese Evangelical Lutheran Church does not represent the full complexity of the Faroese religious configuration. This rate does not distinguish between the members of the Missionaries and the many free believers who attend independent churches, both (neo-) Pentecostal and Lutheran Charismatic, while they continue to be recorded as belonging to the state church. Actually, many villages are structured along lines of religious membership entailing symbolic divisions: firstly, the Lutheran state church and the seculars, secondly the Brethren, thirdly the Missionaries, and fourthly the neo-evangelical churches of Charismatics and Pentecostals. It is valid, more or less, to consider the whole interaction between those religious belongings as a *total social fact* (Mauss 1950) if we want to understand something about religion in the Faroe Islands. The Brethren and Missionaries are historically of great importance. Interestingly, their relations have always been very strained, much more than with seculars. This is also because in each community there have always been a few seculars, while there are no Lutherans among the Brethren or Calvinists among the Missionaries. Even today, these two communities remain relatively sealed-off from each other, with a high rate of endogamy.

19th and 20th centuries: the uses of religious influences

How should we understand the process of such a configuration? Where does it come from and what is its specificity? In the Nordic societies, during the 17th and 18th centuries, religious movements promoted an asceticism that laid down the principle of a personal relationship with the divine. Largely, these pietistic movements constituted the front line of the churches' contestation. The first expressions of this asceticism were found in some groups practising mysticism, such as Haugianism in Norway, religious awakening in Sweden and Finland, and ecstatic groups in Denmark since the

1790s (Thorkildsen 1997: 145). But in those contexts where clerical power was the main tool of state control, such a spiritual crisis was also a temporal revolution, nourishing the process of Nordic Enlightenment. Historians (Sørensen 1997; Tägil 1995) pointed out the originality of the Scandinavian pattern of the Enlightenment, which was rooted inside a Christian ethos and led to a progressive loss of clerical control, thus resulting in freedom of religion being gradually achieved, first in Norway and Denmark in the 1840s. Similarly, prior to the middle of the 19th century the Faroese were not allowed to leave the territorial churches of the Danish kingdom in order to found free churches.

But despite this conformity to the main Nordic pattern, for a long time the Faroese society was far from undergoing such a process. One of the great differences was the absence of spiritual crises prior to the very end of 19th century. As has been pointed out by many scholars (Wylie 1987: 129), in earlier times the faith in the Faroe Islands was not as deep and strong as it is now. Until recently, the Lutheran orthodoxy, along with popular beliefs, formed the basis of spiritual life and faith. Resuming this situation, Jóan Pauli Joensen explained that "their place in the cosmos was seen in relation to a remote king, to the past and to all kinds of supernatural beings who populated and animated the natural environment. Besides, there was the relationship to God and the Hereafter (1989:15)". Inevitably this has to do with a long history of isolation based on a local economy of subsistence, a situation Bjarne Stoklund described according to the Braudelian pattern of marginalization and periphery (1992). After being converted to Christianity in the year 1000, the Faroese were reformed at a distance and remained for a long time far away from continental influences (Cant 1984). The reformation in the 16th century resulted in the unification of the administration of the state and the church into one territorial system[7], and during the last centuries the monopoly of the Danish Crown regulated every kind of trade to and from the islands.

Somehow, this distance and the "religion of everyday life" probably explain why the islanders' reaction against the first missionaries who reached their islands was so fierce. In a book in memory of the

Scot, William Gibson Sloan (1838-1914) – the first missionary, who founded the Plymouth Brethren in the northern Atlantic isles – it is stated that although the missionaries met with some success in the Shetlands, they had an extremely arduous time in the Faroes (Kelling 1993). During his first missions in 1876, the preacher was looked upon with suspicion and fiercely rejected when he baptized the first people in 1880 (*ibid*: 139-148); his meetings attracted only a handful of curious people and he often had to confront both local populations and Danish ministers. The Brethren Community, settling in the Faroes for the first time in 1865, reached no more than 0.2 percent of the whole population in 1900. It was more or less the same as regards other foreign missionaries; the Missionary Community, present in the islands since 1895, amounted to fewer than 70 persons in 1912. The Seventh Day Adventists started in 1893 with a little more success.

Compared to the later evangelical commitment by a huge part of the society, this disinterest towards asceticism and the suspicion *vis-à-vis* foreign missionaries depicts a curious and paradoxical contrast of attitudes. In less than half a century a substantial portion of the society radically changed, adopting new forms of Christianity, which were rapidly acknowledged and re-created as a local cultural stance. In his study on the religious awakening of the Faroe Islands, Gerhard Hansen (1986) also pointed out these opposing attitudes of initial rejection and later exaltation after 1920. For him it indicates a great change both in the religious and the social history of the Faroe Islands. Indeed, during the period that precedes the rise of conversions between 1880 and 1910, some great transformations occurred in the society and in people's minds.

Firstly, it is worth noting that the population increased to a remarkable degree. From the Middle Ages to the beginning of 18th century, the Faroese population remained relatively steady at around 3,000 to 4,000 inhabitants. After that the progression was rapid, from 8,000 in 1860 to 18,000 in 1911. Inevitably, the rise had major consequences for many diverse aspects of life: on the organization of kin groups and the solidarity within the unity of the villages; on the participation in collective work tasks, mostly fishing and shepherding cooperation.

These transformations notably modified the disparity between rich and poor people, even within the same kin group, accentuating also the apparition of what can almost be described as "social classes."[8]

Secondly, the very end of the 19th century was also the right time for independent and pre-nationalist awakenings. Several factors were responsible for this, but with the end of the Danish monopoly and the possibility – and desire – of new economic perspectives, the growing numbers of young Faroese people studying in Denmark were progressively inspired by the national reconstructions they discovered in the Scandinavian world. When they came back to the Faroes, they nourished this desire for independence or, at least, "devolution". Yet, at this time, the model of development in the Scandinavian societies rested on two foundation; firstly a Christian ethos that had been developing since the pietistic movements, and secondly a cultural construction of Nordicism as a supreme and enduring reality able to bring together all the Scandinavian countries into one single common unit, distinct from the rest of Europe (Østergård 1997). But for the Faroe Islands, the path to follow between these two foundations had a narrow entrance. On the one hand religion – and its representative church – was fully associated with the main tool of Danish control. Thus, inevitably, the independent Faroese process opposed (to varying degrees) the territorial church that was ruled by a Danish clergy, who spoke Danish during services. Gerhard Hansen supposed that this fact explained why, at first, the "independent process" was above all culturally and politically based, and turned its back on the religious aspects (1986). But, on the other hand, the process managed to build very little on the foundation of Nordicism. Because of their lack of ancient literature, the Faroese suffered from a representation of illegitimacy in the eyes of Scandinavian history. Compared to their neighbours in Iceland, who were said to have maintained the original tongue, literature, and culture of the Vikings, the Faroese were seen – from the mainland – as people who, far from having preserved the original Norse inheritance, had let it degenerate (Pons 2009). For such a small colonized society, which had to build its self-representation through the eyes of the continental Scandinavian lands, this handicap was symbolically difficult

to surmount. Many authors showed the complexity – but also the richness – of the late 19th century, which saw fights for the right to publish in the vernacular and to talk Faroese at school with native teachers. It was supported by a small intelligentsia and a nationalist association based in Denmark from 1881, which progressively appeared in the islands after 1888/89 (Wylie 1982, 1983; Wåhlin 1989, Debes 1995).

Lastly, this situation could explain that cultural self-affirmation, rather than proceeding through the Viking reference, followed the second path of the Scandinavian development, that which was founded on a Christian vision as the spiritual unit of Nordicism. After analysing the influence of this Christian concept in the process of the Enlightenment, Nina Witoszeck argued that it was a "founding tradition of Scandinavian cultures, based on the powerful, modifying presence of Christianity" (1997: 73). One of the great figures was the Danish theologian Nicolai F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) who was known as the founder of the Nordic folk high schools, which became the cradle of nationalism and Nordic patriotism, first in Denmark in the early 1800s and afterwards in other Scandinavian countries. A follower of 18th century pietism, Grundtvig claimed that the fate of Christianity was to be decided in the North: "There was an inner unity between the spirit of God and the Nordic spirit, and he saw the Nordic nation in terms of 'a new Jerusalem'" (Thorkildsen 1997: 152). Though Grundtvig also supported references to the identity of Old Norse, his concept of the "Nordic spirit" was more rooted in images of nature, of a small agrarian society and idealized values of the individualist but also of an egalitarian free peasant community. With some delay compared to other Scandinavian countries, Grundtvigianism gained some influence in the Faroe Islands where it had been introduced through the nationalist movement of the Faroese students in 1889. Later, a Grundtvigian folk high school (*Føroya Fólkaháskúli*) was founded in 1899, which was to be an important step forward in the struggle for linguistic and cultural legitimacy. Among the foreigners who supported the Faroese claims was a Danish linguist and folklorist who played an important role: Svend H. Grundtvig (1824-1883), the son of Nicolai F.S. Grundtvig (Nauerby 1996). Little

by little the movement, embedded in a reinvention of identity that was projected on to Christianity, nurtured the appearance of religious assemblies in the villages. Based on many of the same dissatisfactions as those experienced by the early Grundtvigian movement, these many indigenous assemblies sought to rescue the population from an indifference to religion and stressed the importance of "being a community", of experiencing a cathartic and emotional conversion to Christianity. They announced a changing moral order that was the local way of seeking distance from a territorial church that was perceived to be too Danish. The reinvention of Faroese culture was then developing through the ideal of a local Nordic peasantry and a universal Christianity.

2 Reframing Society through Religious Congregations

From Individual to Congregation: Identity of the Self as a Commitment

Today, current members of Christian congregations often know the story of their oldest ancestor, who was the first in the family to "meet God" and to pledge to follow him by building a church in the village. Jógvan for instance, a Calvinist member of the Tórshavn assembly of Brothers, reports that his grandfather was a notorious alcoholic, whom no one trusted[9]. However, overnight the grandfather vowed to stop drinking a single drop of alcohol. Nobody believed him. But he said the Lord had saved him and he soon joined the group of the very first Darbyites, who founded the congregation of Brethren in a southern island. Those who, like Jógvan, have an ancestor among the pioneers who built the first churches are generally very proud of their heritage and gladly report what they know about it. Yet among denominations, and in particular the Brethren, the feeling of pride is not valued because it is a deviation from humility. In this case, Jógvan knows he has no reason to be proud of a grandfather he little knew. It is perfectly legitimate to respect him, but not to be proud of him or to gain some profit from him because he is

his descendant. Jógvan explains that he must pay attention to this pernicious feeling; the idea that one may acquire respect and social prestige through filiation is a highly suspicious one. It opposes the morality according to which prestige can only be gained – and never claimed ostentatiously – through personal actions and attitude. Thus, for what is socially recognized and valued as a moral personal quality, any alien contribution that would come from someone else is perceived as a fraud.

Thereby we approach the complexity of feelings according to morality, the individual constantly questioning what is right or wrong not only to do, but also to feel and think. Within the individual's own Christian congregation, everything that comes from his parenthood is considered with suspicion, precisely because it might be a source of pride that has not been acquired individually. Thus it might distract from a personal commitment to God, which is the only way to gain legitimate and highly valued social prestige and authority. In this way, this equilibrium of feelings means that people, families, and congregations have a complex relation to the notion of inheritance. At a social level, personal inheritances are depreciated in comparison to the collective heritage of the congregation. Indeed, the congregation's heritage is highly valued because it symbolizes the church, that is to say the gathering of believers in the name of the Lord. It is then legitimate to be proud of a centennial church that creates a piece of the Kingdom of God on earth. In contrast, an individual's pride in his lineage does not refer to spiritual but temporal filiation. The short narratives that tell stories of the first converts illustrate this tense relationship between the temporal inheritance of lineage and the spiritual heritage of the congregation. Indeed, for the kin group, the short narratives are almost "family mythologies" that designate the starting point of the Christian identity of the whole lineage. Jógvan, like many other men in the congregation, inevitably feels proud of his grandfather and, after him, of his father, who suddenly died, quite old, during a Sunday service right after having blessed the congregation and thanking the Lord for a faithful and good life. Almost immediately he tries to correct his feelings because this singular family pride should rather serve the unity of a "myth of

origin" for the whole congregation. It is actually done elsewhere with a written compilation of short narratives that constitute a collective work tracing the adventures of a church, or the entire community of an island. In this way, these narratives of the early converts reflect the ambivalence of the concept of filiation, sometimes belittled when it concerns the temporal dimension of individuals and lineages, sometimes glorified when it relates to the spiritual dimension of the church and the realization of the whole community, i.e. all the congregations together. Ultimately, this means that independent congregations were immediately considered to be realities of a higher order supplanting any other reality, tradition and lineage.

Significantly, in the beginning, the small independent congregations started to enjoy some success by using the rhetoric of breaking away. Exactly like Jógvan's grandfather, each convert experienced a radical break, becoming a laudable man, a hard worker, a faultless and trusty person, a teatotaller. According to the contemporary Christian people, alcohol was at that time a plague that ravaged men and villages. Many peasants were said to have lost the little they had due to alcohol. Aquavit consumption really caused dramatic poverty in the small northern insular societies and in his book *Feðgar á ferð* (The Old Man and His Sons) Heðin Brú (1940) painted a picture of daily misery. Therefore, in a society, which was undergoing profound changes, whose population had grown rapidly, and where the disparities of wealth became more pronounced, it is not unlikely that Christian congregations also played – at village level – a Weberian role of creating and belonging to moral unities within which trade, loan, cooperation and sharing could be done in confidence and with less risk (Weber 1922; Wilson 1974).

However, the conversion of drunks has always been a "classic" evangelical proselytizing argument. One can find it in the Faroes as well as elsewhere since the 19th century, and still today the topic is massively used by neo-Pentecostals and contemporary born again Charismatics (Robbins 2003). It enhances the idea of radical transformation; unexpected conversions are always possible, even for those who wallow in sin. Thus it means that if the individual really wants to, he can escape from the worst through the discovery of

the best to become, in the process, the living proof of the power and mercy of God. But the topic also refers to another essential concept, namely that Christian identity is neither transferable nor heritable but must be intentionally desired in the choice of a personal commitment to God. This notion of commitment has little to do with salvation; "salvation" is more on a spiritual level while "commitment" engages people right now, in this temporal world. The Brethren for instance are Calvinist and consequently faithful to the doctrine of predestination. For them salvation is not given in accordance with Christian behaviour, but depends on divine election, which is unknowable to human beings. However, the ignorance of what is going to happen in the last days does not mean that the individual should not behave as a Christian. On the contrary, the decision to be personally engaged in this world, as a Christian, in order to contribute to the work of God on earth, means that the individual is a true believer, who does not only seek selfish salvation. While the Home Missionaries are Lutherans, they share with the Brethren this notion of commitment. And for the Pentecostals, even if salvation could be personally decided on earth, in no way can it be transmitted or given by other men.

From a doctrinal stance, the fact that the individual cannot be Christian if he does not take the decision himself has several important implications. The community of believers – that is to say the church or the congregation – is supposed to be constituted of only those who decide to be a part of it. In other words, it is fully accepted by churchmen that children and disabled persons who cannot consciously make this choice cannot be part of the church. Moreover, everyone is free to make the other choice of not taking part in the congregation, of not personally committing oneself to God. It is, of course, a difficult choice and usually people prefer to adopt a passive and distant attitude (somehow becoming "secular") instead of fully breaking down social ties with the congregation. Whatever the case, doctrinally the congregation should not be considered as bringing together all the descendants of all the pioneers who founded it in the early 20th century! But from a sociological stance, it is actually the case. Here the analysis of filiation and transmission within con-

gregations underscores an important gap between the doctrinal ideal of change and the sociological reality of continuity.

On the one hand, there is this great Utopia – almost for over a century – to create a new community that breaks with the flow and the past. For the individual as well as for the community, the Christian commitment must always be a rupture, a radical change experienced as a rebirth. When the first independent churches occurred, they were strongly nurtured by the idea of being of a higher order, of a divine reality supplanting any other realities such as traditions, lineages, and so on. The churches immediately perceived themselves to be essential references, achievements of God's grace on earth, sometimes called pieces of the "New Jerusalem". But on the other hand, contrary to the ideal of change embedded in a personal commitment to God, the congregations are mostly composed of the lineages that come from the first founding members. Although the congregations wish newcomers to join them, for decades there have been few new conversions. Compared to the appeal of the neo-Pentecostals and the Charismatics, the influence of the Brethren and the Missionary congregations is now decreasing. Consequently, both of these communities experience a high rate of membership reproduction from within the same congregations, from parents to children. In addition, as was pointed out before, there is a dominance of endogamy, which means that people from the Missionaries and from the Brethren have few relations. This is going to change in the future; every day teenagers are breaking down the barriers. But still today, marriage between Calvinists and Lutherans remains exceptional and, without doubt, it is easier to marry a secular than someone from another denomination. However, the only `new blood´ that enters a congregation comes from other congregations from other villages and islands, but from the same community.

To be or not to be baptized

A shift that greatly affected the society both doctrinally and sociologically was the question of the baptism of infants. For the Brethren and more recently the Pentecostals, it is unthinkable to force someone to commit to God against their will. That means that

baptism must not be done if the person is not sufficiently mature to understand its meaning. It is probably difficult to represent what it meant for the other villagers to reject a ritual that had been so important ever since the conversion to Christianity in 1000. Baptism was not only important as it protected the newborn in the case of an early death, but also because it was the sacrament that symbolically transformed "alien newcomers" – babies – into human beings entering the social dimension of the living (Pons 2002). For centuries, in each village of each island, baptism was the basis of the "everyday religion" as described by Jóan Pauli Joensen (*op.cit.* 1989), and since the Reformation the first stage in a set of rituals (baptism, confirmation, marriage, funerals). Thus, baptism marked both individual biographies and the social time of collective life. The refusal of this sacrament quickly became a matter of controversy and the use of the word *babtistar* (baptists) was used to stigmatize the Brethren. Among the Brethren and the Pentecostals, baptism is usually decided during the teenage years while in the Lutheran churches, teenagers are prepared for confirmation. The usual criticism Brethren and Pentecostals launch on the Lutherans is that under the influence of secularization, the sacraments have lost their deep spiritual meaning: child christenings are almost like weddings, that is to say a family event without faith, and the rite of confirmation has become a party for teenagers focusing on presents. The desire to focus on the essence of faith required a return to a pure form, generally solitary, of being baptized. Usually the ritual is not even separated from a regular Sunday service. The immersion is done at the end of the service, and then the "new born Christian" is congratulated. But somehow, the most important element of baptism happened before the sacrament when the young person, alone, faced the question of whether to choose God or not.

Zacharias, Jógvan´s eldest son, told us about this proof of faith. Today Zacharias is a little more than twenty years old and can clearly recall his anguish. He was not even nine years old when he first began to think about the meaning of life and to fear the end of the world. For a long time, when he felt insecure, he prayed to the Lord and asked Jesus for help. It was what his parents and the

Congregation had always taught him to do. Usually it was beneficial; he felt extremely good after praying. He believed that Jesus heard and understood. But as he got older, the issue of sins and of what actions and thoughts are forbidden became increasingly obsessive. At thirteen, Zacharias was frightened by the uncertainty of his salvation. Having no knowledge of what awaited him was unbearable. And, gradually, this uncertainty gave way to the certainty that in the final days he would not be one of those whom God would save. This other perspective – of damnation – frightened him even more. From then on, he no longer wanted to go to church on Sundays. At school, he discovered that for other Christians it was slightly different. Among the pupils, his friends in the Missionary congregations said that their salvation depended on their behaviour on earth; they would go to heaven if they behaved as Christians and did not kill. Zacharias did not believe in that. They were surely wrong. How could it be otherwise? How could men decide eternal salvation for themselves? That would be too easy. Salvation must be a decision of God. Zacharias thought that Lutherans were a bit naïve and very pretentious to imagine such a thing. But at the same time he had a double feeling of jealousy and injustice, and he felt even more ridiculous to envy them. At the same time he also discovered that there was a theory that explained the world and the creation without divine intervention. Darwin's theory of evolution was taught in school. But at the youth meetings of his congregation, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, they talked extensively on this topic. Opinions were divided, sometimes with fierce reactions. The adult who led the debate tried to calm everybody down and to guide the debate in favour of creation. This was something Zacharias discerned very well and he worried that adults themselves were confused in their faith by evolution. But if the world was not the work of God, what was he himself? Nothing at all? A speck of dust in the cosmos? Then, in fear of damnation and hell, Zacharias also became frightened of nothingness, the non-existence of God. Zacharias did not want to talk any more about this and stopped participating in the Christian youth meetings during the week. But on Sundays, when he joined his congregation at church he was submerged by his doubts: little

by little, doubt turned into anguish and arose in floods of tears he could no longer contain. It got worse at every service until he decided to tell his family that he would not return to the cult. His parents asked no questions. They only said they would respect his choice. But almost systematically, on the following Sunday, Zacharias returned to the Congregation. How could he not go? He had been used to going there every weekend since childhood. He knew everybody; all his friends were there, as well as his cousins, uncles, aunts and grandparents on both sides. The few times he respected his decision not to go, he was terribly bored. He saw his family enjoy this special excitement that he was no longer involved in. In the morning everyone was busy getting ready on time, well dressed and presentable. His father left first with his little sister to attend Sunday school at 10 a.m. His mother, assisted by her stepmother, always woke up earlier to prepare the meal that would await them upon their return at 1 p.m. Everyone left the house by 10.45 a.m. for the service at 11 a.m., and Zacharias waited for them all. His mother returned first, probably because she knew he was alone at home. The family Sunday lunch would last until at least 2 p.m., sometimes longer. Afterwards everyone was free to do anything they wanted. Usually Zacharias liked to return to the Church at 6 p.m. The service was different from the one in the morning: more peaceful, it lasted for less time and had more songs. Zacharias took part in the choir with his parents. He was particularly fond of these Sunday evening after the service; people did not immediately return home. Many were still chatting and drinking tea. Then there was choir rehearsal, which often dragged on, sometimes beyond 10 p.m. They sang and laughed together. Not to participate in these meetings was, for Zacharias, a real hardship. But he wanted to respect his decision as his parents had accepted his choice when he had told them. They just said they could not do anything for him and advised him to rely on the Lord.

One Tuesday evening, however, Zacharias returned to a youth meeting. That evening, the adult who spoke to them had chosen to deal with hell. Zacharias was petrified. He returned home and promptly fell on his bed where he could not restrain the tears that were flowing without interruption. His mother visited him in his

room to comfort him. But as he pushed her away, she simply advised him to ask Jesus for help. “He is the only one who can help you,” she said. Zacharias tried to think about him, but when he closed his eyes he saw nothing but flames. He then repeated several times without stopping, “Jesus save me, Jesus save me...” The fear gradually disappeared. Zacharias fell asleep. The following days when anxiety and doubt came back, he took refuge in praying to Jesus. Little by little, he acquired the feeling that Jesus was really there and now Zacharias says that this short period of doubt gave him a taste of what life would be like without Jesus. A few weeks later, he decided to no longer entertain any doubt. And Jesus was there to protect him against it. Then Zacharias decided to be baptized at the age of sixteen. His parents told him they were very happy. They were also very proud but they did not tell him. A week after being baptized, Zacharias was once again seized in a totally unexpected manner by distressing doubts. He could not stop contemplating that his conversion was the fruit of his environment, his education, and his parents. He was worried that everything had been arranged since his birth for him to meet Jesus. This time he decided to be stronger than his doubts and to fend off the nagging question of the actual existence of God.

A week later he finally had the profound feeling of being victorious, of having resisted these evil thoughts, the temptation to move away from God. Since that time, Zacharias says, he has not experienced similar doubts. He is certain that God has accepted him among his people.

The Ambivalent Mimesis of the Brethren and Missionary Communities

The Brethren and Missionary communities enjoy a surprising symmetry, wherein each of them seems to have taken the other as a model. First, as we have already noted, they share an extraordinary similarity in statistical terms: but for a few exceptions, they both number around thirty congregations spread across the same thirty villages. They were also established in the Faroe Islands during about the same historical period, and according to the same rate. After some

difficult times in the late 19th century, the two religious influences grew stronger in the first few decades of the 20th century, enjoying a boom in the 1920s. Gradually, the villages split into two distinct groups of Christians that would differ from the rest of the population by their ascetic morality. Both strove to live in strict observance with what is said in the Holy Scriptures. Inevitably this led to a withdrawal into oneself; by attending the same service every weekend, close links were forged between members of the congregation and people quickly developed a separate sociability that overlapped with networks based on friendship, work and kinship. In sum, the Weberian process of ties and relations strengthened by belonging to a church clearly operated here (Weber 1920). However, because this phenomenon occurred in villages and not in urban settings, this Weberian pattern needs to be qualified. It could be said that a strict separation from the rest of the society has always been more theoretical than real, especially for the Missionary community which remained within the dominant Lutheran state church. In addition, they have always maintained close ties with the whole of society. Comparatively, the Brethren distanced themselves more from society, and developed more internal links through politics, productivity spheres, and marriage exchanges between congregations.

The two communities had in common their opposition to the Danish Crown and the territorial Lutheran Church that was the Crown's main tool of control. However, only the Brethren really broke away, going so far that they constrained themselves to a withdrawal that was "marked symbolically" with the rejection of infant baptism. On the contrary, the Missionaries were historically less radical but more ambivalent towards the colonial power. Brethren and Missionary congregations were born of a desire for democracy within the church. They sought a direct relationship with God wherein they could talk freely to him in their native language and not be subjected to the hierarchical authority of a Danish clergy, who reserved for itself the right to speak and pray in the Danish tongue. The influence of Grundtvigian religious thought allowed for this prospect. Thus missionaries developed new congregations that allowed free and specifically Faroese religious expression. "Among themselves", they

could speak, give testimony, deliver a sermon, sing psalms, and pray the way they wanted. These new congregations were not much different from those that developed simultaneously with the Brethren, but they could not be confused with the buildings of the National Church. Therefore, exactly like the Brethren, the Missionaries built their own separate buildings. Today the Missionaries all have their own separate Lutheran worship spaces, except for the congregation at Argir[10] which meets in the National Church of the village. However, since the Missionaries remain institutionally linked to the state church, they do not have distinctive clerics and therefore do not perform any services or sacraments on Sunday. Historically their primary action was to lead the evangelization within the country, that is to say, mostly take over the Sunday catechism (called "Sunday school"), which is taught to children, while their parents are expected to attend the service at 11 a.m.

In fact, while the number of children who attend catechism on Sunday is very high in the Faroe Islands (including both those from the Missionary congregations and ordinary members of the National Church), the rate of adults who regularly attend worship is much more restricted. Indeed, among the members of the National Church, more and more of them adopt the secular way of only attending church for special events[11]. Curiously, however, the Missionaries no longer regularly attend the Sunday service. Even if they are more faithful than ordinary Church members, their participation remains low compared to their attendance at the second "service", which takes place later in the afternoon in their own building. Indeed, usually at 4 p.m., they gather for worship without a pastor. Formally, because of their leaderless mode of organization, the worship resembles very closely what is practised on the other side of the street among the Brethren. The collective dimension of the congregation is highly enhanced. The absence of a minister accentuates the autonomous relationship of each believer with God. Everyone is encouraged to take part in the collective performance of worship by preaching freely, giving testimony, reading, praying... So, similar to the Brethren, the practice of sincere devotion is measured in terms of spontaneous collective improvisation. However, this ideal of "freedom" is not al-

ways practical and often a minimal amount of planning is required in order to clarify in advance who gives sermons and on what topics, and thereby avoiding awkward silences. Delivering a sermon publicly or engaging oneself in the exegesis of the scripture is neither fortuitous nor accessible to everyone. This significant act clearly distinguishes those who do it. Still, this planning should always remain relatively lose so as not to hinder spontaneity. Therefore, this congregational form of organization, which is deliberately communitarian, is a classic model of dissident assemblies of believers and it is particularly amazing to see it at work among the Lutherans. In curious way, they become "Lutherans without shepherds" while remaining linked to their national orthodox church by a stunning form of loyalty.

This ambivalent relationship to the National Church also attests to an ambiguous approach towards the Danish colonial power. On the one hand the desire for autonomy motivated the Missionary project, while on the other hand the Missionaries were inspired by a Danish religious movement. This paradoxical, almost "schizophrenic", attitude perfectly illustrates this trait of pusillanimity that Wåhlin noted in the nationalist movement that occurred in 1888: "Both the nationalist leaders and the majority of the people, in spite of daily complaints, generally respected the efficiency, honesty and benevolence of Danish rule […]. The worst enemies of the Faroese were and still are the Faroese – not the Danes in power in Copenhagen" (1989: 22, 30). Conversely, acknowledging a non-Scandinavian Calvinist influence coming from Scotland, the Brethren willingly distanced themselves and developed a series of distinctive marks of change, which Missionaries have, in turn, almost symmetrically reproduced.

A first key marker of change by the Brethren was the translation of the New Testament into the vernacular by Victor Danielsen in 1937. Just a few weeks later, the Lutherans published another translation, by Jákup Dahl, which was authorized by the Faroese Church. The "translation race" continued in the following years with the translation of the Old Testament in 1949 by Danielsen (Brethren) and in 1961 by Dahl and Kristian Osvald Viderø (Missionaries). While being doctrinally legitimate (Danielsen's translation of the New Testament was based on modern languages whereas Dahl's

translation was based on the original Hebrew text), this competition of two opposed forces standing up to each other strengthened their respective sense of belonging.

A second common and dividing characteristic was their approach to evangelization. The Brethren became a guiding model for overseas missions: today many Faroese Brethren missionaries, often adult couples with children, are doing humanitarian and Christian work in churches all over the world. They, therefore, take great pride in these numerous missions. Many are appointed by international networks like New Tribe Mission and Operation Mobilization. Photographs with names of the missionaries are usually pinned on a large mural world map and are exhibited in the entrances to congregational buildings. Unlike the Brethren, the Missionary congregations have focused on evangelization at home; they, too, have a lot of people doing this kind of work but mostly in the Faroes. However, since 2000, they have been sending people abroad. They have other networks, such as "Youth with a Mission" and "Lutheran Mission" in Denmark, and some other structures generally from Scandinavia.

Finally, these distinctive identities and policies were accompanied, not surprisingly, by opposing political affiliations, which are still relevant today. Brethren tend to support the Self-Government Party or Separatist Party (*Fólkaflokkurin/Tjóðveldi*) whereas Missionaries favour the Unionist Party (*Sambandsflokkurin*) which wants to maintain the Faroe Islands´ union with Denmark.

Internal organizations

All the congregations, whether Brethren or Missionary, are independent from each other. Historically they were founded separately and today they remain independent on many different issues: finance, doctrine, organization, liturgy and so on. This autonomy sometimes leads to large disparities, even within one and the same community. For example, there are some important liturgical interpretations among the Brethren that are hugely different from one village to another. It is usually presented as a matter of "style". For instance, do the elders authorize, or not, the presence of women at the Sunday morning service? Do they allow them, or not, to preach in public?

Do they accept, or not, new lyrics and musical instruments (electric guitars, drums....) during the service… The list of topics that may be an issue of "style" is quite long.

Since these congregations are leaderless (without a pastor), the executive power of decision resides, apart from a few exceptions, in the hands of a board of elders, which is strictly male and generally comprises around ten persons. Somehow, this council – which is the upper level of a concentration of power – betrays the communitarian ideal where everyone should participate in a collegial way of life as soon as they enter the congregation. That, also, explains why people are always a little embarrassed when they have to talk about this leadership system to someone who does not belong to the congregation like, for instance, an anthropologist. It is, indeed, a delicate issue, which leads to questioning as to the undemocratic, inegalitarian, and untransparent characteristics of how their organizations are ruled. However, if people – especially the Brethren – dislike talking about their organization, it is because the topic leads to a lot of misunderstanding between them and people who do not belong to the denomination because, as they say, outsiders have difficulty understanding that certain persons occupy the position of "elder" for the simple reason that they are destined for the job and do what is best. In other words, autocratic organization might be a very good system if the leaders are morally strict and sincere. Here again we find, astonishingly, a similar organization among the Lutherans of the Missionaries community. Still, on this topic they are quick to distinguish themselves from the Brethren by stating that the identities of the elders of each Missionary congregation are officially known and accessible to anyone, at least in theory. Among the Brethren, in contrast, where the collectivist ideal of equality is paramount[12], it is unwarranted to say who the elders are or to designate someone as an elder. The contradiction between the concentration of power in very few hands on the one hand, and a communitarian ideal of equality on the other sometimes causes embarrassment, especially during official exchanges with external institutions[13].

At the national level of the whole community, the organization is even vaguer but the congregations are linked together by two im-

portant phenomena. The first is a huge meeting held once, formerly twice, a year in Tórshavn, which brings together all the congregations. Today it is often three days long but in the past it lasted a week; people worshipped, prayed, lectured, and the elders debated diverse issues. It was also an occasion for dinners and parties, and an opportunity for young people from different villages to meet. The second phenomenon is of great importance. It is a plot of of land with some buildings on it belonging to the whole community. This common heritage, called the *Zarepta*, has been collectively shared by the Brethren since 1965. Located at the centre of the archipelago of the Faroe Islands, the *Zarepta* is a vast complex of collective accommodation for several hundred individuals. It also comprises a leisure infrastructure that makes it even more attractive (indoor pool, tennis courts, outdoor games, etc.). From June to September the *Zarepta* is fully occupied as a summer holiday resort for the Brethren. The season starts in June with the first weeks dedicated to young parents with babies. Then, week after week, groups of children come to the resort according to their age, from 9 to 17/18 years old. Young children are supervised by older children so that children learn very quickly how to cooperate and assume responsibilities. Almost all of the Brethren children go to the *Zarepta* and most of them spend a few weeks there every summer from childhood. Mornings are for Bible studies and the afternoons are free; the evenings are for organized meetings and collective discussions about any subject. It is not a second Bible school but the aim is to get to know each other, to be part of a Christian spiritual family. The *Zarepta* is considered to be the house of this Christian family, and the most noteworthy feature is undoubtedly the general mode of organization, which relies entirely on "symmetrical" joint management. The principle is that any person staying at *Zarepta* must be able to rest and have nothing to do but talk, live and share with their spiritual family. Thus, every week residents are supported by a team of volunteers who handle everything, from meals to household chores and any other material and logistical issues. Later, these volunteers will take their vacation week at the *Zarepta* where, as guests, they will be served by other volunteers. During the winter, activities at the *Zarepta* abate but

the camp is still opened every weekend to host each of the diverse congregations in turn. This time, the principle of joint management operates between congregations, from village to village. For one weekend a congregation will be supported in the *Zarepta* by another congregation and, later in the winter, the supporting congregation will be the guest in at *Zarepta*.

The incredible success of the *Zarepta* can be considered to be a true performance by the Brethren of the "art of community", of living and being together. Undoubtedly this "art of community" caused some envy among the Missionary community. Indeed, Missionaries acquired a similar centre in *Nesvík*, located further north, but also at the centre of the archipelago. The place was turned into a complex similar to the *Zarepta*, where almost the same things are done but with a more formal organization. On a broader scale, this formal organization applies to the entire rule-system of the Missionary community: at the top there is a general board consisting of nine representatives who meet seven times a year. They deal with future projects, possible difficulties and the programme for the *Nesvík*. These board meetings are organized and led by a general secretary who, along with twenty-two other employees, is a full-time worker for the "national organization of the Missionary community", which is based at *Nesvík*. The *Nesvík* Centre and its team depend on financial aid from the congregations. They don´t show any ambition to govern the congegations. Their main activity is the *Nesvík* Centre itself. But they may also be involved in various, more local, actions for the congregations and they also support the publication of the Missionary community newspaper, the *trúboðin*, that comes out two or three times a month. Somehow, the creation of the *Nesvík* Centre was the opportunity not only to make up for lost time in comparison to the Brethren, but also – and maybe even more – to create greater distance from the National Church by recentralizing all the congregations around a new institutional hub.

The art of community

The ideal of a leaderless and collective organization looks like an "art of community" that depends on a delicate balance between the

moderate participation of all its members; if they do not participate sufficiently or if they take part to excess, they might cause imbalance and malfunction (Gullestad 1992). The *Zarepta* Centre – and to a lesser extent the *Nesvík* – illustrates one of the finest expressions of this art of living together, among people who are supposedly equals in the life of the church, and according to the ideal of a typical 19th century Protestant sect. Especially, in the Brethren case, the historical continuity through the generations of this art of community is particularly remarkable, also because it is supposed to work in everyday life. Therefore, this "art" also addresses the question about what conditions are required to make it possible. On the one hand the art of community is the result of a profound change due to the rise of free Protestant congregations in the Faroese villages; but on the other hand, curiously, it also recalls some long term "patterns" of sociability in these same villages (Pons 2009).

Indeed, it is relevant that the many diverse congregations laid down a new religious landscape that, far from the former unity of the territorial church, looked like a mosaic that remained in continuity with the traditional form of living that involved living in distinctive villages as units. From the time of the Vikings to the contemporary period, Faroese society has always been a collection of independent villages (Stoklund 1980). The traditional territorial division followed the boundaries of villages, in accordance with common grazing lands and collective fishing activities. One hundred villages (*bygdir*) composed the "indigenous construction of communities", based on the mutualization of sheep farming and boat sharing (Hansen 1986: 310). As stated by many scholars, this continuity of pattern and a "strong sense of place" were not without negative effects on the entire country. On nationalism, Jóan Pauli Joensen suggested that many "Faroese used to belong more to their village than to the nation, which is also a sign of the incomplete production of the Faroese as a societal political entity" (Joensen, quoted by Bærenholdt 2006: 8-9). On an economic level, concerning policies for village or local development (*bygdamenning*), "people from one village were reluctant to pay taxes to a municipality that also, or primarily, made investments in other villages" (Hovgaard et al. 2004: 15). Religious configuration

remained until recently quite similar, i.e. congregation membership was structured along the lines of a communitarian village within a village, that is to say, overlapping with familial, political and business bonds. Therefore, contiguity between the process of the emergence and the development of congregations, the original pattern of settlement in the islands, and the persistence of a village policy, is neither fortuitous nor metaphoric. It is evidence of continuity in history and bears witness to the fact that the Faroe Islands were a fertile ground for the communitarian social organization of the Protestant free congregations or sects. Most sociological studies on the Faroe Islands have highlighted this perpetuation of social relations that are densely centred on narrow territories (Hovgaard 2002). It leads us to a second point of unexpected long term continuity, associated with expected social behaviours.

The Christian art of living together in congregation is also contiguous with a traditional communitarian way of life. For instance, scholars have stressed that the ideal of the Faroese community finds its most remarkable expression in the practice of whaling (*grindadráp*). The hunting of pilot whales (*Globicepala melaena*), which was long a crucial means of subsistence and a culturally meaningful practice, illustrates the specifically egalitarian Faroese organization. Schools of whales are sighted offshore and then driven into bays by small fishing boats, whereupon they are slaughtered. The whole process requires great organization and division of labour. Spoils are distributed equally to all participants, even to villagers who do not participate. There is no commercial profit made from these hunts and the general share of meat and blubber includes old people and those with disabilities. Regarding such a general distributive system, Dennis Gaffin argued that the complex exchange of *grindadráp* is testament to the whole Faroese mechanism, whereby the communal institution helps to maintain social order. The same process is found with shepherding, which is also partly communal. The shepherds elect a person, a "sheepman", to be the primary caretaker of the sheep and responsible for the fencing of their area. But "leadership rotates, in typically Faroese unauthoritarian, egalitarian style" (Gaffin 1996: 51). Gaffin, who specifically studied those aspects of village (*bygd*)

organization, argued that common property institutions make for high demands on conformity and austerity, and little competition for prestige within the predominantly egalitarian order (1995). As a general consideration, he stated that "there is little differentiation in economic standing among people of the same age. (…) every house and car resembles others in size and quality, and no man or family stands out as wealthier or poorer than the next" (1996:28). In short, Gaffin's observations accredited that living together without provocation, by avoiding delicate topics that might result in conflict, is a long historical Faroese ability that one can find both among congregation members and in society as a whole. Often Faroese people acknowledge this point but refute the idea that it could be cultural, explaining that it is only because they are so few and that living together in such a small place requires them to neutralize conflicts. This causal explanation does not work at all. It is easy for anthropology to collect examples that give evidence to the contrary: small societies regulating conflicts by confrontation, fighting, and feuding[14]. Somehow, the question is less about wondering if conflicts are neutralized and more about knowing how they are expressed.

3. Prestige and transgression of individual identities

Being a "good man"

A recurring feature in the history of the Faroese congregations is their tendency to deal with internal splits that usually lead, after a while, to the creation of a new congregation. As we may suppose now, these creations often happened "quietly" as a "best solution" for everyone. Considered through generations, the process of split and creation is fairly conventional in the sense that it is often the usual way for community expansion. In fact, the schismatic process is not considered to be bad. Instead, it is perceived as a normal phenomenon. Subdivision is healthy when a church reaches a critical size and becomes too big. Moreover, it is an answer to temporal arguments between men, but remains also consistent with the Gospel's order to go forth and multiply. There is little doubt that the origin

of splits has often to do with an attempt by some people to exercise domination over some other people. It is a classic story. It is typical of the history of the Pentecostal Church, since the 1920s present in the Faroe Islands like in many other places. But among churches that are based on leaderless organization, the attempt at subdivision may appear to be a threat to the fragile balance of the congregation. This is particularly true of the villages where, sometimes, the symbolic authority within the congregation overlapped with political and economic power. Without any doubt many divisions originated in such confrontations. But a conflict usually needs a catalyst to create the split. Once again people will not confront or publicly accuse each other and it is very rare for people to say explicitly that a split occurred because certain men were unable to bear others. However, division often derives from a theological, a doctrinal, or a liturgical issue; matters of "style" and modes of relation to God and his son, Jesus, have recently provoked a lot of radical positions and splits, especially in favour of the neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Therefore, it is tempting to look at doctrinal issues as pretexts for social expression. In other words, the real issues would be more pragmatically related to power, politics, economics, kinship, and so on, but the way to deal with them would be to argue and fight about doctrinal topics. This hypothesis is probably not false, and it must be kept in mind for any future analysis. Nevertheless, we must not reduce religion to a simple expression of social relationships. If we did, we would most likely make light of the indigenous discourse according to which people say that it is actually controversial points of theology that divides people. As has been pointed out by many people, this is especially true since the last neo-evangelical revival in the 1980s, when a large proportion of Christians called for a new relationship with Jesus. Consequently, it seems particularly important to note that in the Faroe Islands religious integrity is a true and essential reference for many people, a standard for self-respect and the respect of others. The image of this religious integrity is the ideal type of the "good man".

The "good man" (*góður maður*) is an indigenous concept referring to highly respected social values. It is to begin with a religious

conception particularly embedded in the spirit of the congregation, but widely dispersed in the civil society. We have already evoked the profile of the good man through Jógvan, Zacharias, the elder, the personal commitment to God, and the complexity of the right feelings and actions. Among the Brethren and the Missionaries, saying about someone that he is a "good man" implies recognition of his high Christian morality. In fact, this quality is never officially ratified; it is not a status but a collective appreciation of the congregation towards individuals, relating to their compliance with an exemplary set of attitudes of mind, behaviour and action. The typical profile of a "good man" is a *pater familias*, a man who is married, has children, is a hard worker, a good speaker and active in his church. His sermons are fair and faithful to the Scriptures. He is sincere when he gives testimony[15]. In short, he epitomizes the qualities of a "shepherd" able to guide, who knows his surroundings, able to listen to others and to lead them if necessary. These qualities are acquired at an early age through a Christian education, dispensed gradually, which focuses on moral accountability, sincerity of feelings, and honesty in the personal relationship with God. Jógvan and his son Zacharias gave us a primary illustration of this subtle category of honour. They were both concerned with the same morality of not only doing the right thing, but also being motivated by the right feelings. For Zacharias, going through a bad time of doubt was essential to the construction of his own identity as a "good man". It was an empowerment process in which he had to make the right choice for his personal commitment to God. One remembers that his parents left him alone with his fears. They only advised him to look for Jesus's help. This proof of faith was a founding moment that Zacharias had to cross alone. Even if they said nothing, the parents were undoubtedly very proud of Zacharias, who finally overcame the evil temptation of doubt. Families and all the congregation members have to accept that their child may fail when facing this test of personal commitment. They know full well that some of them will not succeed and will even take a step backward into the secular world. And, basically, this is perfectly normal. People are not equal in their spiritual commitment to God. They are not equal either in their temporal

Christian actions. By recognizing and identifying the "good men", the congregation accepts to respect people according to their faith and actions in the temporal world.

Interestingly, the status of a "good man" should not be deliberately sought to gain social recognition. The status is quite subtle, or ambivalent, because on the one hand the "good man" must not have any ambition for himself, or desire for a leadership position, but on the other hand men who possess those qualities of humility are often asked to be an elder, i.e. to take this prestigious seat that gives individuals very high social prestige. However, it remains socially unthinkable to be proud of this authority or to behave haughtily. The "good men", elders or whoever else, must stay humble and listen attentively to the people; this accessibility confirms their hierarchical position. But every "good man" is not an elder. A "good man" may occupy various positions within the congregation, but he may also be a simple ordinary man of high value. But an important point to note is that within a leaderless congregation where everyone is equal in their commitment to God, the distinction of "good man" cannot refer to inherited qualities, or be acquired by filiation to social status or financial power. Nobody can be the heir of a "good man". The status of "good man" refers to prestige individually earned through personal actions. It is not an election but a talent that the individual gains according to his adherence to an ideal type of religious morality. And within the congregations, "good men" always encourage other people to experience the same type of encounter with God they experienced themselves and to nourish it through a personal and exemplary relationship that is similar for everyone. Therefore, it is important to stress that the spiritual relationship with God is developed in "conformity" with everyone else.

It is significant that this highly respected concept of a "good man", which combines both criteria of distinction and of conformity, is relatively popular in islands that are ruled by a communitarian organization, with no hereditary chiefs but collegiate governance operating within the segment of a village unit. And from that perspective, it is particularly tempting to compare the Faroese "good man" with the "big man" of Melanesian societies. At first, the "big man"

also acquired power through his own merits. His prestige was not inherited and, in principle, not heritable. This merit comes from the superiority he has shown in carrying out various actions (Godelier 1996: 254). Secondly, as suggested by Marshall Sahlins, this type of figure arises more frequently in “free societies without hereditary chiefs, leaderless, composed of a number of local groups, equal in political terms, managing for themselves their material resources and labour power” (Sahlins quoted by Godelier *op.cit.* 255). In short, societies that are structurally close to the organization of Faroese villages segmented by religious congregations, a pattern relatively unusual in a European context[16]. We know that the anthropological pattern described by Sahlins was widely criticized. However, the analogy between `big man´ and “good man” may suggest, at least that some specific social organizations produce specific forms of social prestige. And, from this viewpoint, it is reasonable to suppose that continuity exists from the very traditional organization of segmental units (lineages in the village) to the invention of religious communitarian membership at the beginning of the 20th century (Pons 2009). But we must not overuse the analogy, especially since the `good man´ cannot become more important than the congregation.

A major distinction between “big man” and “good man” is that the former always seeks to increase his authority and social prestige by distributing gifts and goods to the individuals around him. And some time later, the people he favours will have to directly give back to him some goods according to the very well-known principle of *don contre-don* (Mauss 1950). Therefore the dominating power of the “big man” depends on his distributive capacity: his prestige is proportional to his capacity to make others indebted to him (Godelier 1996). The “good man” is not only different because he is supposed to remain an exemplar of morality and not increase his power, but also because within his congregation he does not exist as an individual but as a member of the community. The prestige he gains never comes from the personal relationships he develops with individuals, but from the collective approbation of the whole community. Within the congregation he belongs to, the “good man” is less an individual man and more an embodiment – an exemplar

– of a highly respected category: elder, missionary, preacher, and so on. But interestingly, seen from this viewpoint, the last revival of the neo-Evangelicals introduced a real shift: indeed, the figure we call Friend of Jesus is curiously closer to the concept of "big man" than to that of "good man".

The last revival or the revenge of the failed "good men"

The Friends of Jesus's activism, which was briefly depicted in the introduction, is now a topical and stunning success reaching far beyond the small society of the Faroe Islands. Indeed, throughout the world, Jesus has become an intimate partner for a growing number of people. To date, he has probably never forged so many mystical alliances with so many individuals from societies so diverse and distant from each other. Today, there are millions who claim to be "married" to him, to talk and listen to him, and to see and enjoy him every day of their lives, insisting that he lives among them. It is therefore a global "mystical crisis", but somehow of a "second type" compared to the classical Christian history of the Mystics (Pons 2009b). In this instance it is not an abstraction by which the individual is spiritually absorbed by God, but a relationship with an anthropomorphized entity that becomes a partner, a friend, a fellow, even sometimes a lover. In all cases, this partner is fully accessible to all; he is no longer the frightening image of the father but a protector who reveals the individual to himself in his lifetime. Somehow, this is not completely new: Jesus has always been an ambivalent entity that is both human and divine ever since Christianity asserted itself in the second century as a different approach to monotheism. However, in recent times, during the 20th century, this aspect of the Christian religion was subject to a remarkable influence, especially within Protestantism (Daiber 2002; Troeltsch 1911), which saw the emergence of a third wave of neo-evangelical churches: the Pentecostals and the Charismatics.

In the Faroe Islands this "mysticism for all" progressively entered the society with the rise of the Friends of Jesus, who were significantly perceived to be the expression of a major break in history. Contrary to what had occurred in earlier periods of religious revival,

which gave birth to the Brethren, the Missionaries and even the first generation of Pentecostals, the change was this time associated with social processes of transgression, which nurtured the invention of a new kind of social prestige. Indeed, the alliance with Jesus allowed people to behave in unexpected and upsetting ways, breaking the social codes that had long existed in the society. Because of his alliance with Jesus, the individual can distance himself from his congregation. The individual is no longer of lesser importance in comparison to the Church. If God orders him to accomplish a larger project through his son Jesus, it means that he is highly relevant and even may be more important than the church. This focus on the individual is a change that makes a great difference. The individual has no alternative other than to accept God's will, and no one will blame him for that. Therefore, the effect induced by the mystical alliance is quite paradoxical because on the one hand the individual is extremely dependent on divine authority but, on the other hand, this extra-submission to God allows him to break out from social coercion. Quite explicitly, the individual becomes God's possession. He confesses his weakness by considering that God knows better what is right for him. He accepts to give his life to Jesus, who will use it wisely. In exchange, the individual knows that he will not burn in hell and that his soul will be saved for all eternity. But beyond this spiritual investment in the afterlife, he also obtains a few earthly advantages. He is freed from the material constraints that dominate life down here. He realizes the true value of things. He asserts his own profound nature in opposition to the social identities and statuses assigned to him from the outside. This idea of releasing the "original self" is quite clearly formulated – and highly prized – by born-again Christians: in the alliance with Jesus, they say they are finally free to do what they want. Consequently, there is a great difference between this idea of the liberation of the original self and the commitment to God we talked about earlier with Zacharias. But the gap is, actually, less of a doctrinal issue than of the daily exercise of life. In practical terms, Friends of Jesus are born again to themselves. This indicates that this "new Jesus alliance" is the fruit of modernity in the sense that it comes from this process of subjectification through which

the individual thinks about himself independently from his group. It is a process of individuation that, progressively, first occurred in Western countries with modernity, and that today penetrates, little by little, all around the world (Taylor 1989). In religion this process often modifies personhood. It is associated with the fantasy of entry into modernity and the theological discourse of personal success. It is seen as an anthropological phenomenon that induces substantial global changes in the traditional concept of the person (Robbins 2003a). From the "modern individual" point of view this autonomy gives to the individual the opportunity to act untraditionally in the world; in a way that was unthinkable for the "good man" who remained locked into his status. The Friend of Jesus believes he can do what he wants so long as he is acting as a servant of God. Since then, the Friends of Jesus's "revolution" has undoubtedly provoked dramatic changes in local Faroese society.

One of the first major dissents in relation to social norms was to be a proselyte. Until now, during the summer festive season, Friends of Jesus from various churches and faith movements gave public testimony about their encounter with Jesus. Sigurð, for instance, regularly participates in this active evangelization, which consists of talking directly to people, and not to wait for them to enter a church. Sigurð is now about fifty years old. He says that he really met Jesus when he was at university in Denmark and Austria. Like many other young persons do when they travel outside the islands, he took the opportunity of attending many churches of diverse denominations while staying abroad. Originally Sigurð was a Brethren like his parents and his grandparents on his mother's side. He belonged to a small congregation in a village of Streymoy Island. When he returned home, he was initially very welcomed by his congregation. Sigurð told to his fellows that he had changed and that he wanted to be actively involved in the congregation. He proposed to be in charge of the organization of youth meetings and he did it. At the beginning he was widely encouraged but, as he says, relations gradually deteriorated as the work proceeded. Sigurð was pushed by a wind of change that brought him to make more and more proposals in order to develop the actions of his congregation: making the service more

attractive by inserting new songs and instruments, and so on. But he did not even realize that he was progressively changing habits, and thus became a threat to the congregation. Finally, his temporal commitment to the congregation, which would normally have led to him becoming an elder, was having the opposite effect. But what could the congregation really criticize him for? Certainly not for what was actually the problem, namely his excessive investment in the congregation in comparison to the norm. The first remarks of disapproval began to spread. Soon after, he withdrew from the responsibility of youth meetings. Sigurð was very affected by this decision. At this point he started to distance himself from the congregation and took part in other actions that led him elsewhere, out of his congregation. He met a group of young people, not yet dissidents, who were in a similar position with their Missionary congregation on Esturoy Island. They were organizing an evangelical camp for the summer. The phenomenon relied on a pattern of summer concert festivals and obtained rapid success in the 1980s. Motivated by this new medium, Sigurð became even more proselytistic. He decided to display on his house, located in the heart of the village, a large sign on which he wrote in big letters "Jesus loves you!" This symbolic act immediately provoked disapproval from his Brethren Congregation: some of the elders visited him at home and asked him to take the sign down. In the Faroe Islands, people do not proselytize at home but only abroad where the Brethren community sends its troops of missionaries[17]. In the village, however, excessive zeal was frowned upon: with secularization it is contrary to the principle of social conflict avoidance, and with Christians it appears to be a provocation against competing churches. Except during the service of worship, only proselytizing by example is locally acceptable. It means that here again we turn back to the prized values of the "good man": while remaining discreet and humble, the "good man" must make people want to be like him through his behaviour. Therefore, nothing like the excitement of the spirit of conquest of the Friends of Jesus who practised in the villages what was then being done in foreign lands. Subsequently, they did not stop there. Now, on Saturday nights, they walk in the streets to encourage people to stop drinking, following

them sometimes even into pubs. Sigurð finally left the Brethren in the late 1980s. He was then joined by some other dissidents, for the most part his close relatives. With the dissenting group of Missionaries, they founded a new church, officially without denomination but largely inspired by the Swedish faith movement *Livets ord*.

Since then, the Friends of Jesus claim with immodesty that they love people and want to help them do their best. Again, if the substance is Christian, the form irritates the traditional congregations. And one of the causes of their irritation is their success. During the following decade, many Lutherans, Calvinists and Seculars joined the meetings of the first faith movements, the Charismatic and neo-Pentecostal Churches. They organized new types of meetings around foreign guest preachers. These collective acts of worship are meant for large but diverse audiences. Gradually, the way of attending the meetings also changed the way of belonging to the churches. For a new generation it is now possible to be curious and nomadic by attending various cults in many churches. This new form of belonging – or of not belonging – to a congregation is the result of the partner relationship with Jesus. Because Jesus is currently with him, the Friend of Jesus no longer needs to take root in a community of believers. The church, therefore, is no longer this reality of a higher order as it was formerly, an island of the Kingdom of God on earth. In the view of a Friend of Jesus, this vision of the congregation is now changing from a church to a network, a school mission, a Christian Facebook page or whatever else that may serve as a sporadic means with which to advance his career as a Friend of Jesus. In the end, the goal is to work on a divine plan that, with globalization, is supposed to have no borders.

Thus, compared to the "good man", although the Christian morality remains almost the same, the Friend of Jesus affirms a temporal authority, which has also changed his vision. He now exceeds the boundaries of the village and the archipelago, supposedly ready to leave his church to serve elsewhere a broader mission as a new apostle. Jesus, in turn, gains a faithful soldier ready to serve him and to engage in the Christian battle. Indeed, the terminology has also changed; war metaphors are now widely used. Jesus is a captain

who brings together troops for the total victory of the Kingdom of God on earth. He has chosen each one of his friends and entrusts them with the mission that God has decided for them. And this is how the individual acquires a new social power and prestige. By engaging the public to follow him, by telling the public about his intimacy with Jesus, the issue of his individual distinction rests on his ability to make conversions, that is to say to redistribute the grace he has himself received from the Holy Spirit (Coleman 2004). In this anthropological gift system, the gift is the grace given by the Holy Ghost through the alliance with Jesus, and the Friend of Jesus gives back this gift through evangelization. By distributing this grace he earns new social prestige, a "charisma" that allows him to compete for ministry leadership. Now this challenge properly recalls the social prestige acquired by the "big man" through the system of giving goods and wealth.

Conclusion: Ideal Type, Continuity and Changes

In this paper, I aimed to understand the Faroese society through the fringes of its religious configuration, questioning what has been in the past the local uses of Christianity, and how asceticism came to the Faroe Islands. Originally, the adherence to ascetic Christian movements – both Lutheran and Calvinist – was a local reaction against colonial power. On this point, the situation in the Faroe Islands demonstrates how much the country was embedded in a Scandinavian matrix wherein it needed to use a religious revival to create an identity and independency; it is basically a "classic" of many colonial contexts. But beyond labelling the process as a "generic pattern", I have tried to capture a series of distinctive features that enhance the contrasting local and cultural dimensions. First, the religious revival was not homogeneous but led to a division of the society into many autonomous congregations, each one forging strong ties of sociability, productivity and kinship. Somehow the process recalls the Weberian development of Protestant sects, only at a village level, this being due to major sociological and demographic transformations. The congregations were remarkably numerous for such a small society and were quickly organized around two main

poles, the Calvinist and the Lutheran, each one "federating" all its congregations into its community networks. It is probably here, at the level of this local construction of congregations and communities that cultural singularities best reveal themselves. Among these, I tried to identify some aspects that may also serve as clues for the anthropology of Faroese society. For instance the Utopian ideal of leaderless organization that indicates a very ambivalent relationship to domination and power, and that leads to a surprising way of "living together", involving conflict avoidance. Also, interestingly, the moral complexity of feelings, especially compared to what people inherit: is personal filiation right? Can we – do we have the right – to be proud of a symbolic or material inheritance? Of course, there is here the weight of a Calvinist asceticism, which is now well established. But beyond this influence, there is also the concept that the community is of higher importance than the individual. The autonomy and responsibility of the individuals as members of a congregation are major features, which recall the themes of honour and shame, topics that were long associated with the anthropology of the Mediterranean, but which in the Faroe Islands find a second breath. The ethnography was mostly based on profiles, drawn from the Brethren congregation, which illustrate these model notions of voluntary choice and personal commitment, which are embodied in the ideal type of the "good man". Finally I emphasized the uniqueness of these characteristics, showing they were partly of long-term continuity. In some ways, the extreme model of the sects/congregations that was invented in the early 20th century tells us a lot about social equity across the whole of Faroese society. And curiously, continuities also revealed themselves when they suddenly stopped under the effect of a change: the rise in the number of Friends of Jesus. But still there is, again, continuity in this anthropological phenomenon of change: the Friends of Jesus' breakaway emphasizes the importance of religion in the process of constructing individual identities, and belies the expected phenomenon of disenchantment.

A Friend of Jesus only exists as an ideal type that helps us understand a new use of Christianity, which came to the Faroes and constituted a real break away. Of course, the deep introspection of

a relationship with the divine is not, in the Faroe Islands, a recent invention of the last decades. In the late 19th century conversions occurred within an intimate and enthusiastic experience of the divine presence. Individuals, who were not considered believers, said they were suddenly touched by grace, changed their lives and joined the first Darbyites or Lutheran congregations. Their social status was profoundly modified as they occupied new places within the hierarchies of "good men"; this awakening slowly spread to the villages. Thus, the novelty of contemporary times is neither the collusion between religion and social prestige, nor the profound side of introspection that leads to the divine. The actual novelty is, on the one hand, the growing autonomy of the individual, who is now distancing himself from a religious congregation; it is not that he is without a church but rather that he adopts a nomadic behaviour, free to attend several churches in his lifetime. In comparison, the "good man" was affiliated to his congregation for life, almost in an organic way. On the other hand, the distance from the church is also accompanied by a relative distance from God the Father, in favour of a stronger personal commitment to Jesus the son. In short, both at spiritual and temporal levels, the dissent alliance *per se* is supplanting a civilized affiliation to the congregation.

For the anthropology of Christianity in the Faroe Islands, some of the major effects of this change put new future perspectives and questions on the agenda. First, traditional congregations have been forced to re-evaluate themselves. They realized they could not be the same for ever but that they should take note of the innovations introduced by the Friends of Jesus, especially if they wanted to stop the outflow of the young generations increasingly attracted by new forms of devotion. But by doing so, they also introduce a new vulnerability and provoke debate. In particular, the issues of charisma and leadership. Significantly, the leaderless organization is often threatened, even among the Brethren where new hybrid organizations with pastors are now emerging. The issue of "style" is also a sensitive subject. In the past, liturgical points of doctrine were of great importance, especially around those related to baptism. Today the debates have moved towards a matter of "style".

The concept of style is unclear but essentially refers to what every church agrees to incorporate – or not – as a novelty in rituals; it mostly concerns music. The issue of gender arises too with women's claims for independence. The concept of "good man" that we have outlined above focused formerly only on men but women are also participating in the alliance with Jesus and this leads them to new social and clerical aspirations. All of this, consequently, forces the congregations to question themselves and their future, which is obviously a source of dissension and possible splits. The current period is, therefore, characterized by great agitation in the religious life. Many churches seek to reorganize themselves entirely. Of course, there is increased competition between denominations. The goal is not only to maintain the presence of a church in some areas, but also to gain new territories. In this view, the new small "suburbs" of Tórshavn are particularly meaningful for the observation of strong competition and small territories battled over by different churches.

The proselytizing caused by the Friends of Jesus has finally influenced all the denominations. But it has also led to unprecedented collaboration between denominations, this time turned towards the evangelization of the Seculars in the Faroese society: A new translation of the Bible, the creation of a Christian radio station, soon a Christian TV channel... These actions, locally referred to as "ecumenical"[18], are also surprising because they demonstrate that, beside divisions, Christians are able to unify *vis-à-vis* non-Christians. Whatever their internal differences, denominations gradually tend to create a "new" Christian front that may confront a "second front", less clearly identified but, which would be the secular one. Because of the principle of conflict avoidance, so deeply embedded in Faroese minds, nothing has as yet been explicitly described in such terms. However, in recent years, the opposition of Christian versus Secular starts to appear sporadically in relation to issues that formerly would not have been debated. Among these debates, there is the issue of women's status and the right to abortion, illegal in the Faroes but allowed in Denmark. Also discussions about creationism and Darwin's theory of evolution have taken place in public conferences. Albeit the debate was organized by Christians and the secular voice

was not really heard. This question also leads us to the other issue of the teaching that should be given in public schools and, soon, in the private schools that the Friends of Jesus will probably open one day. And, last but not least, the question of the recognition of rights – and social acceptance – of lesbians and gays. In 2002, perhaps for the first time, a debate really divided the society on this issue. The challenge was to write into the constitution a new article stipulating that no one should be discriminated because of their sexual orientation. The debate was the occasion for society to reflect on what a commitment to God means, thereby strengthening the Christian political party. In the near future, these issues will probably go on multiplying, creating the risk of generating a new division within the Faroese society.

Notes

1. This research is part of a collective anthropological research project I steer under the heading "A Mysticism for all. Conceptions of the individual and the conditions of evangelical Protestantism emergence: Europe, Maghreb, Arctic, Oceania" (MYSTOU). It is financially supported by ANR, the **French National Agency for Research** (n°ANR-08-JCJC-0060-01).
2. By Scandinavian societies I mean Denmark, Norway, Sweden, as well as Iceland and the Faroe Islands.
3. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), Irish born in London, was an evangelist who founded the original Plymouth Brethren, and today seen as the father of modern Dispensationalism.
4. In most of the villages there is a balance between the *Brethren* congregations (BS) and those of the *Missionaries* (MH), except for the southern islands where the *Brethren* had little influence. Therefore, on *Suðuroy* there is 1 BS in Sumba and 1 in Porkeri, 1 MH and 1 BS in Vágur, Tvøroyri and Hvalba. On the island of *Skúvoy*, only 1 MH. No BS on *Sandoy* neither on *Hestur* but 1 MH on Sandur, Skopun, Dalur and *Hestur*. No BS nor MH on *Nólsoy*. On *Streymoy*, 2 BS and 1 MH in Tórshavn, 1 BS and 1 MH in Argir, in Kollarfjørður, in Vestmanna, 1 BS and 1 probable MH in Hoyvík, 1 BS in Kaldbak, 1 MH in Hvalvík and Haldarsvík. In *Vágar*, 1 MH in Sandavágur, 1 BS and 1 MH in Miðvágur and Sørvágur. In *Eysturoy*, 1 BS and 1 MH in Eiði, in Fuglafjørður, in Leirvík, in Gøta, in Toftir, in Søldarfjørður, in Skáli, 1 MH in Elduvík, in Rituvík, in Glyvrar, in Strendur, in Selatrað, and 1 BS in Saltangára. 2 BS in *Kalsoy*, 1 BS in *Kunoy*. In *Bordoy*, 1 BS and 2 MH in Klaksvík, 1 BS in Viðareiði, 1 BS and 1 MH in Hvannasund.
5. For practical reason, I use the term "congregation" for each assembly of the denominations of the *Brethren* and of the *Missionaries*. I call the collection of all the *Brethren* congregations "the *Brethren* Community". The same applies to the *Missionaries*.
6. There is one Charismatic church in Tvøroyri (Suðuroy), in Sandur (Sandoy) and Pentecostal basement meetings in Skopun (Sandoy). In Streymoy, 3 Pentecostals churches in Tórshavn, 1 Pentecostal and 1 Lutheran Charismatic in Hoyvík, and 1 Pentecostal in Vestmanna. In Eysturoy, 1 Charismatic church in Søldarfjørður and in Skálabotninn. Finally, in Bordoy, 2 Charismatic churches in Klaksvík.

7. Greenland was here an exception in the sense that it was not Christian prior to its late colonization.
8. Wåhlin (1989) is very critical about many historical studies that do not consider sufficiently the weight of social divisions induced by industrialization and modernization. And he underlines that during the 19th century the nationalist movement did not adequately take into consideration the social classes that were already in place and preferred talking of one people, one language, one nation, one culture. For the author, this rhetoric was as far from local reality as the Home Mission from the religious Faroese life. On this question, see also Hans Andrias Sølvará, 2010.
9. For reasons of privacy, all names have been changed.
10. On Streymoy, the village of Argir is today almost a suburb of Tórshavn.
11. Though it is a relative tendency, compared to what happens in Denmark or Iceland for instance, the attendance at Sunday services remains at a high rate in the Faroe Islands.
12. The congregation, as a moral and patrimonial entity, is the property of all its members. This implies, juridically, that all material goods (the building and everything inside) do not belong to anyone in particular and cannot be divided.
13. This was the case during an ecumenical project to publish the Bible. Most of the free denominations participated with the exception of the *Brethren,* who returned consistently to several sets of elders/speakers without anyone deciding in the name of the denomination. Probably it was like this because no one was motivated to participate in the project. And ultimately, the *Brethren* did not take part.
14. Those examples could even be found in non-public places where conflicts were openly faced, even sometimes over-exaggerated. I refer here to the difference of policy between Faroe Islands and Iceland, both today and in the past (Pons 2009).
15. Here the notion is only considered for men, but it should be investigated for women as well.
16. Unusual but not unthinkable. We find similar models in the Shetlands for instance. See Coffre-Baneux 2001.
17. Lately, *Jesus's Friends* followed other missionary networks: *Youth With a Mission*, *Jesus Army*, *Jesus Revolution*...
18. Even if it is said to be ecumenical, it only brings together Christian denominations that share a common doctrinal ground. Consequently, for example, the Jehovah Witnesses are never included.

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Cultural Rhapsody in Shift

Faroese Culture and Identity in the Age of Globalization

Firouz Gaini

The Romantic View

Exoticism has characterized most printed portrayals of Faroese culture and society since the nineteenth century. The remote North-western European archipelago was seldom in the anthropological and ethnological lenses' sharp focus. The islands are therefore, in some sense, an academic "minefield" containing hidden risks of misconception that quite easily coax the naïve observer towards facile mental theorization. As a relatively isolated archipelago with several hundred kilometres to adjacent islands, the delineation of Faroese culture´s geographical boundaries becomes a rather easy task in harmony with the classic yet contested anthropological metaphor of "cultures as islands" (Gaini 2003). This presentation of the isladns has hardly been debated or contested, even though the relationship with Copenhagen and the Kingdom of Denmark, of which the Faroe Islands is an autonomous "constituent country", remains unresolved and always blurs the vibrant debate on Faroese cultural and national identities. The physical seclusion of the eighteen volcanic islands has also led to its designation as an excellent "social laboratory", even if Faroese society has always been in significant contact with continental Europe and is, contrary to exotic speculative illustrations of the subject, a result of intricate North Atlantic maritime trade networks and cultural alliances (Debes 1990, 1995, 2001). Although it natu-

rally explains certain aspects of such studies, the typical "isolation" presumption has, I believe, overlooked many elements of Faroese culture necessary for a valid study of the identity and culture of the Faroese. From the viewpoint of the romantic visitor, the "strangeness" of the inhabitants of the unfamiliar islands is reminiscent of a "Paradise Lost" and its associations of natural "authentic" ways of life (Proctor 2004). In this biased view, the Faroese are, ironically, the unsophisticated yet noble "savages" of a cloudy enclave surrounded by the "modern" world of the North. This dogmatic viewpoint mimes the cosmopolitan perspective and world-view of Copenhagen and other continental urban centres that usually fail to grasp the native´s point of view – precisely the viewpoint that any meticulous anthropologist insists on in an empirical ethnographic ventures. This academic predicament echoes the fundamental methodological discussion on so-called "emic" versus "etic" approaches in anthropology today (Eriksen 2010). The fieldworker, in intimate social interaction with his informants, seeks the cultural "insider's" – emic – point of view, albeit fully aware of the inevitable problem of cultural translation. In the Faroe Islands, as in many other peripheral small-scale societies, specifically former non-Western colonies, systematic external influence on domestic affairs has often led to the patronization of local culture and to exoticism that estranges "us" (modern) from "them" (non-modern); furthermore, this strong exoticism generates an imperceptible alienation process consistent with the postcolonial theory related to literary theorist Edward Said's pivotal work on "orientalism" (Said 1978). In other words, romantic representations, initiated and circulated by the preeminent outsider, are adopted as factual accounts of one's own culture at the expense of one's own disarmed local perspective. When considering the general interpretations of the culture in the Faroe Islands, the question of change and continuity through time is probably more interesting, thus also primordial properties of culture that strongly mark exoticism as ethos. Apart from a very few recent exceptions Faroese culture has been classified and analyzed as a relatively static and isolated system of thought determined by compulsory functional adaptation to a harsh natural environment, only rarely interrupted

by radical historical developments. Furthermore, the conventional construction of culture has displayed an intact system without notable inner conflicts destabilizing the whole; hence its approach has generally concentrated on the "group" rather than the individual as the main social agent generating the processes of social integration and cultural continuity (Joensen 1987). Faroe Islanders have not been presented as free "individuals" in modern connotations of the word but as parts of corporate family and village groups, organized by traditional values and principles that are considered to be a part of the cultural adaptation to the given natural setting. Never politically independent as a nation-state but, despite its relatively small size, equipped with all the prerequisites for a successful nationalist project according to modern authoritative sociological theories, the Faroe Islands has a persistently ambiguous political relationship with Denmark, which has controlled the archipelago for centuries (Gaini 2009). This troubled Danish–Faroese "dualism," especially the extremely emotional language question, has influenced all Faroese discussions on culture and identity since the national "awakening" of the late nineteenth century, when a small circle of Faroese intellectuals, using modern academic terminology, designated the Faroe Islands as a "natural" nation with unique independent culture and language. The analysis of Faroese culture has, as a consequence of history's irony, not resulted in departure from the romantic exoticism that characterised Faroese writing in thelate nineteenth and early twentieth century. This is so because local academics adopted a politicized cultural concept in their struggle to "save" the ancient "authentic" culture of the islands. Culture has, in brief, normally been outlined and analysed in relation to abstract historic and political ideals, without the anthropological fieldwork's thorough qualitative study of the individual's own understanding and explanation, opinion and belief, regarding cultural meaning (op.cit.).

A Latemodern View

In order to investigate a culture closer, it is necessary to focus on what connects people in ways that makes them feel safe and gives them a sense of belonging to a community that has something to

offer its members, who are bound together by common values. Culture is also about recognition; everyone everywhere wishes to be accepted as a person, relative, citizen, etc. (Barth 1991, Eriksen 2010). These elements are best localized in comparative studies targeting dynamic and mobile border zones between groups and societies, as well as between past, present and future eras. The Faroese context is rather intriguing, not only because it, as a remote small-scale society, can be identified as an advantageous "social laboratory", but also because it represents a society between tradition and (late) modernity, between local and global culture in the so-called "age of globalization" (Gaini 2008). By itself, this is not exceptional in a contemporary world community characterized by every imaginable political, social and cultural displacement and "border crossing" movement – a fact seen in the recent outpouring of social scientific publications attempting to map these displacements and movements with captivating theories encircling the conception of "globalization" (Beck 2008). The Faroese case indicates a complex and quite unpredictable interaction between local and global cultural flows not totally incongruous yet conflicting and competing frequently resulting in cultural amalgamations that give "meaning" to most people at place. The setting is a fast-changing world that, in nihilistic ways, disregards most old conventions and praxes; it fragmentizes what used to be considered resistant and fundamental in culture and society, and consequently induces a chronic feeling of insecurity among people from all segments of society (Bauman 2006, Beck 1998). The risk of "loss" in culture has become a "normal" condition in the hypothesized new world order that has many competing names in social and human sciences anno 2011; however, this general thesis can be seriously questioned, considering its theoretical shallowness and inattention to the power and vitality of tradition in mostly rural peripheral communities (Karlsen 2001). The Faroe Islands, a young nation of Norse settlers that was never as isolated as imagined in mainstream textbooks, have always been influenced by and in synergy with neighbouring Northern European cultures, hence have also been part of operative international networks. Therefore, the societal shift linked to the process of (late) modern globalization

since the 1980s does not represent a major qualitative change, but rather an acceleration and regulation of existent progression in the Faroe Islands. The Faroese language is a good case in point. It is the most powerful symbol of Faroese (cultural) identity in popular public debate. The debate focuses on the "difference that makes a difference" between cultures but is seldom the subject of scientific research detached from related political discourse. In contrast to what is often assumed, the language has always been characterised by change and development out of political authoritarian reach. Language itself does not embody culture; it can rather be credited as the crutches or vehicle of culture. The Faroe Islands, a relatively traditional kinship-oriented society, have never, as mentioned earlier, been a formally independent nation-state. The country has not experienced the cultural devastation that could have been expected, at least if the more pessimistic predictions of contemporary social theory had materialized. This manifests how the cultural resources of this small outlying society persist and sometimes even intensify in the so-called "age of globalization" (Gaini 2008). Since the original Viking settlement in the ninth century, Faroese society operated for generations as a "stateless" and comparatively decentralized society of free peasants, even though first Bergen, then Copenhagen subjugated the financially and militarily rather insignificant archipelago in the middle of the North Atlantic ocean. This heritage, which runs deeper than the modern patriotic rhetoric as regards Faroese identity, is, I believe, to the islanders' advantage when the post-national "network society", as today's world community sometimes is coined, introduces new imperatives for social organization and cultural communication. The life of the common peasant was quite different from the wealthy and powerful (King's) farmers of certain villages. The peasant had a small plot of land and, in most cases, a rowboat, used to supplement his subsistance living with fish. He followed nature's rhythm and cycles and was otherwise formed by the village community's customs and values, which put the kin group, representing the elementary institution of society, at the centre (Joensen 1987). In order to get a clearer picture of how the Faroese receive and accept cultural input from the "outside" world today, it

is crucial to incorporate this view of what made life appealing and "meaningful" for most people in the past. The language, first and foremost as a semantic system and an oral tradition, has dominated the scene and been widely recognized as the jewel of the Faroese culture. As such, it is seen as sophisticated and holds a position of honour while other cultural characteristics have been kept hidden or just considered simple, unrefined and without justification. The "simplicity" allegation, if referring to a proposed absence of relatively deep linguistic, religious, political and ethnic divides in the culture, is, to some extent, true. Faroese culture is, without going too far in the direction of stereotyped generalization, straightforward and open compared to older civilizations that often carry a more heavy and cloudy historical heritage. Faroese society is relatively egalitarian, lacking elaborate class structures that reproduce distinct and rivalling cultural identities. As such, metaphorically speaking and to certain extent literally, it is like a peaceful family that gives its members wide liberties within the kin code and Christian religious ethics (Debes 2001). This form of freedom, not directly linked to formal judicial freedoms permeating modern centralized societies, seems quite inappropriate for life in an idealized modern nation-state. But it might be convenient and beneficial in premodern as well as late modern societies that expect a strong flexibility and mobility in the populous (Gaini 2009).

Social communication

A common Faroese self-critique, which is also a farcical reflection on local attitudes, notes that if you gather two Faroe Islanders, you will usually get two conflicting opinions. This indicates a strong tendency to emotional disagreement among the islanders, who collectively manifest a relatively balanced binary division in most elementary political, cultural and social discussions, including the permanent argument on the formal and informal political relations to Copenhagen. This observation, at first glance banal like a cliché, is somehow consistent with the curious form of freedom that, as mentioned above, small-scale decentralized societies tend to foster and cherish. This socially acceptable and regular disagreement,

which is woven into traditional family relations and values, is not a menace to society as such. If no deeper unarticulated conflicts of values and morals are involved, the outcome of a disagreement will only in exceptional cases cause a destabilizing rupture in the social organization and pattern. It is easy to romanticize the divisiveness, if it simply comprises noncommittal and amusing contexts of communication, which connect individuals affiliated beforehand through enduring personal bonds and reciprocal implicit understanding. But this interesting aspect of Faroese culture covers much more that needs to be described and analysed, because contemporary society tends to obscure traditional patterns of social and symbolic communication and thus make explicit disagreement more critical. The sophisticated verbal jousting, especially among men, which oral skill was held in high regard in traditional Faroese society, is now weakly echoed in dissident voices, for instance in sentimental conversations on the Faroese language when Faroe Islanders voice their personal opinion in private or public spheres. The alleged division within Faroese socieity also depicts the general absence of interest in official categorical agreements that nullify individuals' qualitative differences in mind and spirit, which is typical in decentralized family-based societies. Opinion is seldom based on abstract ideas and theories apart from an objective attachment to the cultural and societal fabric that positions Faroe Islanders in webs of meanings shaped in relation to the locality (village), family and faith (Gaini 2008). National consciousness, despite the efforts and achievements of the patriotic movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is on most social stages overshadowed by strong local (village) interests and codes linked to practices and rhythms of everyday life and invaluable family networks. The family, as capital and network, identity and association, symbolizing the individual's existential freedoms and restrictions, often leaves the modern and abstract state's authorities in the shade. The Faroese family does normally not function as a corporate clan depending on fierce values of honour and decency, even if the inner psychological cohesion is quite fixed and strong. It represents a more open and dynamic structure that goes along with the Faroese "individualism" based on wide liberties from formal imperatives (Joensen 2003). The recurring

disagreement in expressed opinion, as verbal cultural property, is not the direct result of an intellectual infantilism derived from a lack of social responsibility and rational capability in formal and informal contexts of communication; rather, it is a symbolic construction that is adapted to a traditional community, which is distinguished by basic cultural accordance and union in a relatively secluded geographical setting. Social interaction, actually, is guided by a refined set of cultural codes outlining what actions and attitudes lead to social conformity and which lead to stigmatization. Superficial disputes, according to this thesis, do not normally touch subjects related to taboos threatening the social harmony (Andreassen 1992). The thin line between accepted and inappropriate styles of behaviour and appearance is symbolically negotiated and reproduced in intense quotidian discussions on gossip, the "news" about the "others" belonging to their own villages and regions. The social transparency, which makes any attempt to hide from the public without leaving the archipelago quite unimaginable, generates an immediate intuitive self-control of personal appearance. Even during superficial tensions in the exchanging of views, the individual stays within the fine frame of cultural schemes and beyond notorious humiliation that is hard to eradicate (Gaffin 1996). This intricate regulation of personal liberties in proper social interaction, which often puts a damper on personal self-expression, is comparable to the infamous Scandinavian "Jante Law" that author Axel Sandemose phrased in ten "rules" (collectively summarized as "don´t think youre anyone special or that you´re better than us"). However, its aim is perhaps not so much to punish the unique and creative entrepreneur in the community as to actively remind the Faroese that they belong to a family and community, which cannot be substituted by any other institution. You can indeed think that you are better than "others" and provocatively voice it in social gatherings, but if it is received and interpreted as an egoistic act without any cultural savoir-faire, it will not be absorbed in the rhapsody accommodating Faroese culture (Wylie 1987).

The stranger's role

A strong sense of belonging to and familiarity with a place with a narrative is a major pillar in the subjective self-perception and cultural identity of any Faroese person. Land is, in short, identity's nexus, even though this is rarely apprehended as a qualitative cultural property giving "meaning" to the Faroese who live in the beginning of the 21st century. Cultural meaning is still embedded in space, even if the relation to locality is indeed more complex today than in premodern times (Gaffin 1996). When it is said that the islanders are sober and down-to-earth, which of course is a vast generalization with serious limitations, it is a characteristic mirroring the local culture's attachment to the nature surrounding it, symbolizing an openness and a directness that modern centralized societies often tend to suppress in the name of a metropolitan rationality that aims to separate human culture from an "alien" and caging nature. The Faroese, often viewed as relatively naïve by foreign urbanites visiting the archipelago, do normally feel no need to hide their personality and inner sentiments when interacting with "strangers" with whom they have no previous bonds. Such social behaviour toward welcomed guests would be seen as cold and confined. This trusting practice, regarded as quite risky and unwise in modern urban social environments, exposes a strong social directness, which is not suspicious of the stranger's behaviour and attitude, that her or his movitves might be immoral or corrupt. This characteristic of the Faroese "world view", which conforms to certain exotic narratives about "innocent" people that have not been in contact with the outside world, is vague and often only half the truth of the ideas – hidden realities – behind the social drama being enacted. The world view, says the Faroese folklorist Eyðun Andreassen, is a "frame of reference controlling man's orientation in the world – and thus becomes an important reality" (1992: 303). It is, he adds, "an abstract construction for the very psychological structures instrumental in steering man on his way through life" (op.cit.). The postulated openness of the Faroese is not an elementary psychological structure without any reference to concurrent social realities. The style and pattern of communication is always regulated by a specific context's cultural codes and social rules for the actors engaged, and it

is not permanent. The outsider is, referring to the previous discussion on symbolic Faroese controversies, positioned in a vacuum that gives him a "neutral" status beyond the Faroese landscape of families and communities, which are culturally and socially interconnected and interdependent. The stranger is interesting because he is unfamiliar and mysterious and hence somehow culturally incomprehensible. However, he is also an agent that a local person can exploit in order to get out of the routine of social interaction constrained by cultural norms. The stranger cannot sanction potentially incorrect behaviour in the same way as local friends and neighbours usually would. The prized openness is, in other words, often part of individual strategies to bypass the symbolic conventions that steer and define the subjects and stories discussed in everyday life. The strangers, in many cases well-off immigrants of Danish descent, might even get, rather involuntarily, the informal role of a mediator in local conflicts that have come to an impasse and that paralyze the community. Even if society is changing and the individual "stranger" no longer is as attractive as the foreigner without connection to the local network of families, the traditional Faroese attitudes and ideas have not been completely abandoned and substituted by modern rational ideas. The hidden psychological structure, authoring the social play of everyday life on the islands, is still fuelling strong sentiments of belonging to a collective group of – socially and culturally – similar individuals, who manifest an internal solidarity and a mutual understanding as a real or fictive family (Gaffin 1996). Simply put, if a person follows the verbal and symbolic rules of the social game, practically noone will question his background or formal societal position, but if he or she seriously violates etiquette and provokes the "group," it will in most cases, in concordance with Sandemose's thesis, mock and force him or her into cultural marginalization. The Faroe Islands, says Eyðun Andreassen in an intended overstatement, have a "bullying culture" always in the search of a random fool to be the target of parody. This statement can, of course, easily be misjudged as a comment aiming to present Faroese culture as less tolerant and more dogmatic than others, but this is only one out of several likely interpretations. The victims of bullying, those on the receiving end of the common and

methodic harassment taking place on fishing vessels are a case in point, have suffered greatly and often for their whole life in their local community. They repeatedly ask themselves: why me? The systematic discrimination, which was only in few cases directly linked to the victim's (social, ethnic or family) background, usually targeted an individual because of his or her reputation, gained through experiences, events, rumours, manners, etc. The cause of the person's voluntarily or involuntarily marginalisation is thus tied to the strong psychological stress on social conformity that characterizes the basic structure of the relatively traditional society.

Tradition and Reflection

The social infrastructure of the Faroes changed dramatically during the eventful and turbulent 20th century. It signalled the commencement of a bundle of disordered processes that threatened and even dissolved the villages' and regions' traditional cultural autonomy – the foundation of the decentralized family-based society – with the introduction of a centralised modern "mass society" based on new national, cultural and political institutions. The traditional local democracy that fostered the Faroese type of "individualism" is, as a consequence of the 20th century modernization process, severely weakened and superseded by a new non-personal "mass" culture. Eyðun Andreassen (1992: 307) says:

> The political development threatens the popular sphere from yet another side, by the[…] institutionalized democracy taking up more and more of the `affairs´ that were formerly regulated here [in the villages, FG]. The nstitutionalized democracy has gradually assumed full responsibility for regulating life down to the smallest detail concerning people´s everyday life, where governments formerly mostly dealt with questions of national importance. Legally, and in accordance with generally accepted practice, the traditional popular realm has been deprived of all fundamental functions in the community through the democratic development. What is left within the popular realm is entertainment, certain matters of slight importance and mere nothings.

> Gossip and chat of no importance is becoming the main substance of the popular realm.

This rural elegy, a pessimistic prospect based on hypothesized irreversible societal developments in the 20th century, has lost some of its theoretical force because of the curious changes connected to the emergence of the so-called late modernity at the turn of the century but it has not yet been disproven. The creation of a modern "industrial" society in the North Atlantic was, figuratively speaking, interrupted half way and passed over by a globalized post-industrial movements that, as mentioned earlier, seem to turn the tide with a symbolic reversal of the institutionalization and centralization of popular culture (Gaini 2008). This does of course not suggest that society in general has gone back to premodern eras, without any clear memory of Faroese modernity, but rather that contemporary culture and society link the local with the global, the old with the new in creative non-authoritative styles that evolve constantly. The close contact to global cultural currents through media – television, Internet, etc. – is generating critical reinterpretations of Faroese traditions as part of individuals' reflexive cultural identities. Another interesting outcome of the growing contact with the globalized world is a dynamic public debate – new subjects and perspectives, which were completely unknown, irrelevant or taboo in the past are now being raised. The revived interest in tradition, not only in the folklore associated with championed national cultural symbols but also in older and more cryptic parts of the cultural stock, is clearly attested in the rich cultural activities of young people from every village and region of the archipelago (Gaini 2007). Tradition, as a highly valued cultural capital in a society in shift, is reinvented and granted new "meaning" in new contexts, which Faroe Islanders – anno 2011 – subjectively identify with. This implies a subtle balance between plagiarism and originality in new cultural productions, for instance arts and music, forcing commentators to pose the question: What is new and what is copied from the dim past or from distant cultures? (Ridderstrøm 2005) Ancient tradition has not completely vanished, surviving in small local enclaves during the general political and

economic turmoil of the 20th century; it was culturally rejuvenated by young islanders in the search of reflexive late modern identities. This explains why (1) Faroese culture is often depicted as archaic and "authentic", mainly by reason of the observable vivacity of exotic customs and rituals as the Faroese chain dance that accompanies the ancient ballads; and why (2) the Faroese, especially the youth, which grew up with new digital media that represent novel and available cultural and social liberties and opportunities, are strategically reflecting on the cultural value of the revival of carefully selected traditions in the age of globalization (Gaini 2007). In other words, the exotic portrayal of the Faroe Islands, which could be negatively evaluated as patronizing the islanders or alienating the concerned subjects from their own values and world-view, is today to be considered a cultural construction among others that can be employed in new ways in new contexts. The rhythmic music scene in the Faroes is an interesting case when considering dynamic cultural processes in the context of contemporary late modern society.

Case 1 – Music and youth cultures

The striking development in Faroese music since the 1980s is due to a new professionalism among musicians and producers and a deliberate national cultural policy focusing on music. Compared to the population – 49.000 inhabitants – the Faroe Islands have a very large production of music in genres like folk-rock, hard-rock, jazz, choral music, gospel music and blues. Many local cultural commentators claim music to be the locomotive of Faroese cultural life at the beginning of the third millennium.

> *Music, for centuries part of the cultural life of the Faroe Islands, has never thrived as now. Almost every kind of music has its following. The advent of a music school has produced many good young players and an impressive symphony orchestra. But the Faroese make their own music. A group of talented young musicians compose and record works which are influenced by their singular surroundings: the rugged landscape, the wild sea; at times by the gentleness and peace of the same landscape and*

> *sea; influenced too by the sounds and rhythms of the traditional music. (Blak 1996: 10)*

Faroese music is still mostly limited to the Faroe Islands. Only a handful of bands and artists have achieved appreciable success abroad. Though, the international exposure is increasing, the talented Teitur and Eivør being the modern pop/rock stars who have received most attention outside the islands. Another interesting band in this respect is the `Viking metal´ band TÝR. Its music is an illustrative manifestation of a curious current within contemporary Faroese contemporary music – the blending of traditional ballads and modern foreign music styles. Young people´s reflexive fascination of their ancestors´ premodern culture has led to the search for traditional musical origins as never seen before in the Faroe Islands.

> *Profession of the Christian Faith or Decapitation; this was the choice given by Sigmundur to his Faroese Viking compatriot Tróndur í Gøtu. And so it was that in 999 AD the Christianization of the small, scenic, yet striking Føroyaland began, slowly but surely, casting a veil of oblivion over the ancient Scandinavian gods and only leaving the relics of forgotten [pagan] dogma buried deep within the Christian ritual. Or so it was believed…*
>
> *Exactly 999 years later, a small group fondly remembering the archaic gods and rites came together to form the only Faroese Folk Metal band TÝR. (www.tyr.net)*

Týr, the name of one of the principal gods in Norse mythology, was renowned as the God of War but also as the God of Justice. The greatest hits of the band that takes the name of this powerful god are modern rock variations of popular traditional ballads like Ormurin Langi (The Long Serpent), the name of a Viking ship, and Regin Smiður (Regin the Blacksmith), the hero of the ballad that bears his name (this ballad is a part of Sjúrðarkvæðini, a spectacular epic of more than a thousand verses). Týr got their musical breakthrough with the album Eric the Red, the name of a famous Viking chief, who is claimed to have discovered Greenland. The album was distributed

internationally by the Austrian label Napalm Records. The Týr boys are proud of their background and describe their musical style and identity as a result of "Scandinavian mythology, Viking warriors and heroic battles" accompanied by "Viking choruses, traditional melodies and timeless Heavy Metal" (www.tyr.net).

Týr has inspired many other rock bands, but very few have chosen the Folk Metal path. This concept lead Týr to fame but seems already to be exhausted. Other bands also spiced their work with the texts and melodies of traditional Faroese songs in multifarious attempts to re-interpret modern contemporary music in the Faroe Islands. Clickhaze was one of the pioneers in this trend. The band is from the village of Gøta, the breeding ground for many of the most loved Faroese rock bands for a decade. Eivør, the former Clickhaze lead singer, has strategically branded her name internationally with symbols associated with elves, fairy tales, Faroese ballads and the Norse mythological world in general. This fair young woman with big blue eyes and a clear characteristic voice is considered the most valuable musical ambassador for the Faroe Islands today. Eivør has, like many other young talented artists on the Faroese music scene today, strong roots in a village community, which is characterized by a dynamic fishing industry and influential local religious communities (Kruse 2007). The religious identity of Faroese youth is closely linked to their philosophy of music, piloting creative musical projects that mirror life in a small-scale society between past and future.

The village of Gøta on the island Eysturoy has been a hothouse for Faroese contemporary music since the 1990s, giving birth to the Grót (meaning Rock) music association, which has fostered an impressive amount of influential artists and bands, e.g. Petur Pólson, Eivør, Gestir and Høgni Lisberg, that hav defined the mainstream trends of Faroese rock music. Grót, both as milieu and concept, has, without a doubt, been the most interesting contemporary Faroese rock music scene over the past several years, even though innovative bands from Klaksvik, Fuglafjørður, Tórshavn, Tvøroyri and other towns and villages have also emerged during this period. Grót, firmly grounded in

the religious communities in Gøta (three united villages at the bottom of a bay), started in 2002 the largest and by far the most celebrated summer music festival in the Faroe Islands: the G!Festival. This annual festival takes place on the beautiful sandy beach of Syðragøta (Southern Gøta) during three days in late July; it grows in size every year and has inspired other towns to establish rival but conceptually slightly different festivals. The role of the G!Festival for Faroese contemporary music and youth cultures is extremely important, considering the overwhelming interest in the festival among young people in the Faroes and its reputation in other Nordic countries. In July 2005, six thousand festival tickets were sold and three–four thousand other curious guests took part in the party in Syðragøta. Thus, the festival drew a fifth of the total population of the Faroes to this small village (www.gfestival.com). This is a unique figure.

Foreign commentators have on several occasions stressed the strength of Faroese music, its strong reference to local and national identities, in which premodern traditions function as a vital part of (late) modern life in an advanced and wealthy society. Why are there so many musicians in this small island society? How can they produce such a large amount of absorbing music? These questions raised by the Danish music magazine Modspil in 1988 do not have any simple answers (Jespersen 1988). The traditional music of the islands is indeed a cultural framework that still mirrors attitudes, values and social customs of the Faroe Islanders. This musical heritage was in the 19th century substituted, or rather disregarded by European middle-class music in Tórshavn circles. After fishing on an industrial scale and free trade were introduced between 1850 and 1880, foreigners with high formal musical skills and finesse came to the Faroe Islands. The Danish baker and musician Georg Casper Hansen established a small but excellent classical string music orchestra in Tórshavn, an invaluable contribution to the classical music environment of the islands., He was usually called Baker Hansen and is a legendary personality in the musical milieu in Tórshavn. He is the model for one of the main characters in the famous Faroese novel The Lost Musicians *by William Heinesen. Without the work and visions of talented persons like Baker Hansen,*

the Faroe Islands would not have had their own symphony orchestra today. They formed an important part of a long process.

Classical music on the islands, except for the creative experiments of Sunleif Rasmussen and two or three other composers, has usually not drawn on the Faroese ballad tradition, folklore or nature, and it is therefore not a part of the contemporary youth cultures associated to summer festivals and concerts. The history of modern contemporary music in the Faroes is linked to the popular cultural sphere and hence a part of the social life of people from all social classes in the society. The popular public sphere stands in contrast to the bourgeois milieu, and the rock music of today's youth definitely belongs to the first category, just as traditional Faroese ballad music also did through many centuries until it lost its ground in the 19th and 20th centuries (Andreassen 1992). The popular cultural sphere is characterized by curious patterns of communication, unveiling fragments of Faroese identities.

> *The form of communication in the popular public sphere differs fundamentally from that of the bourgeois one. The form of communication is collective, and it is the collective itself which is the producer, communicator and receiver in the process. In the popular cultural process of communication the entire process takes place within the collective itself […]*
> *Dancing and festival traditions have been used as examples of forms of communication in the popular public sphere. They originated and developed in pre-industrial forms of society. The isolation and stability of the local communities contributed to the shaping of these forms of social interaction and communication. This resulted in a mutual dependence between the people who lived in a village or a region, a dependence applying to all aspects of life. (Andreassen 1992: 305)*

The collective social function of music and dancing in traditional society has changed radically during the 20th century but the Faroese still hold the collective character of their music and singing in high esteem, considering it a key quality in Faroese cultural identity that

deserves protection. Singing is for many people what unites the Faroese and reconstructs a set of cultural values. Musical professionalism with a clear division between amateurs and elite is fairly incongruent within the popular public sphere. Therefore, many people are quite suspicious of such professionalism, especially the older generations, who believe it to be a sacrilege that results in social and cultural fragmentation. In Okkara Sangbók (Our Songbook) from 2006, the short preface informs readers that "it has been a challenge to choose precisely these songs that have received a place between the covers of this book. We have therefore taken advice from many people – old as well as young – when choosing songs; we finally we arrived at those you have in your hand now". This extreme caution demonstrates how important it is to make every Faroese feel that the songbook is his or her songbook. The aim is to include all the islands' inhabitants in one collective group, a mission quite difficult to realize today since young people utilize their cultural ´liberation´ to follow different unexplored musical paths, leading them far away from the popular songs and ballads that their parents´ cherish.

> *Faroe Islanders love to sing!*
> *Much has been composed and sung on these rocks [Faroe Islands, FG] since Thrond of Gøtu [chief from the 10th century, FG] wrote a psalm still to be found in the Psalm Book. And the immemorial ballad-culture has certainly gathered people for other purposes than daily hard work. We know that people were singing in joy and mourning, to honour someone or to chastise someone [...] Our Songbook is meant to be a contribution to this precious culture of ours, not seldom surprising foreigners. Our wish is that the Faroese, when they now and in the future meet in social gatherings will continue to sing together.*

Singing is a ritual that has a strong effect on people, heating the body and lifting the spirit, even provoking feelings of corporate strength and belonging. It is similar to the effects of traditional chain-dancing.

Young people in the Faroes are challenging, not combating, the

singing traditions based on the common songbook because society has undergone significant changes during the 1980s and 1990s. The ritual of singing together at parties is less "natural" and essential for their cultural identity. Today's youth have ambitious personal musical projects based on the Faroese culture but not necessarily on the provincial popular culture of the past decades. The youth anno 2011 is not very loyal to the previous generation's youth cultures because, in comparision to previous generations, they are far more critical of their local musical heritage and more focused on how their own individual qualities and talents may lead to new phases in the world of contemporary music. Society, the so-called reflexive late modern society, has given the youth new opportunities to construct and define their cultural identity with a thousand year of singing and dancing traditions at their disposal. A form of modern cultural individualization has given local and global dimensions in youth culture a new meaning. Traditions are not obvious anymore; they serve a special and strategic role in the game of music and identity, as seen e.g. when the folk heavy rock music from Týr gives old ballads a new sound.

Time Warp

Faroese culture, inspected from another conceptual angle, is in an astonishing time warp that complicates most attempts of social analysis that are based on the premises of a simple linear evolution of history. Swift and slow social advancements, as parallel synchronic acts, compose a culture with the oldest and the latest imaginable features in apparent harmony. The Faroese chain dance, which is of French origin, was à la mode in Central Europe in Medieval time but is still highly popular in the North Atlantic. Fading American rock icons from the 1950s are still trendy and daily guests in local radio broadcasts in the Faroe Islands. Heroic ballads narrating battles a thousand year old and wars between fierce kings and chiefs are still fresh in the "memory" of most Faroese. Faroese culture attaches, in a rather random fashion, minor and major events of a mystic past to the contemporary cultural self-understanding of the islanders. In the Faroese time warp, different cultural components introduced to the islanders during different epochs in history earn, principally

speaking, equal symbolic value and status as “timeless” elements of a holistic cultural universe. Oral history, with its subjective and creative dispositions, much more than structured literary tradition, acts as the main source of Faroese historical consciousness. This explains the relatively extensive liberties taken in cultural interpretation of past centuries. Tradition is

> also a kind of communication that traverses time, where both existing forms and new ones are combined with new ideas and innovations, which people form when they interact with each other on basis of their own independent reflection. (Joensen 2003: 254)

This process, which seldom progresses as logically as mentioned above, has to embrace the question: Which novelty is absorbed by a local culture and which is discarded? This question, as was discussed earlier, must be seen in relation to the values and codes that frame the conventions of social interaction in local community. What was modern and commonly regarded as solid technical improvement, for instance replacing bone (or wood) hooks with iron hooks when fishing, was not always welcomed by sceptical islanders. Not until the 20th century, when significant urbanization and industrialization in the fishing sector lead to a modern market economy and a Nordic-style “social welfare” system, did the Faroese adopt philosophy of linear infinite `growth´ (Raoulx 1992). The demystification of Faroese cultural history through rational arguments commenced, but this was quickly diverted to new constructions of cultural identities based on the radical individualized liberties of late modern society. New media, the Internet being the main platform of information and social communication, play a decisive role in the cultural debate that puts words to what had otherwise been implicit embodied knowledge. The digital media symbolizes a new form of open “democracy” that connects modern and centralized culture to traditional and rural popular culture (Gaini 2008). For instance, the debate on the Faroese language and (formal) education challenges old stereotypes, which are often connected to colourful and exotic depictions of culture that tied public opinion into very rigid categories. The cultural rhapsody

is, in other words, recreated by individuals that independently voice new "meanings," reflecting traditional as well as (late) modern values that belong to the complex whole of contemporary Faroeseness (2009). The case of the Danish influence on language and curricula in Faroese public schools clearly shows the progression of these fundamental changes.

Case 2 – Language and School

The school has been the most fundamental institution in Faroese children's education and intellectual training in culture, language and science for many centuries. Schooling quality and policy have been very uneven as the books in use were predominantly Danish, often out of date, until the late 20th century (Nielsen 1998). The Faroese language was not used in schools, churches, criminal courts and several other public institutions until the 20th century. The most famous Faroese novelist, William Heinesen (1900-1991), wrote all his texts in Danish, even though the vocabulary and symbols in his books have a distinct Faroese flavour. The hymns in popular spiritual songbooks were almost exclusively Danish – especially by Kingo, Brorson and Grundtvig. Local newspaper articles were written in Danish. It was strictly forbidden to use the Faroese language, which was considered an uncivilized rural dialect by many colonial administrators, in schools, and sanctions were imposed on teachers who violated this rule.

It was, therefore, no coincidence that the patriotic movement with Jóannes Patursson as primus motor focused on language and school issues in its agenda for the Faroe Islands. The first novel written in the Faroese language, Bábelstornið (Rasmus Rasmussen), was published in 1909. Except for a handful of pioneers – for example Símun av Skarði and Símun úr Konoy, who established Ungu Føroyar, a Faroese journal for children and young people, as early as 1907 – all central authorities used Danish in their writings.

The conservative inner circle of Sambandsflokkurin (The Unionist Party), a few relatively wealthy families closely related to the Danish administration, continued to use Danish in their newspaper Dim-

malætting until the second half of the 20th century. Even today, Danish is the official language in the courts of justice. Danish has equal status with Faroese in all public contexts; hence nobody has the right to force people to use the Faroese language in public. The fierce emotional language debate of the 20th century has changed its character as English is considered today´s "infiltrator" in the Faroese language, strongly influencing the spoken language of the young generation.

In geography lessons, Faroese children read about rivers and provincial towns in Denmark. In history, they memorized the list of kings and princes, of military battles on sea and land, in Denmark. In biology lessons, they discovered the flowers and trees of Jutland and Samsoe, Zealand and Bornholm. In literature, classic Danish poets were presented and analyzed thoroughly. This is appropriate and functional knowledge for the privileged elite planning to undertake academic studies in Copenhagen, but it is very far from daily life and social reality in their own Faroese society.

The huge distance between formal schooling and society, a common condition in colonies and rural peripheries, alienated children from their own culture and may have caused complex identity problems that in turn had a negative effect on their self-esteem and self-confidence. Until the late 1940s, most primary school lessons were in the Danish language; many of the teachers were Danish but sometimes daring Faroese teachers spoke Faroese to the children, even when it was not "absolutely necessary" (as required by the authorities) (Petersen 1994: 277).

The Faroese, except for a handful of (ethnically) mixed bourgeois families, never spoke Danish at home. There was only one mother tongue, Faroese, throughout the country, but Faroese was not recognized as the language of school, science, spirituality, arts and politics (Nielsen 1998 and Debes 2001). Dignitaries got high societal status through their familiarity with the Danish language and culture. When the majority of the members of the Faroese Parliament, Løgtingið, decided in 1918 to make written Faroese a primary school subject and

Faroese the general language of instruction, the assembly received the following question from the Danish Ministry of Culture: "How do you imagine that a child with average intellectual skills, after finishing primary school, will be able to talk, write and read Danish if Faroese becomes the school language?" (Nielsen 1998: 206). About the same time, the Danish physician Ingbøl, in a lecture held at a meeting of the association De danske atlantshavsøer (The Danish Atlantic Islands), told his audience:

> *You should know that the Faroese language issue has no similarity at all with the Southern Jutland language issue, one reason being that the people of Southern Jutland have a cultural language in their native language, the Faroese do not. The desperate struggle that the Unionist Party [Sambandsflokkurin] leads in favour of Danish, it conducts for itself and its descendants and we have a duty to support them. (op cit)*

Ingbøl, who had worked in the Faroe Islands for a few years, did not imagine that the Faroese language had any prospects as anything but an oral dialect for "household-use". This native language, he said, "will never be able to produce 'civilized' literature" (op cit). When we consider these dark predictions, we have to admit that the Faroese language won a tremendous victory, because the linguistic progress witnessed during the last few decades has been impressive.

There was often little knowledge of the Faroese language and culture among prominent Danish politicians. In 1929, head of the Danish Parliament, H.P. Hansen, said in the newspaper Nationaltidende: "It seems strange that the Faroese want to rid themselves of the Danish language in their schools; I think it is a strange desire, which is seen in many places, to want to make one's own language" (Petersen 1998: 299).

When the language policy problem was resolved, other troubles emerged. The discourse on schools had concentrated on the sensitive language issue. Other important subjects regarding education had

unfortunately been neglected. The power struggle between Faroese and Danish political interests, often crude and one-dimensional, had left many important educational issues off the agenda. The question posed was Danish or Faroese, not right or wrong. The language struggle is indeed an important part of modern Faroese history and many informative books on the language movement have been published. However, the vast attention paid to "authentic" Faroese language left many other important issues ignored for a long time. The whole idea of a national identity was connected to the state of the Faroese language, making identity construction whimsical.

A growing proportion of the school books used in primary school are new Faroese productions or translations, but in some subjects the main books at hand are still Danish. Most people wish to have as much Faroese material in school lessons as possible, but the material in question should always be guided by criteria concerning quality, content and freshness (being up-to-date). The Faroese book should, ideally, be at least as good as the Danish book, so that the pupils maintain a satisfactory level of education. Also, depending on the subject, the Faroese books should have a close link to Faroese society and culture, for instance when using cases and illustrations. This is an uncontroversial mission that has financial resources as its main obstacle. It is expensive to first produce books and later reproduce new (updated) editions of these. In some cases, it might also be a problem to find a qualified person to do the work, but this is rather unusual.

Most of the Faroese educational materials for primary and secondary schools present Faroese society and culture according to fixed interpretations, which are rooted in the national consciousness of the 19th and early 20th century. Strongly rooted in a dim past, the texts and lessons may seem quite archaic for children living urban lives with modern information and communication technologies at hand (Gaini 2003). The romantic images of harmonious village communities with limited contact with the surrounding world reflect interpretations of history that focus on the unique Faroese way of life, different from all other nations'. Schools were supposed to "awaken" national senti-

ments in children through education aimed at forming a strong and robust national identity.

The political climate in the country, dividing the population into two main blocks, including most school teachers, has indeed influenced the content of school lessons. One teacher told his pupils about Faroese Vikings and chiefs, ballads and hymns, legends and rituals; another teacher hardly mentioned any person with a Faroese name but gave instead long lectures analysing the life of Danish kings and scientists. In small village schools, one single teacher could mark several generations of youth and hence have tremendous power to direct their imagination and cogitation according to specific world-views.

Danish as a school subject still holds a strong position in primary school, and many Faroese would like to reduce its importance in order to give the youngest children more time and energy for their own native language lessons. English is also, slowly, growing at the expense of Danish in primary and secondary schools. There are, however, also many commentators who criticize this shift, because they consider the Danish language to be an important gateway to the whole Nordic region. The concept of a Nordic identity is often included in discussions about the role of the Danish language in Faroese school in the future. More Faroese, more English ande less Danish is the main attitude observed at the moment.

The ideas of the Faroese language and culture have, after the conclusion of the energetic struggle against Danish domination, petrified, become inflexible pillars, protected agains any reinterpretation by powerful conservative "guardians" of culture. The fear of losing what was 'saved' from extinction has paralyzed the cultural debate, and indirectly also educational policy, for decades, but is now, with the emergence of a new creative generation, taking significant steps towards an open 'democratic' debate that includes radical reinterpretations of an otherwise politicized 20th-century history.

The gap between high and low, educated and uneducated, political

and non-political has been wide in the use of the Faroese language and the interpretation of Faroese culture. The debate implies a strong polarization and uneven power relations. Some years ago, one's way of speaking and writing Faroese could, so to say, reveal one's societal position and status, even unveil one's political affiliation. While the cultural elite told the public that it was everyone's duty to speak proper Faroese according to the strict styles and standards they themselves defined, other groups, feeling quite provoked, described the elite as chauvinist and narrow-minded.

The static and authoritarian interpretation of language has influenced generations of school children in the Faroe Islands, as many have experienced strong pressure to stick to pure "authentic" language use in order to get recognition in their writing and expression. (National) culture, like language, was also instructed in doctrinaire manners. There was not much room for personal reflection and interpretation.

Cultural Challenges

Behind all the depictions of change – relative and absolute, subjective and objective, local and global – that never offer any final synopsis of culture, only thought-provoking outlines of the field, there remains a strong sense of belonging. As psychological and cultural adaption to the social and physical environment, it fixes the individual to a robust identity, shaping his or her feelings and attitude toward the world he or she lives in. The anthropologist Dennis Gaffin, mainly focusing on the small villages, says:

> The Faeroese belong to the geography around them, and the geography belongs to them. This is very much at the heart of the culture. Villagers belong in the literal, fundamental sense of dependence, of not being able to exist without it. They belong in the sense that one's family, one's kinship grouping, and one's covillagers historically resided in their community of people and places. The homestead, the village, the island is where one belongs if one is to remain a product of one's history and heritage. Numerous literal and symbolic geographical and social attach-

> ments via name, experience, and tale represent that belonging. They also belong to the community of people and places in the sense of feeling a part of it, of having emotions attached to it. They belong to the community as a social entity, involving the community´s general understanding of the proper way to think and to do things. They belong in the moral sense of being socially responsible. Ultimately they belong because the "place" is where life and destiny have put them. (Gaffin 1996: 219)

The "place" that Gaffin's analysis refers to is, most likely, becoming a less geographical and more mental property in its cultural meaning and function for most Faroe Islanders, who since the end of the 20th century have left their villages without any real aspirations of returning to something that is believed to limit their personal visions for a (late) modern lifestyle. The sense of belonging, not weakened as a foundation of identity, is reproduced in social contexts that involve daily formal and informal social interactions with other Faroese. Today, social networks, accumulating and distributing transferable social capital give the "place" and the local community a new dynamism and (economic) potential where traditional non-family cooperation has perished (Apostle 2002). "Place," assuring its future in Faroese identity, is veiled in the spoken language through metaphors, symbols, proverbs, allegories etc., which reflect the landscape, the weather and the ocean of the Faroe Islands. It is, thus, linguistically structuring a subconscious world-view and style of communication that is relatively material and practical compared to some other languages that offer more theoretical and analytical tools that fit to their cultural framework. This fact, making it difficult to translate Faroese "culture" to foreign languages, demonstrates the strong tie between nature and culture. Place-names

> themselves are a relational system binding nature and society together. Like traceable links of kinship, different places and people´s experiences with them provide personal and cultural grounding […] each time a Faeroese utters or thinks a place-

> name, he/she metaphorically re-places culture into the environment. (Gaffin 1996: 232)

The main challenge for the Faroese as a cultural group today is to achieve a common understanding of how to best mobilize the available cultural capital in order to confront new challenges related to the processes of globalization that cuase continuous social change. This cultural approach to general economic and political enterprises in a globalized environment, which is characterized by merciless competition, is necessary because the Faroe Islands, rooted in decentralized village communities, lack the national "agreement" that is institutionalized in typical nation-states in Europe. The informal culture of disagreement, fitting to a family-based peasant society, is turning into a severe obstacle at the start of the 21st century. The lid, primarily symbolized by the Danish state, that isolates the Faroe Islands from the rest of world is being removed without any other cultural defense to replace it. The opening of society, representing risks and opportunities, demands a new debate on Faroese culture that critically re-examines the old exotic presentations that focused on the contrasts between modern and primitive, rational and mythical from urban non-Faroese perspectives. Tradition can be rejuvenated if people are conscious about its value and applicability in new contexts.

(Translation of Faroese quotations in text: Firouz Gaini)

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The Adversity of the Heroes of the Past

Masculinity and Identity among Young Men in the Faroe Islands

Firouz Gaini

Part one

Introduction

For thirteen centuries men have been *dramatis personae* in Faroese society. The Vikings settling the islands during the eighth century AD still mirror the macho ideal of many young men. Men symbolized the potency of the nation as retold in numerous songs and ballads. The venerated heroes of the past find themselves caught in a maelstrom of identity turmoil at the opening of the 21st century. They face a dilemma when contemporary society demands men to follow incongruent paths towards traditional and late modern maleness. It is an impossible mission, forcing them to choose new styles and values. "Man" is nonetheless strongly anchored in the culture of the premodern era. European-style "modern" man has never gained foothold on the islands of the North Atlantic. The body might be modern but the mind is not disciplined along the same principles. My intention is not to offer "backward-looking, self-centred stereotypes" of masculinity (Connell 2005: xiii) that tell about the "warrior brain" and "warrior instinct" of men (Bly 1990). "Masculinity" is a tricky concept; it is, says Sigmund Freud, among the "most confused that

occur in science". The concept cannot be translated into the Faroese language without a proviso; not all cultures treat "women and men as bearers of polarized character types" in the way current European/North American culture does (Connell 2005: 68). The meaning of the Faroese term for man – *maður* – associates to a specific cultural context. Besides masculinity, "gender" is also a disputed concept today; gender dualism gives "the illusion of order and thus a certain security" (Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 12). Gender is, more than ever, "claimed by conflicting discourses" (Connell 2005: 3). The form is fluid, says Friedrich Nietzsche, but the meaning even more so. Faroese men, I claim, possess an undomesticated mind with "mythical" reasoning. This quality does not logically divide men from women, yet it detaches them from conventional "modern" men of Northern Europe. My thesis is not biological but is a cultural anthropological approach to the understanding of boys and men. My intention is to invalidate some widely circulating myths about "modern" man through the investigation of the history and culture of a society in shift – between tradition and modernity. Untamed men hold a "cultural capital" that suffers general value loss at the beginning of the 21st century; late modern society forces them to choose between radical identity change and societal marginalization. This adversity dilemma of the heroes of the past, the perplexed "Vikings", is the premise of my discussion on young men in the Faroe Islands. For the past thousand years these men were the icons of a nation, but nowadays the pursuit of gender identities needs to pay attention to "obvious and everyday matters," because it is here that the "interesting questions lie hidden" (Joensen 1989: 36). Even if most people try to shake off "rigid gender roles" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995) in the current individualisation movement, the identity of men is a key theme in the cultural analysis of the Faroe Islands anno 2011 (Gaini 2008). The "masculine" values and ideals of men are veiled in a largely corporal knowledge, provoking different courses of action; hence the social behaviour exhibited does not necessarily correspond to the self-ascribed identity of young men. Reasoning, in other words, cannot per se account for the untamed mind of men. History and culture, family and work outline the frame of the picture.

Ancient Time

The drama of ancient history as narrated in popular tales reveals man "the hunter" leading an adventurous life admired by young girls and boys; fathers and uncles, joined by fellow villagers, battle wild nature in work, on land and at sea. The small classless village is the stage for the daily life of industrious women and men; and women, firmly assisting in most undertakings, are invaluable for family and community life but are nevertheless seldom portrayed independently in early oral or printed narratives. The Christianisation of society during the tenth century influenced cultural values and customs, including women´s position in society. In many cases pagan society offered women a higher public status than the Christianised medieval society (Hammershaimb 1891; Young 1979 and Winther 1875). Local chiefs' women, for instance Sigmund's infamous widow Thurid and her daughter Thora, were often portrayed as fierce and artful. The river stops running before a woman lacks advise, says the proverb (Winther 1875: 209). Faroese women had leading responsibilities in many affairs considered masculine elsewhere in Northern Europe at the time (Hammershaimb 1891: XXXIX). They were blessed with the highest estimation for their beauty and finesse, their ingenuity and social skills, and the public humiliation of a lady was often severely sanctioned by the local community (Winther 1875: 425). Men were sometimes portrayed as modest warriors with their women as informal combat strategists and shadow mentors. Young men were nonetheless trained to protect the honour of their kin, as well as to earn respect among rival clan chieftains. The Christian "civilization" of the archipelago deracinated many rituals and customs considered savage by the new political and religious leaders. Young men were now urged to base their decisions and actions on Christian ethics; they should be prudent and resist "immoral" temptation. Rural life was normally hard with physically demanding work for women and men, girls and boys during every season in the year. When "strangers" meet and start chatting in small kinship-based societies, the opening question typically is: Whence are you lineaged? (Wylie 2005: 308). Place and descent are merged into one and the same question. In the Faroe Islands kinship affiliation was always a decisive capital,

deciding young men´s social status. Most sons enjoyed larger freedom and recognition in society than daughters (Winther 1875: 421-422); their education, especially for members of wealthy families, followed a distinct path. It was not uncommon for sons, particularly fatherless boys, to be fostered by distinguished relatives in order to secure the young fellows an advantageous education and future. Faroese men climbed mountains, fowled, collected bird's eggs, hunted whales, raised sheep, cultivated small spots of land and fished from small wooden boats (Joensen 1987). Physical strength, serenity and endurance were important qualities among men (Gaini 2006). The Faroese, says the politician and editor Niels Winther (1822-1892), were "as sympathetic, hospitable and faithful as they were persevering, courageous and intrepid" (1875: 212). On the whole, it was a man's world with masculine supremacy legitimized through traditional kinship and chieftain systems. Young men competed with their peers for respect. Life was full of danger and nobody could survive without a strong family and village networks. Man the hunter is echoed in the obscure depth of Faroese masculinities at the start of the 21st century.

The Handyman and Bricoleur

The legendary chief Thrand from Gøta is portrayed as follows in the thirteenth century book "Færeyinga saga" (Young 1979: 6):

> Thrand was a big man with red hair and a red beard, freckled and stern in appearance, sombrely disposed, cunning and obsequious in all his schemes, unsociable and bad to ordinary people, yet sweet-spoken to all his superiors, but always deceitful in his heart.

The rousing account of Thrand reveals a big man with a convoluted personality and two-faced mentality. Thrand was the autonomous Viking wizard and poet, strong and sharp, personifying the heroic pre-Christian age of the Faroes. He symbolizes the era of independent peasants reverberating in countless wistful ballads. Yet Thrand is not a "typical" man nor a venerated champion; rather, he is an amalgamation of different Faroese – and Nordic – types of men; a stubborn fighter with weak spots. There is no archetype shaping the

identity of new generations of men in the Faroe Islands. Nature, if anything, is the determinant that creates order and generates meaning in the mind of the islanders. The spirit of men is in most traditional narratives linked to manual work in tough natural settings as well as to sophisticated social skills (Gaini 2008). Subsistence depended for centuries on ingenious cultural adaptation to the critical limits of a sensitive ecological system. Life was chronically hazardous and survival impossible without the close collaboration between men, families and villages. Patience overcomes everything, teaches an optimistic proverb, and the Faroe Islands is, says an ironic British observer, the "Land of maybe," where nothing is sure as long as the unstable weather takes men by surprise (Norgate 1943). The indefatigable hunter in Jens Pauli Heinesen's (1932-2011) seminal novel "Beachcomber" (1977) is masculine contrast to Thrand. He is burdened with similar problems and tries to support his poor family in untraditional ways. Sámal Matthias, the beachcomber who tries to lure nature and fellow villagers with a secret plan, has a dream of becoming a wealthy and powerful man of honour. He is the untamed hunter who day by day searches for perfect driftage. The first passage of the book carves the core challenge in relief:

> Very few beachcombers enter World history, they search and search, lie awake through the night in fear the driftage of a lifetime now is taken by the stream along the waterfront without anyone to take care of it.

The beachcomber never knows what the next day's catch will consist of. In Heinesen's novel the hunter's one-man enterprise is a Herculian effort that, like a Sisyphean trial, falters every time it approaches its destination. More stubborn than most people, even after his painful failure, Sámal Matthias goes back to the shore to restart the game, because "maybe he would, this same night, find the passage through the headland of hope" (1977: 117). Beachcombers collect exotic objects, usually logs from shipwrecks, that they jubilantly make use of. They add objects to old familiar environments. The beachcomber symbolizes an overambitious character menacing

primeval cosmic order with driftage commonly considered "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966). Thor, the infamous God of Thunder, did the same on a fishing trip to foreign waters, when the Midgard Serpent that surrounds the Earth and grasps its own tail grabbed his fishhook. Thor´s desperate companion cut the line in an attempt to save the world from mayhem. The concrete substance found on the waterfront is "food for thought" that acquires cultural meaning and connotation to an otherwise sealed universe of "mythical" thoughts. From this angle beachcombing appears as much more than a simple economic enterprise; it represents "bricolage" – the conundrum of the handyman – which rearranges materials at hand into new motifs. Sámal Matthias has, thus, a much larger mission than to bring food home to his wife and children. The man is examining and reshuffling a system of thoughts with his seafaring collectables. The "beachcomber" is not a lazy drifter, as the common English language connotation suggests, but a pragmatic factotum with an intuitive approach to labour. Another Faroese man, from the same scene as the beachcomber, is the talented "miðamaður". He is able to find tiny oceanic fishing banks whose positions are fixed by certain bearings ashore. His mastery is based on a complex system of practical knowledge of local nature needed for survival on the islands. The "miðamaður" is an expert in the "science of the concrete" based on the applied wisdom of past generations. The poem "Miðamaðurin" by Sigurð Joensen (1911-1993) portrays the master of the ocean as follows:

> But what is never lifted to the surface,
> is the best half of Faroe Land
> And to explore land that the ocean covered
> became the life and science of the miðamaður
> […]
> So every spot where fish is swimming
> was attached to Faroe Land by bearings.
> And the Faroes expanded in scope and glory
> With the work and science of the miðamaður

The science of the man rowing out to abundant fishing banks demonstrates the precious skills of premodern hunters. His concrete science is directly linked to life and work in a sacred landscape full of perils. The fisherman, pursuing the catch of the day, is also a pragmatic handyman outfitted with multifarious competences. The Faroese sailor is furthermore, ideally, a bird-catcher, sheep-farmer and whaler. The strength and esteem of man rests on his broad skills as well as his social intelligence instead of a single specialized talent. Nevertheless, the hunter's mind is never purely utilitarian as he culturally classifies animals, plants and objects from the surrounding nature according to taboo and popular belief (Nolsøe 1997). The aim is, consequently, not to fish more and faster, but to fish as was always done. This rationale, somehow contradicting conventional analytical science, is based on the associative, poetic and metaphoric work of the mythical mind (Eriksen and Hemer 1999). Fishing from open boats, close to the shore, has for centuries been an endeavour closely tied to popular belief. In order to precisely locate small fishing banks, the bearings ashore have to be in the "miðamaður's" eyesight. It is not sufficient to have detailed knowledge about oceanic streams and winds, about boats and oars, because many hidden risks can only be handled and neutralized with knowledge of "supernatural" powers; in other words, the hunter applies concrete elements at hand as fuel for cogitation and abstraction in the large, albeit limited, universe of the savage mind (Lévi-Strauss 1963). His aspiration is to respect nature´s powers, to preserve cosmic status quo, as well as to take advantage of relevant personal experience and wisdom. The ancient sailor had to

> put all his knowledge and all his energy into it in order to ensure a catch. Both from the `pagan´ and `Christian´ world there was much to look out for that could spoil the fishing success. But he also felt that he had different means to protect or heal it with, when under threat. (Nolsøe 1997: 66)

Man is in contact with inescapable nature. Animals and plants, says the French structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, "are

not utilized merely because they are there, but because they suggest a mode of thought" (1963: 13). Even if the Faroese folklorist Mortan Nolsøe does not explicitly mention "totemism" in his book, the hunters of the North Atlantic do create physical comprehensive classifications by analogical thought based on observation "of the sensible world in sensible terms" (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 16). Undeniably, Nolsøe's research suggests exemplary cases of the art of classification in premodern society. Traditional Faroese chronicles and ballads embody many emblematic birds and fish that symbolize the world of human beings.

The national hero

The social construction of men as patriotic *dramatis personae* in the Faroe Islands is mirrored in famed poems and songs from the nineteenth and 20th centuries. The Faroese are, says the writer Sverre Patursson (1871-1960) from the historic village of Kirkjubøur,

> hard-working and diligent sailors, whom the country can be proud of. Far away from the Faroes, they are famed for being among the best fishermen there are. They do not have the newest and best equipment, but no one can match their pliability, capability and dexterity in using the equipment at hand. (1901: 1)

Here again, the Faroese handyman is shown as a creative bricoleur with reduced technical and material resources at his disposition. Later, in the 1930s, the journalist and romantic author Jørgen-Frantz Jacobsen (1900-1938) meditates on the cultural roots of the islanders:

> On the Faroe Islands you can still find peasants, ordinary people with their own culture that is not learnt in school, but steeped in heritage. It is not only folksongs and legends that folklorists can write down and register on gramophones, there is more than this. It is something that has gone into the blood, an education and dignity of the mind, a deep-rooted sense for the gentle form, the controlled appearance, a masculine seriousness, which, however, at the same time is spiced with an extremely developed sense

> of humour, which is always in place as an almost imperceptible smile in the corner of the eye. (1936)

In his nostalgic poetic style, Jacobsen (1900-1938) attempts to articulate the untamed mind of men; others focus on hard labour in a hostile nature. Mikkjal Dánjalsson á Ryggi (1879-1956), for instance, praises the force of men in many of his beloved poems.

> Føroyar our splendour! You still own boys,
> experienced in work and respected as men,
> straightening their backs, and tightening bowstrings
> they still show toughness in the gut.

The coming of age is often portrayed as a dangerous yet necessary struggle against the might of nature. "For the brave men that storms have hardened", says the farmer and patriotic politician Jóannes Patursson (1866-1946) in a romantic poem lionizing Faroese men and culture, "for the men that bear colour on their cheeks". The collective labour enterprises in traditional village communities make the identity of boys and girls. "Come children, and carry hay! Here both boys and girls are needed!", says Símun av Skarði (1872-1942) in a text for children. Observing boys, "born with oar in hand," grow and take responsibility, becoming part of the squad of hard-working adults, was the joy and inspiration of many old people; they witnessed "young boys [on boats] exert themselves in rowing and pushing", says Johanna Maria Skylv Hansen (1877-1974), "and they probably recalled what the ballad says: `blessed be the mother that put the bite in their mouth´". No storm, no wild wave, says "Finnur hin Lítli" (nom de plume of Jákup Hansen (1881-1967)), frightens "surf-battered boys". And "when I'll be a grown-up", he says in another popular children's song, "ah! how happy I will be" – because the young boy will go out on the sea, "day and night as a fisherman". He will become a happy man like the fathers and uncles. The children's magazine "Ungu Føroyar" (Young Faroe Islands), published for a few years in the beginning of the 20th century (1907-1910 and 1910-1914) by the cultural intellectual pioneers Símun av Skarði and Símun

úr Konoy, aspired to save the ancient national cultural and moral education of Faroese children through instructive texts that were easy to read. They, for example, note in a text about bird-catching from 1915, that young boys "usually crave to become grown-up men quickly, and they believe it will be great fun to catch birds with a fowling net"; the authors confirm that it is very exciting "but at the same time dangerous". What is fun for most boys is commonly associated with some risk and danger of which their parents are very much aware. Faroese men were associated to specific working skills and problem-solving talents.

The villager

Social relations were in the past, and still often are, shaped by the condensed and rather transparent village context where there is no place to hide. The floating and unrestricted social bonds, says Dennis Gaffin (1996: 102), an American anthropologist, correspond to cultural features of the Faroe Islands: individualism, egalitarianism and spatial (local) identity. The nickname and reputation of a village boy was normally related to various authentic and imagined narratives – events, personality, behaviour, skills, etc. Each man and woman, through the centuries, Gaffin argues theatrically, is legendary and contributing "to the ultimately mysterious quality of Faeroese life and culture" (1996: 115). Elizabeth Taylor (1856-1932), a British voyager, wrote the following passage from a visit to the remote island of Mykines:

> A fine set of men are the Mykinesers: hardy, athletic, brave, skilled cliff men, daring boatmen, proud and reserved to strangers, cheerful and very talkative among themselves. Their power of speech was a marvel to me; they had known each other intimately all their lives, are often weeks in the summer time and months in the winter time without one new idea coming from the outside world, and yet the stream of words can flow unceasingly for eighteen hours out of twenty-four. It was, to me, one of the wonders of Mykines. (Taylor 1997: 138)

To this vivid and informative account by a lady impressed by men's stoic attitudes is added her consideration that "men had that calm, far-seeing look in their blue eyes that one sees often in sailors and prairie dwellers" (1997: 135). People are landmarks, says Gaffin (1996: 116). Man shaped the free self-supporting entrepreneur; he was flexible and down-to-earth. Complex grids of bonds connected him to most, if not all co-villagers; he is relatively autonomous but born into the symbiotic collective of men. He was often mild and modest in personality, and – especially in interaction with non-relatives – sought unity and avoided overt controversy (Wylie 1987). He was an "indigenous naturalist" (Gaffin 1996: 233) with tangible practical knowledge as a companion through the trek of life. A proper guy, clever and reliable, he is a "raskur maður." But how does he fit within the community network? Jonathan Wylie, an American anthropologist, observes that

> [i]t is good to be strong and self-reliant, or, in a word, raskur, an untranslatable term of high praise in Faroese meaning strong, bold, resourceful, capable, and clever. Obviously, however, a raskur person is not necessarily a cooperative one, and his place in local society may be rather precarious. (1987: 195-196)

Contradictory social expectations pulled young men into an individualism versus collectivism vortex. The egocentric hedonist, a late modern type of individualist, has only recently appeared on the masculinity index of the archipelago. It takes a long time, says the Icelandic author Guðrún Eva Minervudóttir (2003: 25), to find "tough guys, the kind that sneer the way James Dean did on his motorbike" on the islands. The Faroese, she utters teasingly, are "mature and pliable, like modern incarnations of Buddha" (2003: 27). Rudeness and arrogance are strongly disregarded by most islanders. Stereotypes of sexist macho-sailors with big tattoos on their arms hardly fit the generally soft character of Faroese men. Minervudóttir says:

> The Faroese are slow moving and impassive, they don´t like any

> kind of brouhaha, any activity that smacks of aggressive ambition and unnecessary frippery. (2003: 32)

Everyday life in remote villages was a reproduction of the archaic culture – generation succeeding generation – until the twentieth century. In many cases, unconvinced Faroe Islanders resisted basic change with regard to new technology and modern society. The Danish priest Jørgen Landt (1751-1804), writing about the Faroe Islands, says melancholically:

> Their unreasonable and obstinate `adherence to old customs,´ even when they are convinced in tangible ways that the suggested new can be better, is something they have in common with other peasants, and, as I believe, especially with islanders. (1965: 247-248)

Until the second half of the 20th century, the Faroese were usually described as fishermen and sailors, sometimes as farmers, even as whalers, but almost never as modern individual citizens (e.g. Debes 1990, 2001; Joensen 1975, 1985). Most of the literature on the Faroe Islands focused on the past in search of a lost European heritage. Culture as island, the classic anthropological allegory, is here to be taken objectively. The cultural universe stretched to all physical and ideational parts of the archipelago, which lay far from the European continent; and it was considered to be in "perfect symbiosis" with the vicious oceanic environment.

Work and Leisure in the Modern Age

Some important industrial working sites that emerged during the 20th century are almost exclusively the worlds of men. Tórshavn dockers are a case in point. The Faroese historian Erland V. Joensen writes about the curious new working class culture at the waterfront:

> The harbour has always been manned by men and cannot be anything but a man's world […] The young boys and new men were introduced to the working process and were told what a

> worker's body has to be used for. Also, they were told how to behave among others in a man's world. (Joensen: 2003: 146-147)

The modernization and industrialization of Faroese society with urbanism and large-scale exports indicate a fundamental societal shift, which had a deep impact on gender identities and cultural values. In the 1980s and 1990s the concept of "gender" had its first major appearance on the stage of the Faroese public debate. Earlier there had not been distinct cultural classifications of men and women according to qualitative attributes (Connell 1995: 70). Dockers and workers on large fishing ships represent modern corporate classes with lifestyles and interests incompatible with prototypical peasants' ways of life. The masculine verbal communication of the harbour workers in the capital was

> quick and swift, easy and good-natured, with shouting and yelling, aphorisms, nicknames, teasing, competition, bravery and fearlessness, in short, an informal working class culture. (Joensen 2003: 370)

Dockers were, according to many in Tórshavn, rough and abusive, especially towards young unmarried women, and the old kiosk at the harbour "was not a place for women, thick in tobacco smoke, beer scent, yell and rubbish" (Joensen 2003: 92). The cultural divide between girls and boys, quite ironically, expanded at the end of the twentieth century (Gaini 2008). Earlier, at the start of World War II in 1940, several thousand British soldiers disembarked on the remote islands in the quest of occupying and protecting the Faroe Islands against an impending German invasion. The young flamboyant troopers introduced modern British music, dances and parties to the local youth (Mortensen 1996). Local girls were invited to the foreign troopers' amusing evening balls while enraged Faroese boys were kept out of the parties; many boys felt outclassed and deeply humiliated by the well-dressed visitors who attracted girls to their stylish gatherings. A young frustrated Faroese poet even made a mocking song about the wicked girls that includes these lines:

> They consort with soldiers and don´t know shame,
> they switch between Jim, Jack, John and Tom.
> (Djurhuus 1977)

Young local men were often just curious, not directly annoyed, and spent late evenings spying on Faroese-British couples in dark Tórshavn streets and gardens. This was the biggest and most exciting "sport" of all, especially among young men, says Petur Jacobsen (in Mortensen 1996: 26). After the war, in the early 1960s, a new group of alien fighters came to the islands. The new radar station at Mjørkadalur ("Mist Valley"), established by NATO in agreement with the Danish Ministry of Defence, was operated by mostly young Danish recruits. These men in uniform inflamed the same kind of anger and frustration among groups of Faroese boys as the Britons had done twenty years earlier. Girls who associated with the foreign soldiers often ended up being isolated and stigmatized by other local youths who considered them "cheap" and "corrupt". A young man at that time, Sámal Kragesteen, tells that "a young respectable woman did not go out with any army man. This was an unwritten law that everybody knew" (in Mortensen 1996: 48). Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, the European/American youth "revolution," with its radical notion of freedom and provocative styles, became part of the mainstream youth culture of the Faroe Islands. Many young people, especially from the largest towns, felt strongly inspired by novel international political, social and cultural movements. They searched for cultural emancipation and new opportunities. "To make it short", says Magnus Dam Jacobsen (1977), an eccentric author from Tórshavn, "my wish was to be: Tarzan, Cowboy and Donald Duck". He combined these very divergent masculinities in a personal identity project. All three characters symbolize facets of man's troubled mind in the capitalist social context. They have different relations to (savage) nature. What is human nature? What is man's nature? These questions follow Magnus Dam Jacobsen (1935-1978) through all his anarchic writing. Man at work, exploiting his body and skills, sweating and battling, is the star of Jacobsen's stories.

The subsequent passage is from Jacobsen's (1976) novel on Faroese fishermen located in cold Greenlandic waters:

> Sitting on the bench. Looking at the foreman. Under such conditions you see man´s worth. He is steering. The tiller is locked under his left arm. He has taken off his glasses. He is soaking wet from sea water. The clothes glistening, wrinkled […] This is the fisherman, our miðamaður. He who knows the ocean and currents […] And, now, I understand the values of our ancestors. Their mentality, knowledge and culture. Their modesty, gentle behaviour and patience.

Here, the fisherman embodies the heroic past. In this portrayal, man, affixed to history in a floating world, overcomes the societal maelstrom that late modern youth often feels drawn into. The modern fishing industry produced a new archetype of fishermen very different from the ancient mariner and "miðamaður" that never lost sight of the isles. Jákup Berg (1905-1997) writes about the flair and expertise of the navigator in stormy waters in a biographical essay collection (1988):

> Cautious sits the oarsman and glances around him with a sharp look, and every time a wave crest approaches and wants to come up, he pulls the steering pole towards his body and turns the thigh upwards on this running boat that is riding the wave while the sea roars under the bow.

The construction of identities of young men became more complex and less attached to fishing and other physical working ventures during the 1960s and 1970s, the era when new American/European youth cultures associated with a strictly-youth entertainment and leisure life emerged in the Faroe Islands (Gaini 2008). A new youth, ambitious with progressive cultural visions, fuelled by the empowered European/American youth generation, appeared in the flourishing 1970s. This dazzling decade also presented the youth–adult division

in new forms; during this time the youth entered the societal stage as an independent and established social category. The frontier between generations, says the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, "is something that is fought over in all societies" (1994: 94). Another interesting point is found in Bourdieu's statement:

> What for the parents was an extraordinary privilege (for example, when they were twenty, only one person in a thousand of their age and their milieu owned a car) has become statistically banal. And many clashes between generations are clashes between systems of aspirations, formed in different periods (1994: 99).

Girls and boys have new dreams and aspirations as well as reconsidered understandings of gender and cultural identities. Man is not what he used to be; contemporary society embraces several parallel masculine ideals which are crystallised in new subcultures. The "traditional man" is but one category in a broad and colourful fan. Today´s men face challenges totally unknown to yesterday´s men.

Rural and Urban Men

At present the local discussion on masculinity and gender identity revolves around a cultural rural–urban module. In public media, village boys are stereotyped as provincial and straightforward, not fit for the imagined lifestyle of urban socialites (Gaini 2006). They are, melancholically, falling stars. In Danish media presentations, for instance, rural man is a comical archetype of a Faroese man leading a simple life amongst sheep and birds. This is the one-dimensional metropolitan image of the rural periphery. In the Faroes, rural men are not "outsiders" found on society's outer rim, and even if they undeniably are the target of prejudiced anecdotes, the villagers answer the mockery with exaggerated caricatures of gutless and unmanly townies that have lost touch with the untamed nature of man. The picturesque contrast exposed in conversation among young people reflects intense identity negotiation (Gaini 2008). Rural men claim to be the agents of "authentic" masculine values in the Faroe Islands, thus being the "real men" with direct ties to

yesterday's heroes, while other men, they sarcastically argue, have watered down their masculinity and replaced it with "modern" feminine behaviour. Men from family-based village communities are often autodidact handymen with practical intelligence, allowing them to solve all kinds of problems without much external help. These fellows collaborate casually with friends and relatives, young and old, from the local non-hierarchical community (Andreassen 1992; Gaffin 1996). Young boys, trained and coached by experienced men, compete with peers that usually form a lifelong and closely knit clique; most village boys keep their childhood nicknames and reputation no matter what happens later in life; and men returning home to their villages after years in exile are normally thought of as exactly the same persons they were as children, because nothing essential has changed in the view of their kin. Friendship is crucial and often almost as permanent as kinship. In villages the personal choice of friends and acquaintances is obviously more limited than the selection in a larger urban society. Take what you get and accept it is the categorical condition faced by many villagers. The men in question are mostly from traditional and (Christian) religious families of fishermen and farmers.[1]

Rural men are, as mentioned, considered "typically" Faroese in public discourse, since their lifestyle appears more ancient and less "foreign" than mainstream urban lifestyles. They are sarcastically presented as "bygdasligir" (parochial and regional), men of nature and tenacity, and, according to rivals, conservative without inventiveness. Villagers, on the other hand, tag their urban counterparts as flat "office workers" without masculine energy. Some groups of village boys, disparaging higher education, are deeply suspicious of intellectuals with academic training. "Blind is the bookless man' is a true saying" says Jákup Berg (1986) when mulling over widespread anti-intellectual attitudes, "but it probably is not cherished but by educated men"; but then again, the traditional masculine identity of villagers is strongly challenged by new styles in a late modern society. Body strength and practical skills are still widely valued but these attributes do not meet new criteria for a triumphant societal

status. Many men have lost their cultural capital in the recent metamorphosis of Faroese culture. Few boys actually fit the caricatured village stereotype found in local media, and everyday life in the villages is most often as modern and as globalized as life anywhere else in Faroese society; the capital of the North Atlantic archipelago is also full of immigrated “peasants” (Gaini 2008). Most young men in the capital have close bonds to relatives in remote villages. It is therefore impossible to create an unambiguous geographical partition of men according to their manliness. The traditional values and styles of villagers are still dominant in many domains of society[2].

The village, which many Tórshavn boys view as rather boring and enervating, is the centre of their world; it is safe, quiet and familiar (Gaini 2008). Nevertheless, there are also young men that support their village from other motives. Many peripheral villages have lost their ancient culture and identity as mass emigration has caused critical population decline. The demographic misfortune has affected the rural youth; many villages lack structured leisure activities – maybe except for some religious engagements – for teenagers in the community. What to do in one’s spare time? Many adolescents, stuck in the periphery, decide to move to Tórshavn or to Denmark, making the villages even more deserted. In some remote places there are hardly any young people left. Villagers are often men, timid and cautious among strangers, of few words. In mixed gatherings they might at first glance seem unnoticed and voiceless compared to some sociable urban individualists; though, they are vivid and entertaining when surrounded by friends and relatives. This is, as a matter of fact, typical of all young men in the Faroe Islands. Even and especially rural men often feel uncomfortable when physically separated from their family network. Some introverted men from villages are not accustomed to metropolitan formality and politesse when communicating with “strangers”, but few are socially handicapped. Their social tact is not necessarily underdeveloped, but it is adapted to the social framework of local discourses and gatherings. Today rural society is closely linked to globalized society through extensive – social and cultural – communication, and rural manliness

is strongly influenced by the shift in society – between tradition and late modernity (Gaini 2010).

Part two

An Untamed Mind

This brief and fragmentary summary of thirteen centuries of Faroese men's history does, of course, not present anything but *one* version of the cultural history of Faroese masculinity through the volatile poetic lens of written and oral narratives. The provocative – and easily misinterpreted – thesis of "untamed" man in the Faroe Islands has so far not been convincingly defended; it is therefore the main subject of this latter part of my essay, which scrutinizes the new identity of contemporary man with respect to late modern society's values and priorities. The heroes of the past are today often in the unpleasant position of "villain" and antihero. The pigeonholed account of "Faroese men" compared to other men – and women in general – is definitely, as Todd W. Reezer (2010: 15) also says,

> an attempt to stabilize a subjectivity that can never ultimately be stabilized, to create a brand of masculinity as not in movement, and as such stands as proof of the unstable nature of masculinity.

The simplification of the complex field, which is writing on "masculinity" in the Faroe Islands, is intentional, since the reason for my analysis, as mentioned earlier, is to reveal the general relation between man's identity and society in a time of social and cultural shift. This undertaking demands certain generalizations in the delineation of otherwise shifting gender identities. Who are the "modern" men? And who is "traditional"? The discussion of the presumed transformation in man's gender identity reflects, sensibly, radical changes in Faroese society within the last decades. Otherwise, why should historical heroes not keep their heroic reputation among women and men? Why should the alleged "untamed" mind of men not fit to present-day expectations? The dilemma of the "heroes of

the past" needs justification grounded in central masculinity and identity issues; this throws my project straight into the orbit of the protean jack-of-all-trades operating with his peculiar "science of the concrete". He is, whatever his name and lineage, the unchallenged hero of past centuries. Take for instance the fisherman, beachcomber and peasant – their careers were as "protean" as any noble Renaissance man's, even if their everyday lives were far from the intellectual circles of Rome and Paris. The Faroese man was a jack-of-all-trades with clear parallels to the shape-shifting Greek God Proteus, who Carl Jung defines as a personification of the unconscious. This flexible and placid type of man, memorably incarnated in the Italian artist and scientist Leonardo da Vinci, tinkers in the original way of the untamed "bricoleur". The Faroese man was not an eccentric character seeking to melt hegemonic tradition because his untamed mind was inextricably connected to an unquestionable cultural and natural universe (Gaini 2010b). He was, in other words, not able to break out of the ideational and mythical wall surrounding the culture in the way that logically minded "modern" man to some degree succeeds in doing. This is not at all an objective for the traditional man who places greater value in what he has than in what he does not have. He finds all the answers to the questions he raises without modern analytical and scientific methods. Magic, contrary to science, says Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962), "postulates a complete and all-embracing determinism". This statement does not reflect higher or lower intelligence, but rather a refined perception of different autonomous types of knowledge and "sciences" that exist at the same time and even at the same place. The traditional bricoleur normally composes abstractions and concepts out of observable physical elements – birds, fish, etc. – while the modern "engineer", systematically using texts and numbers, makes abstractions out of abstractions (Eriksen 2002). Faroese man, I maintain, is neither a magician nor a – in the strictest sense – scientist, because his creative "bricolage" is more similar to the work of an artist or architect that combines binary spheres of thinking. The marginalization of traditional values and identities in the changing conception of Faroese men is, according to my thesis, profoundly linked to how the jack-

of-all-trades is discredited as the “professional” educated man with global networks enters the stage. This often unnoticed change is seldom mentioned explicitly in the gender discourse that somehow takes contemporary urban masculinity for granted without paying attention to the rise and fall of the heroes of the past. Traditional man is thus, ironically, disqualified from the discursive “competition” before even demonstrating his diverse skills and competences. The so-called savage mind has been acculturated to the new analytical and scientific context of late modern society. Most of traditional man’s qualities and symbols are, quite cynically, considered useless and trivial; hence his combined cultural capital is also seen as a direct hindrance to progress, making him particularly vulnerable to embarrassing societal failure. Is this really happening today? This melodramatic image is probably slightly exaggerating the unfolding transformation because the handyman from the family-based village is still an influential character. Here, the point is that his decline has started and is unlikely to stop before he has become an antihero considered passé.

Education

The formal education of contemporary young men, through kindergarten and school institutions with modern didactic principles, aims to influence the mind of man so that he learns to reason and behave “comme il faut”. Unfortunately, this value laden project of human formation, based on a rather narrow definition of the individual “person” that fits an ethic of gender equality, turns a blind eye to the inconvenient fact that many boys do not thrive or develop in such a fixed environment. It is argued that these boys, usually labelled “problematic” and, more vulgarly, “wild” or “savage”, need special attention and professional assistance in order to get on track and turn away from abnormal behaviour. In primary and secondary school, the boys in question, some already deeply marginalized, are considered weak because of a burdening verbal immaturity. The weak and timid boys often have, professionals say, primitive communication skills that isolate them from the dominant group of articulate “tamed” youths with analytical finesse. Some of these boys would be

stigmatised as “outsiders” in any age, but others, with their remarkable practical experiences and creative skills, could hypothetically have been part of the élite in past eras. The stigmatized school boys, often from relatively traditional families from rural regions, but in some cases also from the capital’s academic classes, are considered old-fashioned and primitive by their rationally disciplined peers. The lost boys’ cultural capital is, as mentioned earlier, quite incongruent with new formal educational values and social standards. The consequences of the ever increasing demands and requirements in general education are crippling for the traditional young men of the islands. However, it is first and foremost in the domain of work identities and values that the vivacity and resistance of the so-called “untamed” nature of men is unveiled and recognized.

The knife

The knife is a key symbol of man the hunter and of the contemporary jack-of-all-trades, but it is also a masculine fetish that keeps melancholic young men busy. As such, it is a good passage into the heart of the topic. Man without a knife, says the old proverb, is man without life, referring to the countless and indispensable functions that this sharp and handy tool represents (Hammershaimb 1891). The knife is the pencil, scissors and hatchet in one and the same device. It is the key to the concrete working ventures mastered by creative handymen. Only a fool would leave his house without a sharp knife at hand. Still today, Faroese men, especially in small village communities, wear practical knives in holsters or pockets as they navigate through the movements of everyday life. Until new international restrictions were put into effect at the end of the 20th century, Faroese men travelled unhindered abroad with the same knives around their waist in case any relatively harmless cutting or carving enterprise was ahead. Especially terrifying, for modern non-Faroese observers, were the large knives designed for pilot-whale hunting. Swedish knives of the “Mora” brand, characterised by their red wood handles, are extremely popular in the Faroe Islands, including as cutlery at the Faroese dinner table, as they are strong and flexible, and available in different sizes. Today small pocketknives, safe and easy to keep in

small pockets, are also favoured by the Faroese. The knife has had strong associations with masculine identity, not as a weapon but as an extremely practical tool for life and work in the nature, as well as a motif with near magical power. Mastering the knife involves more skills than most people imagine. How to avoid breaking the blade? How to keep its razor sharp? How to protect it against corrosion? The knife is also an artistic instrument used to carve and whittle objects out of natural materials. It is no coincidence that woodwork has for a long time been one of the most popular subjects among primary and lower secondary school boys. Woodwork is concrete and creative work that seems "meaningful" in relation to the widely esteemed skills of the Faroese handyman. With a knife and a piece of wood, a boy can make his own object in his own fashion. The knife is also a symbol of danger, even if this is a rather irrelevant connotation in most Faroese contexts, the main exception being the knife at work in pilot-whale hunting and killing. A more decent and exact interpretation would be to define the knife as the companion and protector of untamed man in menacing nature. The limitations of the knife as a technologically primitive and static tool are ideationally irrelevant to the untamed mind of the handyman, who controls and appraises the shining blade and handle placed in his strong fist. The knife is, in a metaphor elucidating the central point, the eyes that nourish the untamed mind with thoughts and concepts. It is an object with a huge variety of detailed practical functions that, nonetheless, never is a danger to the fundamental infrastructure of the cultural landscape. The user, Faroese men from all age groups, does not need any exacting theoretical instruction, only practical experience and guidance, in order to master the handy knife that gives its dignified owner societal respect and power as well as an ethical responsibility in the manner and consequences of how he uses it. What is cut cannot be uncut later.

The car

While the knife is commonly attached to serious working pursuits, the car is considered a strong symbol of the freedom and independence of young men in their leisure life, even if the car also operates

and has meaning in various working contexts. The car, a much more advanced and modern but also a more sensitive and vulnerable object than the knife, is worshipped by many young men, who not only appreciate the art of driving but also the ingenuity of fixing and remodeling a car. Thus, the car functions as an object for the creative talents of the young bricoleur, who invests energy and time into the project of remodeling the car, without having to pay homage to an authoritative aesthetic or scientific criteria (Gaini 2006). The car, a product of advanced scientific engineering that naturally belongs to modern life, has gained immense popularity among Faroese men since the 1960s, because it has many different functions, practical and symbolic, that represent a sense of freedom and an idea that can unleash a man's artistic imagination[3]. The car, in other words, mirrors some of the elementary requirements associated with the untamed mind of men (op.cit.). When the alleged qualitative difference between the untamed and the modern mind is considered according to Lévi-Strauss' theoretical model, the former connects the object to abstract concepts in a holistic and timeless manner while the latter keeps them separated by dismissing the empirical evidence – the object as object – as axiom for theory and analysis. The former abstracts from concrete phenomena while the latter concretizes abstractions. This important difference, usually veiled and impenetrable in most concrete social interaction, is the antecedent to deep value and world-view conflicts today, because it exemplifies different ways of thinking about the same things. The case of the car is instructive and stimulating because the automobile in public discourse is on the one hand associated with danger, risk and "masculinity", and on the other with freedom, mobility and modernity. However, in contrast, untamed men usually connect and integrate the concepts and convictions into a larger and more creative construction. Untamed man's relation to the car is therefore outlined in a synthetic and unifying fashion, spiced with colourful metaphors rather than by modern man's fragmented analytical logic that rests on written language. And, concluding this train of thought, it is impossible to fully understand the car's role and meaning in Faroese masculine identities without a thorough investigation of the untamed mind of

men that always attempts to combine a heterogeneous repertoire – large but limited – in new ways of thinking. Hence, the automobile is, using Lévi-Strauss' accurate cliché, an object "good to think with" as much as a scientific object with rational prospect.

The computer

The fresh field of information technology (IT) and advanced digital media is, quite unexpectedly for many superficial observers, a haven for many traditional untamed men who manage to decipher extremely complex computer systems without noteworthy formal training. The handyman, whose prime goal is to be self-supportive, intuitively acknowledges the immense potentiality that today´s IT represents. He is maybe not the best engineer and programmer, carefully bypassing the theoretical research and innovation sphere, but he is a rare talent when it comes to locate and solve problems as well as to dismantle and rebuild computer systems. He does not always respect standard procedures as defined in the logic of user manuals because he tends to prefer following his own sense and, simply, to "learn by doing" (Eriksen & Hemer 1999). As a fearless amateur, he nonchalantly experiments in order to find new and unique solutions to old problems; and as an optimistic "beachcomber" of the digital age, he searches for new alien elements to combine with familiar objects. He is, nevertheless, no romantic dreamer that believes he, just by using his imagination, can win any struggle against defunct technological systems because there are other incentives making the untamed man especially interested in how synthesized IT software and hardware works. As a curious parallel to the general pattern of modern industrial fisheries, IT workers can earn huge amounts of money within short time span while resting without any noteworthy income at other times. As such, It is a kind of masculine gold-digging affair, where no one knows for sure when and where the "gold" is discovered. Moreover, the IT worker, as his modern fishing counterpart, operates with very atypical working hours that change from day to day, week by week, depending on work load, type of work and ever-changing deadlines. As computer "janitor" man has to be flexible with the aesthetic associative competences of the jack-of-

all-trades. Therefore, the computer as tool and technology, idea and symbol, becomes the niche of many men that feel excluded from other sectors of the modern labour market.

Informant no. 1	**Informant no. 2**
33 years old, villager	*24 years old, from Tórshavn*
From secondary school	*From secondary school*
to work in food shop	*to unemployment*
to work on fishing ship	*to work in fishing factory*
to work as IT supporter	*to (limited) work in IT company*
to technical college	-

The computer is normally considered a symbol of rational, mathematical and logical data processing and thus suitable for the theoretical minds of modern men. But computing also involves unpredictable and incomprehensible imperfections that, in Sisyphean style, return every time the professional worker has corrected seemingly isolated errors (Cross 2008). In this chaotic context that stresses even the most experienced IT professional, the traditional bricoleur blossoms as a wild rose in nature. He cannot take the job of the researcher, but he can fix concrete problems on a practical level because of his pragmatic stance to the field (Gaini 2008). In a blasé disregard of common scientific conventions, untamed man creates his own hypothesis and "theory" in working enterprises; the ambition of inventing new artistic solutions is stronger than the need to comply with rational structural frameworks.

The Adventurer

Ove Joensen (1948-1987), a colourful sailor and adventurer from the small village of Nólsoy, had many things in common with the fictive beachcomber Sámal Matthias, who carried big dreams that were difficult to materialize. Ove built a traditional Faroese wood boat, named "Diana Victoria", in which he wanted to row the 1.700 kilometres from the Faroes to Copenhagen. Most people considered the idea to be complete madness, considering the extremely unstable and stormy North Atlantic waters that the adventurer resolutely

planned to cross without any help. Even after two hazardous unsuccessful attempts to cross the ocean, the hopeful villager continued his mission "impossible", and finally, in August 1986, he anchored at Copenhagen´s packed waterfront. Ove, who, tragically, fell overboard and drowned the year after his incredible achievement, was creative and multitalented. He is an example of the untamed man with traditional identity. The short light-hearted man in his homemade boat on the endless ocean symbolizes the free and unruly person that, like the beachcomber, has huge goals and objectives.

The Happy Amateur

Faroese men´s untamed mind resists most social changes of the 20th and 21st centuries but is jeopardized by new modern urban masculinities that impose new gender identities. This mind is best deciphered and explored in a dicothemy, in a comparison with the analytic mind of conventional modern men, which represents its opposite.

Untamed Man	**Modern Man**
Amateur	*Professional*
Jack-of-all-trades	*Specialist*
Bricoleur	*Engineer*
Concrete science	*Abstract science*
Poetic (creative)	*Logic (analytic)*
Pragmatic	*Structured (idealistic)*

The cultural flows and trends that characterise contemporary Faroese youth lifestyles reveal some interesting contrasts between traditional and modern men and reflect a latent identity conflict. Untamed men are usually "happy amateurs", a common ironic description stressing their informal and laid-back attitude to work and play. Amateurs, in contrast to professionals, have substantial personal liberties in their projects, which emphasise autodidact creative skills and associative imagination. The Faroese love to write songs and poems, to play music and produce works of art. This productivity echoes the untamed mind's appetite for new and innovative achievements based on feelings and experiences rather than scientific rational

argument. The islands' current music scene is a remarkably rich and mixed milieu with an advantageous combination of amateurs and professionals, most of whom are melodic "bricoleurs" par excellence. It is no coincidence that the most famous Faroese novel is entitled *The Lost Musicians* (William Heinesen 1950), in which man's life and destiny in the Faroes is melodiously narrated. The appetite for holistic and imaginative narratives is also reflected in the strong spirituality and Christian religiosity that is at the core of the identity of many young islanders. The untamed mind of men searches for unconventional explanations that can release the psyche from the "crutch" of analytic scientific intelligence. This is e.g. seen in the music and arts production of the youth generation. The amateur is not regretful of not being a professional since he appreciates the independence, flexibility and matter-of-fact style of the practical generalist. Crucial to the gratification of the "happy" amateur, a generally family-oriented man with a strong attachment to the local community, is his liberty from strict sets of rules and sanctions regarding working and leisure pursuits – a doctrinaire structure would limit his intellectual and aesthetic autonomy. The contrast and contest between untamed and modern man is often an important cause of verbal misunderstandings and confusion. Such conflicts often lead to tragic or comical situations that result in the humiliation of the traditional man, who is seen as verbally impotent. When traditional men e.g. answer "I don´t know" or "maybe" instead of giving logical replies to focused questions, it is in most cases not based in lack of knowledge or intellectual immaturity. Rather, it is the result of his unease with a question that reduces a complex subject into an empty detail of a modern and rational style of conversation. The formality and limited time frame of the verbal interaction can indeed also turn out as a regrettable hindrance to more articulate answers than "perhaps" or "maybe," which, as mentioned earlier, is in the ironic title of a British publication on the Faroe Islands. "The Land of Maybe" connects the Faroese "maybe" primarily to the wild and ever-changing weather of the islands (Norgate 1943).

Endnote

Masculinities are changing and reflect social and cultural developments in contemporary late modern society. The cultural capital that secures prosperity and success in life is changing character. Today it is assumed that the traditional man is substituted by a curious combination of the same “primitive” man and new norms and values drawn from local and global society. However, as has been shown here, he is still deep in the hidden masculinity, defined by the untamed mind of Faroese men. The poetic mind of men will in the future regain lost esteem and status.

(Translation of Faroese quotations in text: Firouz Gaini)

Notes

1. Children in the Faroe Islands, a highly modern society, come of age in homes with all modern-day resources and facilities. Most families live in large private houses with gardens and parking lots. Boys enjoy large personal freedom during childhood in the villages, which are widely considered as safe and healthy places. The entrance of the house is always open and the children enter and leave the house as they please; they go fishing in the harbour, play football on a grassy field or head for the grocery store to buy sweets. Since the 1990s, nevertheless, children spend more time indoor playing with computers and other electronic gadgets (Gaini 2010). Village children's play and leisure time has changed significantly since the 1980s and is now rather similar to the customary activities of their peers residing in larger towns and city areas (Forchhammer 1998).
2. The family network of rural men does not merely function as a social and cultural network; it is a valuable capital assisting men in life career ventures (Gaini 2010). If your father, say, is working on a fishing vessel, you will most likely be offered a contract on the same ship. If your mother's relatives are the owners of the local factory, there might well be a job awaiting you there. And your father's small plot of land might provide a plot for your new house when you marry. A villager can, in most cases, in this traditional family-based setting, succeed in life without formal higher education. He is, in simple terms, the pragmatic no-nonsense family-man, who likes to spend Saturdays with friends and Sundays at church. Few of them are pondering idealists with radical expectations for times ahead.
3. The car culture discourse of Faroese youth is characterized by the stereotyped dichotomy capital–village or centre–periphery, which defines styles and trends in driving. Village youths, considered more traditional and provincial than Tórshavn's "city-dwellers", can easily be recognized by their cars. That is what my young informants say, even though I regard it as a rather subjective construction of village youth that seldom fits empirical observations. The village youth, in the discourse, is always driving with open windows and loud music. The "Atlantic cowboy" does not care if it rains or snows. Also, village youth always fix their cars; whenever they have time off, young men disappear into oily garages and are transformed into amateur car mechanics with a handyman's pragmatic intelligence. The village youths are extravagant as handymen because the grand metamorphosis of his poor vehicle never ends.

Some details are always missing in the punctual “make-it-cooler” project. The aesthetic surgery that cars undergo in order to get higher value among youths is a complex subcultural process not to be analysed thoroughly here. The creative car owner’s aim is normally to improve his rank in the group, hence also to get easier access to admiring women. The sound, shape and colours of the car signal sexual capacities. The car is, in this respect, a prolonged part of the driver’s personal identity. The village youth stereotype, according to a 26-year-old female informant, is the boy who comes to Tórshavn in a car that has a lowered chassis, 4000W subwoofers, 17 inches sport rims and preferably many lights on all sides. The driver wears slippers, a white cotton T-shirt and a brown or black leather jacket. But, says the informant, today the capital is full of villagers, so the difference is not so obvious anymore. Today, the cars identified with Atlantic cowboys – e.g. Opel Mantra and Toyota Corolla in the 1980s – are considered rather farcical. The new trend is to have expensive luxury cars – BMW always a hit among young boys showing muscles – which exhibit economic wealth more than anything else. The owners of these vehicles are seldom amateur mechanics with dirty garages. They are not very young and they wear black shoes fitting the sterile offices in Tórshavn. Women are also active car drivers with an interest in motors and wheels, a shift from the strongly male dominated era of the cowboys (Dennis and Urry 2009).

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Notes on Contributors

Jonathan Wylie made the first of many field trips to the Faroes in 1970. He is the author of *The Ring of Dancers* (with David Margolin, 1981), *The Faroe Islands* (1987), and *What Their Neighbors Did* (forthcoming). He has taught at Cornell University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and has held Fulbright Fellowships at the Universities of Bergen and Århus. He has also done field work in the West Indies.

Christophe Pons (born in 1970) is a social anthropologist at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), member of the Institute for Mediterranean, European and Comparative Ethnology (IDEMEC) in Aix-en-Provence, France. He has done intensive research in Iceland on the relationship between the dead and the living, spiritualism and Protestantism. His books are *The Specter and the Clairvoyant* (PUPS, 2002) and *The Supernatural Liaisons* (CNRS Editions, Paris 2011). He started to do fieldwork in the Faroe Islands in 2005 and now steers a researching program on evangelical churches.

Firouz Gaini (born in 1972) is a social anthropologist and youth researcher at the University of the Faroe Islands. He is the Chair of the Scientific Society of the Faroe Islands. He has written articles and chapters on the cultural identities, lifestyles, values and media consumption of children and young people in contemporary Faroese society. He has also done fieldwork in Southern France.