To die into the mountain

A study of a Northwestern Icelandic burial mound and the Sámi cultural influences in Viking Age Iceland

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Abstract

This paper deals with pre-Christian burials in Iceland and issues of cultural heritage, with focus on a supposed Viking Age burial on an exceptional location in Kollafjörður, Iceland. The (burial) monument is located under a steep cape by the sea, right next to three rock pillars, which is not normative position for pre-Christian burials in Iceland. In order to understand the choice of location I used Post-colonial theory to go “behind” the Norse cultures and gain insight into the cultural heritage that was brought to Viking Age Iceland. I compared the locale and the monument with graves and cultural sites in possible lands of origin, mainly Northern Norway and areas where Sámi cultures had interacted with the Norse cultures. I came to the conclusions that the Sámi, and sometimes the Norse, used “dramatic landscapes” in ritual purposes and for burials. Also the respective myths and folklores are highly similar. From that I assumed that dramatic landscapes may have been considered holy by the Norse, and that burials occurred at mountain basis, representing “sacred burials”, a burial location that needs further investigation in Iceland, along with a study on origin of place names.

Key words: Pre-Christian, Iceland, Strandir, Kollafjörður, Sámi, culture, burials, landscape, place names.

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1. Chapter - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

According to legends a “Viking settler” was buried under Ennishöfði cape in Kollafjörður, North-western Iceland. The myth of this burial has always interested me, especially the location of the supposed burial, which is in a spectacular place, under a steep cape, beside three rock pillars that are out of sight from any human inhabitation. In order to understand the myth and the location better, I set out on a quest to gain knowledge about this site.

Archaeological records have been systematically gathered and collected in Iceland since 1816. It started with Finnur Magnússon’s Survey of remarkable antiquities in Iceland, where the idea was that a priest in every parish would register and collect archaeological data from the parishes. Similar collection was done by the Icelandic literary society in the years 1839-1874. Both collections were done by sending out questionnaire to priests and enthusiasts. The results were coloured by national romanticism and the sagas played a major role. Kristian Kålund did similar work in his 1872 publication Bidrag til en historisk-topografisk Beskrivelse af Island, where he literally tried to connect the saga literature to the Icelandic topography. Daniel Bruun was the first to do “real” archaeological work: from 1896-1910 he drew up, photographed and excavated several sites. The Icelandic archaeological society (Hið íslenzka fornleifafráðífélag) was formed in 1897 and kept up the surveys, excavated sites and published its work annually. In the 20th century archaeological work began in a professional manner and is ongoing (Aldred 2006:9-17). Registrations of sites are yet not finished and several areas in the country are virtually unknown archaeologically. The Westfjord peninsula (Vestfirðir) is one of those places. On the east coast of the peninsula, there is a region called Strandir (beaches). The region has almost been left out from archaeological point of view, but has however received some attention in the last decade due to the good work of Fornleifafráðístofnun Vestfjarða (The West fjord archaeological institution).

In his journey in 1872 Kålund went around Strandir (Strandasýsla) to register old findings, but deliberately ignored areas where no Icelandic saga took place (1985). One of the areas he ignored was Kollafjörður, a small fjord, south in the Strandir region. The fjord still to this day is
uncharted archaeologically, despite several interesting locales in the area. One of those interesting locales is on a remote peninsula under a steep cape, between Kollafjörður and the aligned fjord, Bitrufjörður. According to legends, a “Viking burial” took place under that cape (Halldórsson 2012), right next to three large rock pillars and a single large black rock that set a dark, yet respectful, tone for the mystical landscape that surrounds the supposed grave, a landscape that is characterized by steep mountain walls, rocky beaches and virtually no grassland. The monument has the shape of a Viking Age mound, it is approximately 4.5m long and 50cm high, it lies between two small cliffs, and is clearly artificial; it is located near the borders of crossing farms (which is typical for one group of Viking Age graves in Iceland) yet it is in the middle of nowhere. What is not typical is however the location under the cape and the fact that the monument would only have been accessible and visible for a very limited quantity of people, due to the remote location. One wonders why this place of any was chosen. Most importantly no other graves in Iceland have been found near such natural phenomena. At first I would assume that such phenomena would deter the “believers” of the Old Norse faith, rather than attract them, and no Christian burial would take place on such location.

Fig. 2 View over the cape Ennishöfði. The monument is located on the right side of the rock pillars that are in the middle of the picture. To the far right is the opening of Kollafjörður fjord (Picture by Albert Jakobsson 2011).
The Norse mythology has often been defined by what is inside and what is outside. Both gods and men lived in fenced cities, or worlds, that were safe, familiar and tamed. They lived in Ásgarð and in Miðgarð, which represent civilization. Outside of these fenced residences one would find the various worlds of fierce creatures: the untamed nature and the dangerous dwellings of evil supernatural beings (Brink 2004:239). There is no coincidence that known Scandinavian Iron Age graves are often found in connection to the farms (Steinsland 2007:375). The cosmology of the Norse faith, as it is represented in the Eddas, spins around the safety of the home fields (Zachrisson 1994:220). Who would want to rest forever outside Miðgarð?

During the settlement, and the years afterwards, the respective settlers could, within their own lands, freely choose burial spots for themselves and/or their ancestors. This freedom of choice must have been current in Iceland, since the land was probably uninhabited prior to the settlement. A creation of new holy grounds was bound to happen. The locations were surely inspired by something in the settlers’ former residences; a cultural heritage was brought to the country. But, the settlers of Iceland came from a broad area, even vast area, if features as slaves, workers and eventual mixture of “different peoples” are taken into considerations, which surely had some influences on the culture of later generations in Iceland.

Interpretations on the matter of origin of the settlers and locations of burial spots, conveniently have pointed towards Western Norway and other Nordic habitations, such as the British Isles. Most of known Icelandic burials have similarities, both in form and locations, to those Norse areas, as I will show later on. The location under the cape is however an exception location-wise and needs an alternative approach to be fully understood. To understand the location, a deeper study is needed on the matter of cultural backgrounds of the settlers of Iceland, which is a study that unfortunately is often ignored when discussing the Icelandic Viking Age. The settlers, and their followers, were unlikely to have been a unified group that shared worldviews and beliefs. On the contrary, there must have been a large number of different people, with various cultural backgrounds coming from different areas of the “Norse world” in order to make a living in the newly found country, and “cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic” (Bhabha 1994:52).
Many different elements that are currently unknown, or have been ignored, were sure to land in Iceland along with the settlers, elements that could aid in the quest to better understand the Icelandic settlement period and the cultures that Iceland emerged from. By using post-colonial theory, I will look “behind” the “Norse cultures” in order to understand the locale under the cape.

1.2 Research aims and questions
My main goal with this paper is to try to find reasoning behind choice of location of the monument under the cape in Kollafjörður, Iceland. Many possibilities are at hand. To my aid I will look at cosmology and mythology of the Northern European Iron Age along with the overall grave pattern in Iceland and in plausible countries of origin, also topography and usage of landscape will be discussed.

The world view of the Norse is a study of its own, where nothing can be proven or disproven, but gives however glimpses into the minds of people that thrived in the pre-Christian culture. The Norse myths cannot be ignored when seeking reasoning for cultural locations in Iceland and are in fact vital for my quest for a clearer picture of the monument under the cape. My questions therefore are:

- Why is there a (burial) monument located on such remote yet powerful natural site?
- Why would this location be ideal, for whom and in what purpose?

These questions prompt more questions as the quest for reasons for the monuments location incites questions regarding identity and cultural origins. All this has to be carefully and critically approached.

One problem will be relevant throughout the whole essay: the contents of the monument will remain uncertain. I cannot fully state that the monument is in fact a burial mound, since it has not been investigated by archaeological means. On the other hand, the monument has so many qualities of a grave, both visual and location wise, that it is highly likely that it is indeed a grave. In order not to jump to conclusions, I will call it what is surely is, a monument.
I hope this little paper about a small, virtually forgotten, monument in Iceland will raise further questions about the “cultural backgrounds” of the settlers of Iceland and hopefully help future archaeologists and enthusiasts to locate possible cultural sites in the land where the myths and the tales of yore emerged, much like the Norse mythical creature Ýmir, in the gap between ice and fire.

1.3 Methods and theoretical approach

Hábarðr (Óðinn) said:

“Nam ek at mönnum       I learned from men,
þeim inum aldrænum,       those of an older age,
er búa í heimis skógum”   who dwell in the forests of the world.

Þór answered:

Þó gefr þú gott nafn dysjum,   Yet, you give a good name to graves
er þú kallar þær heimis skóga    by calling them forests of the world.

(Hábarðsljóð 45 & 45: my translation).

My methods consist of comparing various material and narratives to each other, seeking out similarities and differences. I would like to think that they in some way feature post-colonial theories and elements of contextual archaeology. My ground point will be the monument in Kollafjörður, in North-Western Iceland. To figure out what the monument and its location mean, I have to compare it with various historic, archaeological and anthropological records. On top of that an analysis of the Old Norse cosmology and mythology is necessary to gain insight into the world view of the settlers.

First of all I will look at the pre-Christian grave pattern in Iceland. Reasons for why things are as they are will be discussed, and most importantly I will look at similarities and differences of the common grave patterns and compare them with the monument. Furthermore, the monument will be viewed in regard to multiple contexts: the landscape that surrounds it, place names, landscapes in possible eras of origin and in comparison to graves abroad. All this will be done in connection to “the Northern European Iron Age mythology”, which includes the sub-arctic cultures in Northern Scandinavia, which unfortunately are often left out of the discussion. Importantly, I will also view the monument from the point of view of the local population who
live near the remote locale and take a brief look on myths and folklore in the Strandir region, in order to gain insight to the area.

Another vital notion that I will use is based on Bjarni Einarsson's theory of an “ecological heritage” (1994). Einarsson has suggested that the settlers of Iceland choose lands depending on their previous knowledge and former residences, seeking out familiar landscapes and acquainted natural resources in order to make adaption in the new land easier.

The combinations of all this will hopefully help me to better understand the reasons for the choice of the locale where the monument is and maybe to gain a little insight into the “subjective inner world of the individual(s)” who made the monument (Meskell 2001:188) by “considering the ways agencies were created” (Barret 2001:161).

1.4 Post-colonial theories.
Post-colonial theory is more of a political statement than a theory. It is about discussions of culture and identity in the modern world. The theory aims to show that the world is not black and white, but an ever-changing mixture of “cultures” and ideas that interact, blend and form new values by everyday basis. During the colonial period cultures were seen as opposites, Europeans met Indians, Africans etc. and both groups were thought to keep their original identity. Post-colonial theory approaches cultures in a different way and sets out from that world see cultures as initially separate and covert entities, wherein the “different” cultures blended, created a hybrid and “Creole cultures” that were neither the one nor the other. Something new was, and always is, established when different cultures meet, a mix, a third space where elements of both or all cultures join in, forming new culture and new identity (Bhabha 1994:37; Gosden 2001:241-243). Post- colonial theory also opens up discussions about cultural dominance and lifts up the point of view of the colonized, the sub groups, or series of people, and any other vital human elements that work in all cultures but do not get the attention they deserve due to the dominant point of view of those who “write the history”. There is always an ongoing negotiation between different groups, be it race, class or gender, and “each group”, or individual for that matter, has more than one identity that constantly negotiates with the other selves (Bhabha 1994:28-45).
By this Bhabha is not denying the existence of different cultures, but showing that cultures cannot be viewed as they simply emerged from nothing. There are always influences to notice and elements to adopt, improve and/or adjust (1994:52-55).

The post-colonial point of view is very usable and much needed when looking at the different cultures that the monument might be inspired by. The notion and the ideas of post-colonial theory are also an important part of my analysis. Not only does it help to bring better understanding to the connection between the various grave materials present in Iceland and in the Norse settlements in Northern Europe, but also aids in my attempt to connect the grave to the complex Nordic mythologies, which are labyrinthine phenomena’ with roots and influences from various groups and lands, and clearly fall under the notion of “series of hybrids”.

1.5 Example of a hybrid and the usage of culture in Iceland
The essay focuses on the Icelandic settlement period and graves, but many good examples of Creole culture and cultural hybrids are found in other archaeological findings from Iceland, which might help in explaining the theories. One might assume that many of the settlers were pagan, many place names, and person names in the saga literature, have the prefix Þór or Frey in them, but both heathen gods Fryer and Þór are believed to have been popular in Iceland (Benediktsson 1974:193). The people that came to Iceland were from areas that already knew about Christianity and other beliefs. The local population in the British Islands was Christian during the Viking Age, and Christian missions had been made from central Europe, among others, to Scandinavia. The “Vikings” did travel a lot and had become acquainted with various cultural forms and religions; they did not only contact the Muslims in the east but had much contact with the Baltic countries and especially the sub-arctic cultures in the north and the Celts in the west (Roesdahl 1998:147).
The picture above shows artefacts that currently are located in the national museum of Iceland. To the far left we see a bronze statue (þjms. 10880) that is 6, 7cm in height and was found at Eyrarland in Northern Iceland. The statue has been interpreted as the thunder god Thor, however it has also been suggested that the statue might, for example, be part of a chess set (Eldjárn 1974:110). Next to the bronze statue we see an artefact that is called a cross (þjms. 6077) by the national museum, but known as the hammer of Thor: this is a pendant that would have been worn on a necklace. It is 5cm long and 3cm wide. Like the bronze statue, its purpose is unknown (Sigurðardóttir 2004:74). Is it a cross or a Thorshammer? Is it both or maybe neither? We do not know, but is highly likely that the cross is all of the above and maybe more. It is something new, something that was created from the cultural mix that was taking place in Iceland in the 11th century.

Fig. 3 Artefacts from the National Museum of Iceland (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands 2004).
Despite the fact that the national museum acknowledges the artefacts’ uncertain interpretations, both artefacts are sold as reproductions by the thousands and are associated with Thor. To imply that these artefacts are connected to Thor is not only beneficial financially but also culturally, since their existence strengthens the image of the pre-Christian culture in Iceland. But that does not mean that they are “pagan” in any way. The “cross-hammer” is a hybrid. These two examples are not the only things in Icelandic history that come from a cultural blend and have been commercialized to show a certain cultural heritage, like I will continue to discuss further on in the essay.

1.6 The living dead: The saga literature
Iceland is rich in literate culture and has the privilege, through its ancient texts, an insight into the country’s earliest days. The sagas tell tales from yore, of heroes, villains and mystical creatures. All description of the Viking Age society was however written down in the 12th and the 13th century in a Christian context and cannot be viewed as fact, due to the time span and the mythological elements; on the other hand sagas can be seen as a reflecting mirror of the 12th and 13th century society (Einarsson 1994:19) as they contain elements of past peoples beliefs. Recent archaeological research has however proven some specific contents in the saga literature to be accurate, but research in Mosfell in Iceland has revealed empty graves and lacks traces of other settings from the saga of the Viking Egill (Egilssaga Skallagrímssonar) (The Mosfell archaeological project 2005).

Relevant here is the mythical content of the sagas. Despite the fact that the sagas were written two or three centuries later than they were supposed to have happened, the superstition and faith in mythical creatures is worth a study of its own. Such stories/beliefs were bound to come to the country with the settlers and should be able to tell a great deal about the people who came to the land. The myths themselves can of course never be validated, but they can however validate the people who told them. The same can be said about the Norse mythology.

The tales and the myths are not only to be found in the saga literature, but also in folklore which has lived with the nation up to current date, even more so than the saga literature, which is a commonly known fact in Iceland.
Íslendingabók (book of the Icelanders) is one of the oldest Icelandic documents preserved; it was written in the 1120’s and describes all major settlers of Iceland. Landnámabók (book of settlements) is thought to have been written at similar time, but oldest copies of the book descend from the 13th and the 14th century. Landnámabók is more detailed than Íslendingabók and describes all settlers and their land claims. The same author, Ari Þorgilsson “the wise”, is thought to have written both books (Tómasson 2006: 64-81). The book of the Icelanders (Íslendingabók) and the book of the settlement (Landnámabók), can be viewed as proto-historic, whereas the “line of argument” might be somewhat accurate, but exaggerated to benefit chieftains and landowners in 13th century. Some settlers in the book have great ancestry and big land claims, while others are hardly mentioned and have little or no credibility. The books are clearly ownership documents and should be approached critically. The book of the settlement has even been described as a “Doomsday book” written by high rank clans in the country to legitimize their rights to lands and privileges (Rafnsson 1974 in Einarsson 1994:19). Much like the saga literature, the settlements books also should be viewed as a product of the 12th century’s society (Benediktsson 1974:163).

My use of the written sources will be limited; I will not use them as historical documents, rather view them as a stepping-stone to get some idea of the settlers’ beliefs and ideas about the world. My focus will mainly be on archaeology and locations.

2. Chapter - Iceland in the Viking Age

2.1 Graves from Viking Age Iceland.
It is a wide believed “fact” that colonization took place between the years 870 – 930, and that the highest concentration occurred in the years 890-910. At the same time Vikings were chased from Dublin (902) and had major problems in Scotland and the Scottish islands. In Norway, Haraldr Hárfagri (Harald Fair-haired) conquered his opponents in western Norway and declared himself king of the country ca 885. Due to those factors, and others, Norwegians and other Nordic people fled to Iceland (Benediktsson 1974:160; Kuml og haugef 2000:23).
supported to a certain degree in the Icelandic archaeological record, where the majority of findings can be traced to that period and resemble the late Nordic Iron Age (Kuml og haugfé 2000:484-486).

The majority of the settlers are believed to have been pagan, most known graves point to that direction. A dispute has risen among Icelandic archaeologists regarding the matter, since some areas in Iceland are virtually empty of pre-Christian graves. Some archaeologists have suggested that those “poor” areas were inhabited by Christians from the beginning (see Auðardóttir 1989 & Einarsson 1994:48-50) while others think that these grave poor findings have other explanations.

What we do know is that the country was at least inhabited in the 10th century and onwards and a great number of the settlers were pagan. They were bound to be buried somewhere and there are probably a few tens of thousands of pre-Christian graves to be located in the country (Kuml og haugfé 2000:256). Currently there are ca 170 known pre-Christian burial sites in Iceland containing approximately 320 graves (Pétursdóttir 2009:22; Friðriksson & Vésteinsson 2011:53; Einarsson 1994:46). In the year 1967 the number was 312 graves on 151 locations (Eldjárn 1974:133). Approximately 70% of all known pre-Christian burial sites have been discovered by accident (Kuml og haugfé 2000:260).
2.2 Distribution, locations, form, finds and orientation

The greatest distribution is in northern and southern parts of the island, with the greatest concentration in Rangárvallasýsla and Árnessýsla in the south (N=17 & N=28) and Eyjafjarðarsýsla in the north (the left part of N=50) (Vésteinsson 2011:42; Einarsson 1994:46). The west fjord area is poorest of all regions in pre-Christian burials, where only seven locations have been registered so far, and only one confirmed in the region of Strandir, which is the region where the isolated monument lies.

Icelandic pre-Christian graves are usually divided into two types. The first type is found near farms, yet out of sight from the houses, or at least out of the home field. This location is believed to be from the earliest period in the country’s history. The second type, which is believed to be younger than the previous, is found further away from the homestead, on or near boarders of crossing farms, or on some other kind of border zones (rivers etc.). It seems as though pagans avoided having burials on their home fields, which might be explained by
economic factors. The usual spot was just few hundred meters from the house, on a dry bank, small hill or ridge, low cape, on gravel fields or even on small flat peninsulas on the bank of the sea near to the houses. There are of course exceptions: graves have been located far away from any known settlement, but are believed to have belonged to farms that ceased to exist long time ago or are simply graves of unfortunate people who died in the wilderness and were buried on the spot. The pre-Christian graves are nearly always located near routes and do then lie “alongside the roads” (Friðriksson 2009:19-22; Friðriksson & Vésteinsson 2011:52; Kuml og haugfé 2000: 264-266).

Pre-Christian Icelandic graves tend to be shallow and are often hard to see, and it is currently unknown if the burials were visible from the routes. However, a recent discovery in NE Iceland has shown that graves there did have a wooden superstructure which would have guaranteed visibility (Friðriksson & Vésteinsson 2011:52).

The average depth is 50-100 cm, they never exceed 1 m in height, and they are never shorter than 150 cm and never more than 2 m in length unless they also contain a horse or a boat. Their form varies from being round, quadrangular or oblong; usually there are stones around the graves or on them1. The majority of the graves are simple, not unlike today’s graves. Mounds have been found, but big mounds like those in Norway, Sweden and Denmark are unknown, with no megalithic burials present anywhere on Iceland (Kuml og haugfé 2000:267-271).

Icelandic burials can be divided into three categories depending on quantity: a) single burials, of which there are 97 b) smaller clusters, of which there are approximately 60, comprising ca 2-5 individuals per grave filed c) large clusters containing 6-13 individuals per grave field, found on 7 locations (Friðriksson 2009: 12-22).

Boat graves are extremely rare and usually only fragments of boats are discovered. One example of a boat find was at Káldárhöfði, where the two individuals that were buried with the

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1 Criminals that were executed in Iceland were always buried under a pile of rocks throughout history; people even threw rocks on the criminal graves when passing by. This was done to keep the dead in its grave (Kuml og haugfé 2000:272).
boat had not been put in the boat, but the small boat was buried at the feet of the bodies. Another 6m long boat was found in Vatnsdalur in the west fjord peninsula containing 7 individuals and a dog, the boat oriented east/west (Kuml og haugfé 2000: 87-91 & 115-117).

Horses in graves were common, but 115 graves in the country did contain horses, while only 21 dogs have been identified. Common grave goods are spear-heads, knives, beads and saddles (Pétursdóttir 2009:26).

In Iceland there seems to be no precise rule of the orientation of graves, however there is a tendency to make the head point to the west or the south. Landscape might have something to do with it, whereas graves often lie according to valleys, mountains etc. as has been suggested by Norwegian archaeologist A.W. Brøgger (1930:246). No cremations have been discovered, which is also the case in the Faeroes and Greenland (Kuml og haugfé 2000:286-291).

2.3 On locations
It has been suggested that burial mounds (haugr) along with family cemeteries on the farms, and especially on the manors (Óðal) in the Iron Age, served as a legitimate of the property rights of certain families over the lands. An unbroken chain of family graves would strengthen that claim. This later manifested in the erections of rune stones in Sweden, where family tides were written in concrete form on the rune stones: similar thought may have been behind the book of the settlement in Iceland (Zachrisson 1994:226-235).

It has also been suggested by Mikael Jakobsson that that individuals were, through burials, “transformed into a symbols of the community” (1997:80). By that Jakobsson means that graves, especially single graves, represented the community and served as a confirmation of its belongings, especially on farms that were “stressed” (1997:80-94).

2.4 Regional difference
There are two main explanations regarding the regional difference in Icelandic grave distribution: According to Kuml og haugfé “the difference is primarily an effect of discovery” and claims that where erosion has hit hardest, along with road making in areas where pagan graves are common, the graves have naturally appeared (Vésteinsson 2011:41; Kuml og haugfé
Bjarni Einarsson approaches the matter differently and suggests that pagan burials were fewer in the areas where few or almost no pre-Christian graves have been found, and implies that different people might have inhabited areas with less pagan graves. Einarsson says that “erosion occurs sporadically all over Iceland” and takes the Reykjanes peninsula in SW Iceland as an example of a place with much erosion yet virtually no grave findings, and points out that western Iceland is as eroded as Northern Iceland, yet there exists a great difference in findings (Einarsson:1994:41-67).

2.5 Discussion
From my research, I lean towards Eldjárn’s explanation on regional difference, that some areas are richer in graves than others is simply because of “an effect of discovery”. Pagan graves of similar character have been located all over the country, fewer in some parts, but are present everywhere none the less. The few graves discovered in the west fjord area might simply be explained by Eldjárns words, that “most graves are hardly visible at all and probably have been locked down under cultivated lands, houses and roads for a long time to come” (Eldjár 1974:133). Also, the west fjord coastline is not that eroded, it is the highland and the mountains that have suffered the most. Subsequently the majority of settled areas are on the coastline. The Reykjanes peninsula is, however, virtually covered in lava and ashes. An alternative explanation could be that we simply do not know where to look, and that further research is needed on the matter of locations, especially in the “poor areas”.

In Iceland no big burial mounds exist, but cemeteries on or near the farms are however common. It is highly likely that they served as proof of property ownership. Maybe there was no need for big mounds in Iceland, smaller mounds and relatively flat graves may have been considered enough. It has been suggested that the graves found near the farms are older than the graves found further away: those who are on the borders (Friðriksson & Vésteinsson 2011:52). This might be explained by that the original settlers/settlements were only in need of confirming the settlements by graves on the manors, by establishing the burials there. Later on however, conflicts may have arisen in the country on the issue of landownership. The population in the country may have increased and the sagas tell of a violent society and conflicts between various groups. That may have resulted in the need of further attempts in
legislations of property rights. By this time through the erections of mounds (haugr) on the borders of the settlements, or on the borders of what was left of the original settlements.

If that was the case, the monument under the cape in Kollafjörður may have been erected due to unstable ownership status. The grave could have served as a confirmation of ownership of land on the borders of the settlement. That border was however not necessarily the border of the “original settlement” which might have decreased through the years.

That does however not fully explain the choice of the locale.

3. Chapter - The Nordic connections

3.1. The Ecological heritage
Theories of ecological heritage are useful in my attempt to point out the possible origin of the monument builders/locale users. I will not discuss it in great detail but instead I will discuss the main aspects. The theory of ecological heritage has been suggested in Iceland by Bjarni Einarsson. Einarsson combines theories from natural science, social science, anthropology and archaeology in his quest for answers. He tries to find the root of how people/cultures settle and adapt in new places. In fact, it is rather simple: Human beings are natural creatures and do, like other beings, live in nature. Nature can be divided to different eco systems, where people live and thrive. But of course all eco systems are not the same and therefore limit human possibilities of expansion but also offer opportunities for people to evolve. This evolution is however bounded to people’s earlier experiences and traditions, that is, people tend to chose and evolve from something familiar (Boas 1896 in Moran 1982 &Kroeber 1939 in Einarsson 1994:21-22).

A crucial factor for the ecological theories is adaption, which is “the ability of an organism to survive and reproduce itself in a particular environment” (Kirch 1980 in Einarsson 1994:22), and adaptability, which is “the capacity of the system to adjust. Adaptability depends on the ability of the system to incorporate new information. The more behavioural variability that is
tolerated, the more probable it is that new ideas will be harmonized with existing values and thus will be found to be acceptable” (Butzer 1982 in Einarsson 1994:23).

When humans try to adapt to a new circumstances they are likely to seek out familiar circumstances to make the adaption easier. When arriving in a new land the settlers would probably “read the landscape” and make decisions on where it would be best to settle in relation to former experience and culture. If one was used to flat grassy lowland in the old country, he/she would probably want to live in similar circumstances in the new country. When the settlers arrived in Iceland they immediately started their adaption. Upon arrival the settlers would chose places that they were familiar with from their home countries to make the adaption easier, as would they have some knowledge of how to make as good living as possible in a strange country that had resembling to their previous cultural settings (Einarsson 1994:21-24).

By going from those assumptions, Einarsson has looked at several factors of Viking Age Iceland and Viking Age Norway. By studying the ecology of the different countries and the archaeology, he came to the conclusion that large parts of Iceland, especially Northern Iceland, were indeed settled by Norwegians, but not from Southwest Norway as usually stated but from Northern Norway; Troms and Nordland. By looking at geographical and environmental data he came to the conclusion that the topography, fauna, landscape, climate and “visual similarities” from Nordland and Troms in Norway are strikingly similar to Northern Iceland. These similarities would attract people from Northern Norway who most likely would make Northern Iceland their prime choice when settling the new country (Einarsson 1994:30-39).

While these theories are reasonable and believable, there is however one catch. Einarsson puts out the proposition that the settlers could, on arrival, “freely choose” a suitable place to live on. This might have been actual for the very first settlers, but not for latecomers, unless they gradually moved to areas that were familiar. There is even a possibility that Iceland had been known long before the actual settlement and been used as a fishing outpost, as is hinted in the Icelandic family saga Laxdæla (1969:4).
3.2. Nordic grave patterns

3.2.1 (Northern) Norway
Inhumation graves are the primary grave form found in Northern Norway from the Iron Age (Almgren 1904:333; Simonsen 1959:9; Sjövold 1974:189). Graves containing boats, rich grave goods and monumental structures decline the further north one goes along with mounds and cremation graves. Inhumations however increase and so do isolated graves (Einarsson 1994:60-61; Holm-Olsen 1988:5). Northern Norwegian graves are often found near the homesteads, have average depth of 50cm and are sometimes “surrounded or covered with stones” and have “no strict rule of orientation” (Sjövold 1974:188). Graves are generally found on bigger grave fields, sometimes as single graves or as two/three graves together, often on “beautiful locations” (Munch 1977:23). This grave form is however found in more places than Northern Norway. In fact the rule of thumb in whole Scandinavia is that graves are very often located near the farms, which implies that the dead were “present” in everyday life of the living. Orientation varies in the whole Nordic area and graves are often found in connection with roads and routes (Steinsland 2009:375-378; Kuml og haugfé 2000: 266-267). The difference between Northern Norway and Western and Southern Norway is the decreased numbers of: big burial mounds, larger boat graves and cremations (Simonsen 1959:9; Sjövold 1974:189).

In Finnmark, several findings from the Late Viking Age (late 9th and 10th century) such as flat graves, small burial mounds and silver hoards of a Norse character have been located. One of the richest female graves in Norway was found in Vadsö parish in Finnmark, containing a Borre style ornaments (Sjövold 1974:175-180). The discovery of Norse Viking Age findings in Finnmark along the coastline from Vardö to Karlebotn shows that Finnmark was a part of the Norse expansion in the Viking Age. On the other hand, findings from the area are few, due to little research, and it is currently unknown if a permanent settlement had taken place under the Viking Age (Sjövold 1974:340-354).

3.2.2. The British Islands
The pattern from the Viking Age Norse graves in the British Islands has strong similarities to Iceland and parts of Norway. Majority of known Norse graves in the British Isles are shallow inhumations, sometimes covered or surrounded by small rocks, boat graves exist along with
small mounds, but they are not common. The graves tend to be oval or rectangular. Cremation graves can be counted with one hand. The graves tend to orient north to south, but that is in no way the rule, and many graves point east/west. Graves containing horses and dogs are known. In those cases the horse is always placed by the feet of the individual in the grave, which is also the case in Norway and Iceland. Many graves contain simple grave gifts, such as a single sword and combs. In fact this description of Norse graves in the Scottish Islands can easily been imported to Norway, and especially fit description in Rogaland and Söndhördland in Vestfold (Brøgger 1930: 163-241).

3.2.3. Sámi graves
In general there are three types of pre-Christian Sámi graves. There are simple “earth graves” where the deceased was interred in a “pit” in the ground, never extending beyond 1m in depth, and left unmarked except for few stones that were put on top for protection against predators. The second types are “stone graves” which like the name implies are made of stones. Flat stones were laid down and around the body, forming a kind of coffin, these were either on the ground or buried under the earth. The third types are “cave graves” where natural caves and crevices were used as a final resting place. In all types, bodies were sometimes put in wooden caskets or hallow trees. On the border zones between Sámi and “Scandinavians” there are examples of Sámi cremations that were found under stone-mounds in mid-Sweden, and even in earth-mounds during the late Viking period. Flat earth graves were however conventional and they tend to be on dry sand or stone banks or ridges, even on small hills, often in connection to water. The graves were sometimes “decorated” with stones that were put around the graves and flat stones put on top, they are however not very visible in modern times (Storli 1988:19; Schanche 2000:113-123; Zachrisson 1995:228-229). The Sámi in the east were known to build small “sheds” of wood over their graves, where an opening was left at the top so the soul could move freely from the grave (Holmberg 1987:20).

Location of Sámi graves varies depending on region, as so much more in the Sámi culture. Despite the variety, graves are commonly found in environment similar to the Sejti stones (holy stones and cliffs that the Sámi worshiped) and other sacred locations: In locales that stand out against the landscape, that can even be describes as “dramatic”. Graves are seldom found on
fertile grounds and tend to be on locations that are rich in stones and rocks and are commonly in “dry airy rooms”. Graves are not often found in relation to “holy places but there are examples of burials near a Sejtí site, and even in them” (Schanche 2000:282-285). Holmberg even stated that people of extraordinary character might have been buried at the Sejtí sites, which would apply to great hunters and leaders, but it was not common and was certainly the exception (1987:20). In few cases, graves were made under big rocks and cliffs and even below holy mountains (Schanche 2000:14).

Sámi graves tend to orient east/west, the head to the west and the feet to the east and some graves contain grave gifts, such as food, weapons, combs and even dogs. Because of the rural lifestyles of the Sámi, graves might be found here and there spread over the lands, there do however exist cemeteries that probably belonged to families or clans of some sort. According to legends a Sámi wanted to be buried in his birth place (Holmberg 1987:20-21) which might have to do with the belief in the protecting spirits.

3.3. Norsemen and Sámi
In Norway, and Sweden for that matter, the “Germanic” peoples had been living side by side by the “sub-arctic” cultures for centuries. It is clear that interactions were bound to happen again and again. During the Iron Age it is believed that the Sámi settlement stretched from south-eastern Norway to the Mälar Valley in Sweden to the east, and up north (Zachrisson 1995:228). The Sámi were not only hunters and reindeer herders but some of them lived as farmers and/or fishermen in harmony with the Norse population, which gives hints to a mixed society. Historia Norvegia mentions that Hálogaland in Norway was one of these mixed areas where both groups lived together. Overall it is hard to say which areas were mixed and which were not, because the territories never had sharp borders (Mundal 1996:99-104; Zachrisson 1995:229).
This mixture of the cultures could be beneficial for both groups. Up in Northern Norway it is believed that the “Norse” started to migrate in the years 200-300 AD, where they quickly developed “mixed economics”, living as farmers but adapting Sámi ways of living on the side, such as whaling and seal-hunting. There are also examples of “Norse” residences’ deep inland in Finnmark, one of the Sámi strongholds (Simonsen 1968:16-17). Like the name Finnmark implies, it is the territory (forests) of the Finns. Sámi were often called for Finns in various resources; there is example of the word “Finni” in Heimskringla (1911:56), and the name “finnr” was also used by authors like Tacitus and Jordanes among others (Mundal 1996:99-113).

This infusion and exchange of ideas is well seen in the grave material from the border zones in the Viking Age. As mentioned earlier there are examples of Sámi graves in mid-Sweden that clearly have Norse structure, but the table turns in Northern Norway where “Germanic” graves where clearly inspired by the Sámi, and we might even speak of a “new grave form”. In Norway, the further north one goes, big Norse burial mounds decay in numbers and flat graves
become more common (Holm-Olsen 1988:5). In Finnmark a grave was found in under a “very large stone”, containing a bronze brooch and a silver ring of a Norse character, the grave has been estimated to the 10th century (Sjövold 1972:177). In Sør-Kvaløy in Northern Norway there are few “mixed graves”. One example is a flat grave, containing a young man, containing eight “Norwegian” artefacts and five “Sámi” artefacts. Moreover the grave was placed under a steady earth bound rock. More similar examples are found in the so called “border zones” between the Sámi and the Norse (Simonsen 1959:22-24). Blood blending of the populations has been suggested, which was not unlikely to take place. It might even be hard to determine which group was “Norse” and which was not. It has also been suggested, that originally there might have been one population that over time separated due to adaption of different economics, one “half” being inspired of the southern agricultural economics, while the other kept on living as their forefathers had done (Odner 1983:62). In Snorri Sturluson’s Heimkringla intermarriage between a Sámi princess, Snæfríðr, and King Harald Hárfagri is described (1911:56-57). The story may well be a mythical declaration on Norse kingship of every folk group in Norway.

3.4. Discussion
The similarities in grave customs between Iceland, Northern Norway and the British Isles are striking; all areas are characterized with simple graves found in clusters, or as single graves. No cremations are found in Iceland and only few from the same period in other west-Norse settlements.

Einarsson came to the conclusion that large parts of Iceland were settled from Northern Norway and rejects the former beliefs that the majority of the settlers came from Southwestern Norway. He admits, though, that the same grave pattern is to be found in the British Isles, which were occupied by “Vikings”. He adds that many things in Iceland, other than graves and topography, were similar to Northern Norway, such as social structure, housing, and environment amongst other, pointing to a Northern Norwegian heritage. Furthermore, he suggests that Sámi cultural influences might have been brought to country with the north Norsemen, such as economical structure and grave forms (Einarsson 1994:63-119).
Similarities are to be found over such a broad area that is hard to pinpoint any exact origin of the settlers based on the grave material. It is however interesting that the similarities increase the further north one goes in Norway or compares the grave forms with the pattern in the British Island. Nevertheless, the only thing that seems clear is that majority of the settlers were of a Norse origin, as we can see from both the archaeological findings and the earliest written documents: the oldest written sources being highly similar to Old-Norwegian, if not identical. Nationalities of the population might however have been variable, and maybe “second class” citizens did get different burials.

Many scholars, and others, have pointed out the Celtic heritage that accompanied the settlement of Iceland, but fewer have claimed a more northern influence that might have shaped Icelandic culture, namely the Sámi cultures from the sub-arctic. Few articles, essays and one book have been written on the matter. Hermann Pálsson (1997) wrote detailed work on Sámi cultural influences based on the Old Norse written sources along with the family sagas. Like theories on a major Celtic settlement before the 800’s, the Sámi theories have been ruled out as “mere speculations with no scientific background” by Icelandic archaeologists (Kuml og haugfé 2000:37). While it is logical to point out that there is no physical evidence of Sámi present in Iceland, one cannot simply look away from all hints in the literature, which seems to be used at will when convenient, but correspondently ignored because of unreliability when inopportune. I use the word “hints” because there are in fact many hints of a both “Sámi origin” of several settlers and many cultural phenomena can be connected with the sub-arctic cultures. There are no sources that state any settler was a Sámi, but few were “half trolls” or of a son of a “half troll” and many named settlers and persons in the sagas did come from the “border areas” in Norway. In fact, there is a tendency in all Icelandic medieval literature to confuse Sámi with trolls, giants and even elves, which really can put the mythology into perspective, but that is an issue for another paper (Pálsson 1997:16-23; Mundal 1996:105-111).

Mixed graves and mixed economics tell a lot about the interactions between the Norse and the Sámi, and the Sámi burials under mountains and large rocks are interesting, along with the Norse characteristic graves that are found under similar circumstances. Another matter of
interest is the wooden sheds that sometimes were built over Sámi graves, so the soul could live there and later on fly to the realm of the dead. That tradition reminds us of the graves found in NE Iceland that had “wooden superstructure which would have guaranteed visibility” (Friðriksson & Vésteinsson 2011:52). May the idea behind the structures be the same?

The Sámi ideas of burials in dramatic landscape may well have been shared by the Norse, especially in Northern Norway. This indicates that the choice of locale for the monument under the cape in Iceland may have been inspired by a phenomenon that was known in Northern Norway: that the locale was seen as holy.

There are however other similarities between the different cultures to be found, as I will show in next chapter.

4. Chapter - Myths of the North

4.1. Introduction
In this chapter I am going to take a look at the mythology of Western Scandinavia. My approach to the myths will be comparisons of what is known today about the “Old Norse” faith, the Sámi myths and Icelandic folklore. Surprisingly there are striking similarities to be found. I will go from the assumption that most people do know the main aspects of the Norse myths, so I will not discuss them in detail. I will set out from the Sámi myths and work the others from them.

It is impossible to get a clear picture of how people of the past viewed the world. The cosmology of the Iron Age Scandinavians probably varied from time to time and by region. However we do have fragments of their thinking via archaeology and the written sources, which can give us certain ideas about how things were looked upon. It is even questionable to consider different groups of people living thousand years ago as Sámi, Norwegians or Icelandic, but one has to work with what is at hand. It is also impossible to describe a whole belief system in just a few pages, so I have limited myself to what I think is relevant for this paper.
4.2. Sámi: land and people.
The Sámi people live in Northern Scandinavia, Northern Finland and Northwest Russia. Their estimated population counts ca. 100,000 souls and they have a rich history that dates back to the birth of Jesus Christ. Their former belief system can be viewed as “nature worship” or as beliefs in the forces of nature. Their religion also includes beliefs in souls and spirits (Mulk 1994:122).

The Sámi were Christianized much later than the rest of the Nordic population. The northern Sámi, who were not intergraded with the Scandinavian population, held on to their customs for a long time. There were several attempts made to convert them from the 11th century and onwards, but the converting did not get serious until 1609 when the Norwegian Sámi were forbidden to act upon their beliefs, which resulted in secrecy of the religious culture. Similar formations were done in Sweden in the 17th century. Several persons in the 17th century and onwards documented what they saw and thought of the Sámi belief system with very variable outcomes, depending on their intentions (Holmberg 1987:12-13; Pentikäinen 1996:8-10; Price 2002:239-241).

The majority of the documentation came from missionaries who were not in Sámi regions to document their customs, but to Christianize them. It seems clear that many of the missionaries looked down on the Sámi, especially their “primitive” beliefs. Unfortunately, most of what was documented, and is the basis for today understandings of the Sámi belief system, comes from those “dark ages” of Scandinavia and has to be carefully approached due to the prejudiced nature of the primary sources.

4.3. Shamanism
A big part of the Sámi belief system would be classified as Shamanism. Shamanism is not a religion in the strictest meaning of the word, but can be viewed as a set of faiths and beliefs, or as a way to look at the world. In the centre is the Shaman himself (Noaidde) who almost always is male. Shamanism includes the belief in the existence of a set of souls; each individual has more than one soul. One of these souls was called the “free soul”, a soul that lived forever (Holmberg 1987:19; Schanche 2000:254). This “undying” soul could be connected through
dreams, trance and by other means. Through the “free soul” the shaman could journey to other worlds as some kind of an animal, fish, snake, a bird etc. These other worlds could be more than one, and were on different levels, both below and above. To gain access to these worlds the Shaman had to use certain techniques that only he knew. These techniques could include humming and singing (Joiking) while wearing certain outfits, such as ritual dresses and/or masks and most important of all a shamanic drum, without it, a shaman really would not be a shaman. To the Shamans aid he had spirits and most importantly his own helping/protecting spirit (sueje) that guided him to other levels of existence. Shaman could be a healer, fortune teller, spiritual leader, illusionist, singer, poet, politician, murderer (through the spirits), exorcist, communicator with various spirits, and a folklore expert. This list is of course not nearly full and shamans were thought to contain much more qualities (Pentikäinen 1996:10-11; Holmberg 1987:19-20; Price 2002:249-275; Schanche 2000:254).

Aspects of the “Old Norse faith” have also been classified as form of shamanism (see: Price 2002). In Völuspá, among others, several spiritual worlds are described, that are inhabited by various forces and deities. According to Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla, many gods knew the rituals of seið, which has similarities to shamanism. Originally only the Vanir knew how to perform seið rituals, but taught it to the Æsir (Vanir and Æsir being the two divine god families). Æsir on the other hand found seið to be unmanly and the rituals were taught to women. Despite that, Óðinn, the chief god of the Norse faith, knew how to perform seið, and was able to travel to other worlds as an fish, snake or any other kind of animal, while his body lay as it was dead, also Óðinn fulfils all the shamanic qualities that were described earlier (1911:7-8). In the sagas and the Eddic poems we can find several mentions of seið, performed by women, men and occasionally by Óðinn himself (see: Lokasenna & Snorra Edda). The Icelandic literature clearly states that women, who performed seið, were considered somewhat honourable, while seið performing men were seen as less honourable. Good examples of this are found in the saga of Eric the Red (Eiriks saga rauða 1987:523-524), where the sorcerer Þorbjörg travels between farms, enjoying her status, while in other sagas the manly shamans were looked down upon and seemed not to enjoy any civil rights at all, at least there are two examples of where shamans were killed, without any consequences to the killers (Gísla Saga Súrsonnar 1969:239-
The only big differences between Norse and Sámi shamanism seems to be the role of the genders.

Interestingly enough, tales of protecting spirits, which could be connected through dreams, is known phenomena in Icelandic folklore (Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri 1951:170).

4.4. Deities and nature worship
All Sámi gods had their own specific role in the cosmos. Most of them can be connected to nature in some way. Tiermes or Hora-Galles was a hammer bearing thunder god who also had the rainbow as his symbol. He protected the people and the livestock, and was often called upon to smite enemies and to protect the reindeer heard from his thundering rage, he also provided rain. He was sometimes companied with a dog and slaves/servants, which in some tales are children (Holmberg 1987:51-61; Price 2002:242; Schance 2000:260-269). There were of course many other supernatural deities, such as a wind god, sea god, and a god of the hunt, goddesses of fertility and an underground death goddess: the list is endless. The Sámi believed in various range of gods and supernatural beings, and in infinity of spirits (Price 2001:241-243). The deities from the spirit world were similar if not the same as the forces of nature; the spirits and many gods lived in nature and in the landscape, and therefore Sámi “religion” is without a doubt in principia Nature worship (Mulk 1994:122).

The same can be said about the Norse faith, where many gods are connected to various forces of nature and too animals. Needless to say, the god Tiermes is almost identical with the Norse god Thor, who fights evil with his hammer, accompanied by two children (Snorres Edda 1997:51-60).

4.5. Sacred Locales
The Sámi gods lived in the natural forces and the spirits lived in the landscape. This resulted in, or is the result of, a worship of natural sites and locales. The Sámi worshiped lakes, springs, trees, boulders, the wind and entire mountains where seen as holy, along with cliffs, rock-formations and rocks. Everything had life within. Some cult places were locales for clans and groups of people whilst others were “inter-regional” for travellers (nomads), serving as holy grounds for the wandering hunters near or on the routes (Mulk 1994:122-127).
The “Old Norse faith” also includes faith in natural locales, such as grooves, mountains and lakes, but it seems that many aspects of the Norse cult had been moved inside buildings during the late Iron Age, as is seen in the cult-halls that have been discovered in Lejre in Denmark, Gamla Uppsala and Uppåkra in Sweden and Lofoten in Norway (Steinsland 2007:294).

In Icelandic folklore many natural locales such as lakes, mountains, hills, waterfalls, rock-formations and even the air were thought to contain supernatural beings, a heritage that still is alive today (Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri 1938:3-98).

4.6. Holy Rocks
The Sámi whom lived in the mountains, had their holy stones there, and those who lived on fishing had sacred stones on the beaches of the fjords and the lakes. Usually holy stones, or Sejti, were placed near waterfalls, on small islets, on peninsulas and at the basis of mountains endings. These stones were natural, and sometimes transported and piled up, or were single rock/rocks and cliffs, in various forms and sizes. They have been described as “ugly, gray or black and were marked from encroachment of water and winds”. The holiest ones were usually grounded by nature. Large rocks that had similarities to human forms were considered of bigger importance than other smaller rocks. These rocks were usually of an “outstanding character” and stood out of the surrounding landscape. The ground around these rocks was also considered holy (passé). These holy locales were sometime fenced by piled up rocks, but were more than often marked out by nature itself with a natural “fence” of some kind. If the sejtis were near a mountain, the mountain was also considered holy, or a holy mountain (passé vare). When approaching a Sejti, it had to be done with care and respect, all noise and disruption was forbidden, in order not to disturb any spirits. It was forbidden to sleep on the holy grounds that surrounded a Setji, and if mistreated, it would result in severe danger for the “actor”. Offerings were made to the Sejti, in the form of an animal slaughter; which might be a bear, reindeer or even fish. Piles of reindeer horns have been located near a Sejti and were probably the result of hundreds of years of sacrifices. After a sacrifice the Sejtis’ were smeared with blood and fat of the offered animals. There are even indications that the Sámi thought that spirits, or a spirit, lived inside each Sejti, which could be a spirit of any kind or spirit of passed relatives. The Sejti spirit could and would personify him when needed and appeared to

Fig. 6 Sámi sacrificial site in Alta, Norway (Sámediggi-Sametinget n.d.).

Here, a clear difference from the Norse traditions is to be seen, whereas it has not been documented that Norse people worshiped rock-formations, but that does not necessarily mean that such faith did not exist. In Grágás, an Icelandic law book from the 1200’s, the usages of stones in magical purpose is forbidden (1997:19).

Both Icelandic and Norwegian folklore tell of large rock-formations that once were giants or trolls, and that elves (Huldufólk, Huldrar) lived inside various forms and sizes of rocks and cliffs. If these residences were disturbed, it would result in revenge (Bergh 1980:122-173; Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og æfintýri 1862:1-4).

4.7. Holy Mountains
Some Sámi thought that the dead would live on inside Holy Mountains (passé-vare), or mountains of the dead. After a person died, it was believed that the soul literally moved inside a holy mountain. These mountain dwellers could be the ancestors, or spirits, that occupied hills and mountains. The hill spirits protected the living, and it was considered an honour to be able to “move” into the mountain of his/hers protecting spirit after passing away. These protecting spirits of the mountains could be inherited by sons and daughters, bought and owned, or given away via sacrifices. Similar tales about spirits in the mountains are that inside these holy mountains lived creatures that were very similar to humans, only better. They had the same means of living, but had more and better food, were richer, and families in each
mountain could go and visit families in other mountains. These creatures could even aid the living by giving gifts or some kind of help when needed. The Shaman could associate with these mountain spirits. He could feast with them, make conversations, get advice from them, dance, and even have sexual relations with them (Bradley 2000:9; Holmberg 1987:25-27; Price 2002:244-245).

Many mountains in the whole Nordic region have names of Norse gods as a prefix, and might have been considered holy (Vikstrand 2004:318). It has been suggested that the so called *hill forts*, found in Scandinavia, were made in a ritual purpose, fencing holy sites on sacred hills and mountains in the early-mid Scandinavian Iron Age (Carlsson 2005:176). There is however no indications that spirits were thought to live in these holy mountains, but that is a possibility that unfortunately cannot be proven.

The Icelandic saga literature speaks of holy mountains and that people would “die into mountains” (move into them in death). In *Landnámabók* (1986:125), the settler Þórólfr Mostraskegg is said to have believed in the holiness of a small mountain in his settlement, *Helgafell* (Holy-fell). The mountain was so holy that it was forbidden to “look at it unwashed” and nothing was to be killed on the mountain, neither humans nor animals. Þórólfr believed, that in his death, he would move inside the mountain, and all his family. The story is repeated in *Eyrbyggjasaga* (1969:10). One of the most famous settlers, Auður Djúpúðga, was, according to *Landnámabók*, a Christian woman who settled large parts of Western Iceland and practiced her Christianity on hills near her farm, which she called *Krosshólar* (Cross-hills). After her death, her heathen followers “took over” the hills, made it into a pagan sacrificial site and believed that they would “die inside the hills” (Landnáma 1986:139-140). Another similar tale exists from *Bjarnafjörður* in *Strandir* County: A man called Svanr (Swan), a magician from the settlement period disappeared during a fishing tour. His body was never found but people saw him walking into a mountain nearby called *Kaldbakshorn* (Njáls Saga 1969:33).

The Icelandic folklore contains endless tales of creatures living inside hills and mountains, those creatures, usually called *Huldufólk*, (hidden- people) had variable roles. Sometimes they were friendly and sometimes not. They would appear if they, or ordinary people, needed help, and
many tales say of interactions between humans and the *Huldufólk*. Their residences were nicer than the human dwellings and humans could sometimes visit their glorious houses inside the hills and the rocks. There they would feast with them, talk to them and even have sexual relations with them (Íslenzkar þjóðsögur 1951:3-63).

4.8. Other tales
The dead could return to the living during mid-winter, according to Sámi folklore. During that dangerous time, everyone had to be quiet, especially children, in order not to attract the souls of the dead. Sometimes water and food was left out for the ghosts, and women would carry food to the outhouses as offerings for the roaming spirits (Holmberg 1987:24-25. Price 2002: 246).

In Icelandic folklore the hidden people would move either on Christmas or New Years Eve. At the same time they would visit human residences, while the people were at church, and kill whoever witnessed their Christmas feasting inside the human houses. There are even examples of Icelandic housewife’s who walked around their houses on New years eve, while reading up a little welcome poetry for the hidden people and leaving food for them (Íslenzkar þjóðsögur 1951:48-60).

Trolls were also dangerous during Christmas time in Iceland, they would come to the farms either to kill people or kidnap girls. The infamous *jólasveinar* (Yule lads) were also annual Christmas creatures, which robbed food, among other things, even children (Íslenzkar þjóðsögur 1862:218-222).

4.9. Discussion
The similarities of the myths are clear and really show that “cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic” (Bhabha 1994:52). Many old elements that were forgotten by some groups may have been kept alive by other groups. Some myths may be unique, but it is surprising how many aspects of the Sámi beliefs are almost identical to Icelandic folklore, especially when considering the length of time these cultures were separated for. The questions should not evolve around who borrowed from whom, but rather why the tales are so similar. From a personal perspective, I think this shows that the Sámi myths cannot be left out
when discussing the “Old Norse faith”, because it seems, the collective memories of the respective groups were highly similar. These memories were brought to Iceland, by the settlers, and lived on through narratives and myths, aided by the landscape in Iceland which helped the collective memory to survive through the natural similarities of the new and the old country.

Due to the closeness of the cultures in ancient times, it is impossible to determine which culture influenced which, but both were sure to contribute to each other through cultural diffusion. Perhaps it is questionable to discuss the matter in terms of “different groups”. Many aspects of the “Norse faith” might even been traced to the Bronze Age archaeologically when believe in “Norse gods” was not present:

![Fig. 7 “Solvognen” An artefact found in Trundholm Mose, Denmark. The wagon is from the older Bronze Age ca 1400 BC. It has been interpreted as a divine horse that dragged the sun around the skies (The national museum of Denmark 2012). Sámi follores tell of a harnessed bear that drove the sun around the skies (Sami folkloristic 2000:250). Snorri Sturluson’s Edda tells about horse that drove the sun around the earth (Snorres Edda: 1997:41).](image-url)

What is sure is that western, eastern and Northern Norway had been a cultural cauldron of different people for a long time, both before and during the settlement of Iceland.

The fact that the Norse and the Sámi saw mountains as holy, clearly indicates that burials on such locations may be viewed as “holy burials”, intended for special people. It was identified in the previous chapter that the Sámi beliefs in the holiness of large rock-formations might have been shared with the Norse. This is also visible in Icelandic folklore, where rocks and rock-formations have special roles, and contain supernatural beings that were to be approached with care and respect.

The rock pillars and the large black rock under the cape in Iceland would fully qualify as a sacred ground for the Sámi, and may have had similar role for the first settlers that came to
Kollafjörður in Iceland in the Viking Age. Upon arrival, respective individuals who were familiar with the custom of considering dramatic landscape as holy made the locale their own, thus creating a new sacred ground.

The monument by the rock pillars can even be viewed as a fence to the area, since it is located right between two smaller cliffs that leave an opening to the area surrounding the rock pillars. It is at least plausible that the area around the monument served as a holy ground, along with the mountain. Also, if the monument is a grave, it might very well represent what was behind the myth of “dying into mountains” that is mentioned in the sagas. To move in the mountain in death, may have included burials at the roots of holy mountains.

5. Chapter - The monument and the locale

5.1. Introduction

“Natural places have an archaeology because they acquired a significance in the minds of people in the past” (Bradley 2000:35).

To gain knowledge about the monument it is crucial not only to study the form of the monument itself, but also to look into all aspects of it, place names, manmade surroundings, what its outline resembles etc. but last but not least to try to understand the landscape that surrounds it and what it might have meant for the people who built the monument. To gain insight I have outlined a study on places by Christopher Tilley.

5.2. Places

Place is a humanized space. One can move from one place to another, the body feels and sees things and most importantly remembers places and forms emotions for them. By those bodily functions people “create” places (Tilley 1994:11-14).

Without relations a space/place is of no importance. A relation to a place can be social, cultural and natural. A place has to be interpreted on its own terms, in context and in consideration to its relations. A place is always of significance in the human mind and goes far beyond being just a distant dot on a map or something of unimportance. Familiar places always represent
something distinct; a location on the way to somewhere, a landmark in the landscape, place to rest or shop, a final destination and are therefore valued by people as something specific, not just name on a map! Places even play a major role in people’s self-image and in their private and cultural identity, as do people tend to associate themselves with places and events that occurred on locations of importance (Tilley 1994:15-18).

Tilley’s theories on the importance of places and unaltered natural locales has been questioned, thoughts have arisen around the matter if it is possible at all to study or even discuss what roll natural locales have played in pre-history, especially if no monuments are present to confirm the importance of an unaltered place (Bradley 2000:43).

The locale under the cape is “confirmed” with a manmade monument, also, places do, and always have, played significant roll throughout history, unaltered or not, sacred or secular. But of course a place is not necessarily shared experience for all who know of it. People are different and so are their views and that must be taken to consideration when one interprets a story /or usage of natural locals. Needless to say, importance of a place or space varies drastically depending on the local and the people who thrive around/in it. We cannot overlook the fact that people experience places, get attached to them, and form ideas and beliefs around them. That is why we cannot ignore the importance of a natural place that people have been associated with.
5.3. The monument

Under a steep cape, which lies in between two small fjords in NW Iceland, one can see the small manmade monument. It is located on N65° 35,764 W021° 18,021 between two small cliffs. The monument is at least 4, 5m long, but a narrow sheep path lies through it and has damaged it, along with landslides from the mountain, which have damaged its western tail. It appears as though the monument is 4, 5m long, that it ends by the sheep path. However, upon closer inspection, it might be extra 2, 6m long, but the hand of nature has damaged its features. Where widest it is c. 3, 4m but 1, 3m at the eastern tail of it and approximately 50cm high where highest and has triangular features. It might even be oblong and have a shape of an upside down boat if the extra possible 2, 6m are taken to consideration. However, to quote Malmer: “a minor fact is worth more than a great fiction“ (1997:14) I will leave the “might” and stay with the 4, 5 meters. The monument points to the east overlooking the Húnaflói bay that continues to the Atlantic Ocean. To the west, the cape slopes over the monument. To the north an old path pauses at the monument leading from the nearest farm that is ca. 2-3km
away, to another farm ca 3km south. A few meters south of the monument three rock pillars stretch up to the sky, ca. 15-20m high: three large gray and black rock-giants walking out of the cape into the ocean. South of the pillars there is a large creek and at the end of that creek (about 100m away from the pillars), a large black rock, called Stigaklettur, lies on the borders between the two farms, along with the borders of the fjords and former parishes.

The monument has many features resembling a Viking Age grave. Its size fits, it is rather low and does almost point to the same directions as the mountain above it. More importantly it is located near a border between two farms and an old path lies to it.

The monument also has qualities that are not typical for known Icelandic Viking Age graves: foremost it is on a remote location, also, the path leads to the monument, not alongside it, and continues for 100-200 meters past it, which is rather unusual and is probably the reason for why people and animals have “walked over it” and damaged it. On the other hand, to make a path over the creek would be an impossible task, since the creek is entirely made of stones.

Fig. 9 The monument in wintertime (Picture by author 2012).
5.4. Place names.

“Through the act of naming and through the development of human and mythological associations... places become invested with meaning and significance” (Basso 1984 & Weiner 1991 in Tilley 1994:18).

The landscape that surrounds the monument is filled with place names. Most of them can be traced to the 12th and 13th century (Íslenzk fornbréfasafn 1893:258; 1896:79; 1907:72-73). Many of them are vital for understanding the significance, and the puzzles, of the locale and its monument.

South of the monument (ca 100m), on the shore, one finds the great black rock that I have mentioned before, the rock is called Stigaklettur (Stair or path-rock) which is named after the path between the farms. South of the rock, the before mentioned path continues and leads to a farm ca. 3 km away called Skriðnisenni (landslide-peninsula-brow). Skriðnisenni belongs to the aligned fjord to the south, Bitrufjörður. North of the rock there is a creek, called after the same “stairs/path”, Stigavík. At the end of the creek the rock pillars take over, they are called Broddar (spikes). Few meters north of them the monument rests. It does not have any specific name, some call it Broddahaugur (Broddi’s mound), other Broddi’s grave. A few meters north of the “mound”, alongside the path, there is a large rocky creek, called Ólafsvík, (the creek of Olav). The creek is rich in driftwood which used to belong to the local church at Fell2, which was the capital estate in the parish and is located at the bottom of Kollafjörður (Íslendingabók 1986:199; Jarðabók 1940:418). The area as whole is simply called Stigi (Stair, path) (Íslenzk fornbréfasafn 1896:79; Guðbrandsdóttir 2012; Halldórsson 2012).

There are two farms south of the monument, called Broddadalsá and Broddanes. The monument “belongs” to the estate of Broddadalsá. The farm itself is ca 3km northwest of the monument and Broddanes is 1km north of Broddadalsá. Both farms are mentioned in old church books, although Broddadalsá is mentioned later, and it is believed that the farm

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2 Fell was, according to íslendingabók, the settlement manor in Kollafjörður (1986:199). There was a church there at least from 1200 (probably earlier) (Íslenzk fornbréfasafn 1923-1932:15) until 1890 when the church was moved to a farm nearby (Kirkjur Íslands 7 2006:86).
originally was a smallholding out of Broddanes. There is a small river in-between the two farms, Broddá, which comes from a valley called Broddadalur (Halldórsson 2012).

In the near-by place names: Brodda-valley River (Broddadalsá), Brodda-peninsula (Broddanes), Brodda-Valley (Broddadalur) and Brodda-river (Broddá), one might wonder to whom or what Brodda refers. There are two possibilities as to the origin of the Brodda prefix. It may indicate the ownership by a man with the surname Broddi, as Brodda is the possessive form of Broddi, for example Broddá stating Broddi’s river. Or Brodda may indicate a more topographic description related to the word for spikes, broddar, for example Broddanes would be spike-peninsula.

The fjord is called Kollafjörður. A farm on the northern site of the fjord, facing the Brodda-farms goes by the name Kollafjarðarnes (Kolla-fjords-peninsula). The aligned fjord to the south is called Bitrufjörður, and the cape between them is called Ennisháls. A farm called Kiarlakstader once existed in Bitrufjörður. It belonged to the before mentioned farmed Skriðnisenni (Jarðabók 1940: 425). Kiarlak is a form of the Celtic/Irish name Ceallach, Kiarlaksteder simply means: the residence of Kiarlak (Brøgger 1930:225).
Fig. 10 This map shows settlements and supposed settlers mentioned in Íslendingabók. Kolli settled Kollafjörður and parts of the aligned fjord, Bitrufjörður. The monument under Ennishöfði is marked by the black five point star. Skriðnisenni by the yellow ring, Broddanes by the red four point star and Fell by the blue triangle ((Picture in Íslenskur söguatlas 1990:41) with adjustments by author).

5.5. The path
The shortest way from Broddadalsá to Skriðnisenni goes by the rock pillars and the monument.
There does not exist any formal date of the path but it might be as old as the need of it was.
The route must have been vital for communication between the three farms, but also for the residents and clerks at Fell, who had goods and wood to claim at the “cape farms”.

In the last century, before the introduction of the car, travellers were shipped from Kollafjarðarnes to Broddanes, from there they had to walk pass the rock pillars and the rock, to Bitrufjörður. From there they were shipped forward to a cape farm south of Bitrufjörður and from there they could continue their journey on foot (Eysteinsson 2012).

The way by Stigaklettur is said to have worsened through the century’s and another “highway” between the two fjords lies from the bottom of Kollafjörður, via heath, to the middle of the
northern side of Bitrufjörður, and has always been the main road between the two parishes and fjords (Hjálmarsson 1952:269).

5.6. The locals

The locals, sometimes, do go to the monument area: their main purpose is not to see the humble monument, but to gaze upon nature in all its glory. It is the great black rock and rock pillars that attract, the monument is a mere bonus, a place to sit by, or on, drink coffee and maybe tell children the story of Broddi, the man who “settled” Broddanes, and who subsequently was buried at this extraordinary place (Guðbrandsdóttir 2012).

On a good day, the way to the monument is beautiful: one has to follow the path from Broddadalsá, approximately 3km way that starts at Broddadalsá’s home fields, which are surrounded with fences made out of stones. After passing the fences the way lies under the steep cape via rocky creeks filled with driftwood that has travelled to Iceland from Russia and Norway, a good extra resource for the farmer. When arriving at the monument, and not until then, one finally sees the black rock and the rock pillars. This experience on the other hand is not as enjoyable during night and/or wintertime and people say that they would not want to be there alone, since the whole area is considered mystic, frightening and even dangerous during snowy winters and rainy seasons (Halldórsson 2012 & Guðbrandsdóttir 2012).

5.7. Broddi and Kolli

According to the book of the settlement (Landnámabók) Kollafjörður was settled by a man named Kolli. The book states that he claimed the whole fjord as his own, along with the north eastern part of the aligning fjord, Bitrufjörður, a farm mentioned before called Skriðnisenni. His manor was at the capital estate Fell, “he resided there while he lived” (1986:199). The book does not mention anything else about that man, not where he came from nor anything else, which is unusual since many settlers do have a little background story.
According to legends Kolli is buried in a valley in the bottom of Kollafjörður, called Mókollsdalur (Mókolls-valley), in a great mound called Mókollshaugur (Mókolls-mound). He was supposed to have been a heathen man who wanted to be buried where he would not hear the bells from the newly established church at Fell, and where the sun did not shine (Þjóðsögur Jóns Árnasonar 1954:91). His mound is supposed to have been plundered to a small degree in the 1700’s; greedy farmers from Fell started to dig up the mound, found a large silver ring, but were forced to stop, because they saw that the local church was on fire, which of course was a hallucination made by Kolli. The ring was given to the church at Fell and remained on the church door until the early 1900’s (Viggósdóttir 2011:95-103). Similar stories about the origin of church rings are common all over Iceland.

The valley with the supposed burial mound is narrow and steep and shaped like half-bowl at its end, where three huge natural mounds stick up in the air. There is no road in the valley which is rather isolated.

I did a little field research there myself and took a look at “Kolli’s mound”. Kolli is supposed to be buried inside, or on top of the biggest mound. Those mounds are clearly natural and there
are no traces of any burials there. The name Mókollsdalur might have confused people, but this valley is among few places in Iceland where fossils have been located along with lignite (Náttúrufræðistofnun Íslands n.d.). The Old Icelandic word for lignite is Mókol (brown-coals), and therefore the name; “brown-coal-valley”, not “brown-Kolli’s- valley”, like many believe, and have added the ‘mó’ in front of the name of Kolli, because of the valley. The hill that the mound is supposed to be on looks disturbed, and might have been loaded with lignite which has been mined out.

Fig. 12 The mound(s) of Kolli in Mókollsdalur (Picture by author 2011).

One might wonder why the story of Kolli plays a part here. First of all it is the story of the supposed first settler in the area, although Kolli’s name might be fake or a misunderstanding, since Kolli is related to the word “bare head” and the mountain above Fell does look like a shaved head. Secondly, the myth of the mound is similar to the myth of Broddi’s mound; if someone tries to dig up the grave and its treasures, the farm at Broddanes will go up in flames. The only way to get Broddi’s gold is: a virgin has to spend the night at the grave, in autumn, with a baby boy, as a reward she can dig up the gold without any harm (Halldórsson 2012). Which brings us to the third reason: The myth of the virgin and the baby is clearly Christian, it seems as only Mary and Jesus can get the gold.

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3 Fell simply means: mountain. According to earliest resources the church was: at Undirfelli which means under-mountain (Íslenzk fornbréfasafn 1923-1932:15).

4 According to a popular tale, the mound was partially dug up in the late 19th century. That was supposed to have been done by a “famous” wanderer in the area who made a living of telling tales and poetry around the west fjord peninsula. The story does not say if he found anything in Broddi’s grave, but the man, Tómas, never was the same after the attempted grave robbing (Jóhannsson 2012:47).
church at *Fell* was dedicated to Mary and foremost to saint Olav of Norway\(^5\) (Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn 1893:258, 1896:90, 1897:128, 1913:358), and the church at *Fell* owned all driftwood in Ólafvísk, the creek north of the monument (Jarðabók 1940:418).

The two mounds in *Kollafjörður* are connected through myths and place names. If Kolli or Broddi ever existed remains a mystery.

### 5.8. On place-names and memory
Memory can be seen as social and “long term social memories” live on via oral myths and stories told in the society (Jones 1998 & Ollie 1999 in Cummings 2003:38), “locales in the landscape” even help the memory and “validate the myths” in people’s minds (Tilley 1994:59). Therefore there might be some truth behind the mythical stories about the settlers in the fjord. Unfortunately these stories tend to change through the passage of time, and it is always appealing to connect the lands with “brave Vikings”. If the name of the settler was unknown it would have been convenient, like Eldjárn has suggested (19874:108-109), to name the settler after the name of the farm or the fjord. Considering that one might wonder if it is plausible at all, and acceptable, that all major place-names on, and near, the Brodda-farms were named after one man, Broddi, who is not only buried at the *Broddar* but named a farm after himself, a river and a valley (Halldórsson 2012). Or, like Eldjárn has pointed out, that the many Icelandic place names did come from nature (1974:108), and therefore the farm, the river and valley are named after the rock pillars, which really do look like spikes. That is the most reasonable and most believable thing to do.

On the other hand there is also a possibility that some place names were imported to Iceland, from the Nordic countries or the British Isles.

For example, there are three *Kollafjörður* in Iceland alone, one in the Faeroes and two fjords in Norway are called *Kjøllefjord* and in one of them we find the place name *Kjøllefjordsneset*. In

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\(^5\) In the year 1354 and 1397 a wooden idol of Saint Olav was present in the church at Fell (Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn 1896: 91-92 & 1897:128). In the years 1814-1815 a traveller named Ebenezar mentions a wooden idol of the same saint inside the church at Fell. He was told that the idol had drifted ashore a long time ago (Henderson 1957:311-312). Nowadays the idol is lost.
fact, the place names Skredneset, Ennesåsen, Skrednesjelllet, Fjell and Fella are found at various locations in Norway (Navnregister for kart 1991:97-247). The place name Broddshaug is also found in Akershus in south-eastern Norway, where it has been suggested that the name comes either from the surname Broddr or from the word brot, “broken” (Norske Gaardsnavne 1898:424). All of these Norwegian place names are north of the N64°50, with the exception of Broddshaug. Another example of foreign influences is the farm name Kiarlakstedter (in Bitrufjörður). A farm called Kjarreksstaðir once existed in the Orkneys which nowadays goes by the name Cairston and is near Stromness (Brøgger 1930:225). On the other hand most of the place names mentioned do describe natural phenomena’s, both the Norwegian and Icelandic. It would not be surprising if similar natural circumstances got similar names in the new land, but they do however imply an origin.

The Brodda-farms, the river and the valley are at least 3km away from the rock and the rock pillars, which are far from being visible from any location near the farms, since the rock pillars are at the far end of the peninsula. In fact, the rock pillars are only visible from either the great black rock, or the monument, and of course from the sea. I can assume that the rock pillars were considered important for those who settled the land and named the locales. The cape and the pillars are clearly visible from sea and might have served as a milestone. The monument itself is, however, not visible from anywhere, except when standing right next to it.

Guðmundur “the good” Arason (1161-1237) Bishop of Northern Iceland is said to have travelled from Steingrímsfjörður (the aligned fjord, north of Kollafjörður), to Miðfjörður in Northern Iceland, a location on the other side of the Húnaflói bay. From Steingrímsfjörður he “travelled to Broddanes and there across the bay to Miðfjörður” (Biskupasögur 1858:463). One wonders why Broddanes is mentioned at all in this description of Guðmundur’s travels. The sea route from Steingrímsfjörður to Broddanes is not very long, but the route from Broddanes to Miðfjörður is on the other hand at least three times longer. Is the text implying that Broddanes was a centre for travellers or that it served as a landmark? Why did the bishop go to Broddanes and not to Fell where the church was? Maybe the rocks at the mountain ending served as a landmark, both for seafarers and for those who had to walk. This gives the possibility that the
southern peninsula of Kollafjörður was called Broddanes, a name that got stuck on the farm later on. This would also explain the name giving of the black rock, Stiga-vík, being path-rock: the milestone by the sea that set the path across the bay.

5.9 An unexpected connection
An interesting fact is that in one of the Kjøllefjords in Norway there are two large rock pillars at the end of the fjords southern peninsula, also the northern peninsula of the fjord is called Kjøllefjordsneset. The rock pillars in Kjøllefjord go by the name Finnkirka or Finnkjerkja (Bergh 1980:175; Kartverket n.d.) which according to legends was a sacrificial locale for the Sámi in the areas (as the name implies). In later times, the rock pillars served as a landmark for Norwegian sailors (visitnorway.com). Kjøllefjord is a small in-fjord of a larger fjord called Laksefjorden in Finnmark.

The landscape in Kjøllefjord in Finnmark also has similarities with Kollafjörður in Strandir, Iceland. The mountains have similar form and shape and the rock pillars are at the mountains endings. The mountain above Finnkirka is 305m above sea level, while the mountain above the rock pillars in Iceland is 260m above sea level, according to The Norwegian Nautical charts system (Kartverket n.d.) and the Icelandic met office (Veðurstofa Íslands n.d.). Both fjords have limited lowland and little vegetation.

Fig. 13 The picture to the left shows Finnkirka and the mountain above it in Kjøllefjord, Norway (arcticcoast.no 2008).

Fig. 14 The picture to the right shows Ennisháls in Iceland (Picture by author 2011).
5.10. Discussion
By analyzing the grave, its surroundings and place names I have reached the conclusion that the farms near the monument are named after natural phenomena, the Brodda-farms being named after the rock pillars, along with the valley and the river. I have even suggested that the whole peninsula was called *Broddanes* in ancient times.

The monument has many resemblances of a Norse burial mound and I have connected it to the former capital estate at *Fell*, both through myths and legal documents, since the church at Fell owned all driftwood in the creek north of the monument in later times. Further, I have connected the place name *Stigi* (path/stair) to the former rout in the bay of *Húnaflói*.

To name any settlers is an impossible task. The Norwegian word *Kjøl* means *keel*, which is found at the bottom of sea-vessels. The Icelandic word is *Kjölur*. In both Icelandic and Norwegian the word can also stand for “mountain ridge” and usually “the way over the mountain ridge”. All three *Kollafjörður* in Iceland are connected to routes over ridges and heaths, also *Kjølefjord* in Finnmark, hence the name of the fjord. *Kollafjörður* might originally have meant “the mountain ridge fjord” and have nothing to do with any man.

The place names in the fjord do have a nature description in them, but surprisingly they are also found in Norway in highly similar circumstances. I cannot state that *Kollafjörður* in Iceland was named after *Kjølefjord* in Norway, but the similarities are however vast. Consequently, this cannot be a mere coincidence, although the two fjords might have similar names due to the similar natural circumstances. The place names point to Northern Norway and imply a far north origin, namely the coastline of Finnmark.
6. Chapter - Interpretations

6.1. The monument under the cape, an interpretation
In Landnáma it is said that the original settler of Kollafjörður owned the whole fjord, along with parts of Bitrufjörður. Considering place names in the fjord, along with topography, it is highly likely that the settlers of the fjord came from Northern Norway, maybe even from the coastlines of Finnmark, where it was believed that dramatic landscape was sacred. In latter times the church at Fell, which was dedicated to Saint Olav, owned all rights to whatever drifted on the shore of Ólafsvík, the creek next to the monument: a heritage that probably had its roots in the settlement period. Mythical tales about the settlers Kolli and Broddi are very similar, and the tale of Broddi has Christian insinuations, pointing towards the church at Fell. Surely, the monument has connections to the manor in the bottom of the fjord.

The monument is clearly Norse, its form, size and location on a border indicates so and it is highly possible that it indeed is a grave. Single graves are symbolic, and this grave, probably made in the late Viking Age, served as an ownership declaration. A need to mark the borders may have arisen, due to external factors such as increased population and/or disputes on the matter of landownership. This resulted in the erection of the monument, where a person, probably of higher status (due to the size of the monument and location) was buried. That person was not only buried on the borders of the current land claims, but on a place that served as a landmark for travellers on sea and land, a place that also was considered sacred. With the monument a sacred land claim was established, a sacred ownership of the fjord and the routes around it. The mound dweller may even have been considered a watchman over the sacred ground that surrounds the monument. A person died into the mountain, keeping an eternal eye on the family’s estate.
7. Chapter - Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to understand the monument and the locale under the cape in Kollafjörður, Iceland. What I set out to do was to find reasons for the choice of location, what purpose the monument had and which groups would use such a landscape as background for a burial monument. By looking at the overall pre-Christian grave pattern in Iceland, such as graves form, sizes, locations, and regional difference, I came to the conclusion that the monument under the cape has many similarities to a small Norse burial mound. One of the main findings regarding Iceland was that graves that are located on borders of some kind are younger than graves found near the farms. I also indicated that that single graves might have been used as declarations of ownership, especially on farms with weak positions. This pointed toward the notion that the monument was erected during the latter part of the Viking Age due to the weakening position of the ruling families in the area.

When looking at graves abroad I took a standpoint from Bjarni Einarsson’s theories on “ecological heritage” (1994), which includes the notion that the settlers of Iceland settled lands that had similarities to their home areas. My main conclusions were that the overall grave patterns in the west Norse world (Norway and the British Islands) are too similar to pinpoint any exact origin. The grave form in Iceland seems, though, to have strong resemblances to Northern Norway and the British Islands. Sámi graves were also discussed. I found out the Sámi used “dramatic landscape” for their burials and pointed out that the Norse population in Scandinavia had lived together with the Sámi for centuries, where both groups learnt from each other and had similar economies. I discovered that a unique grave form had been established in Northern Norway where graves of Norse character were located within a dramatic landscape. I also discussed the presence of mixed graves in the same area and the fact that Norse Viking Age graves have been located as far north as Finnmark. From the Sámi traditions of using dramatic landscapes I assumed that similar thoughts were behind the usage of the locale in Iceland, whereas the traditions and memories around such locales where brought to Iceland by the settlers. The locale under the cape was probably seen as sacred.
I would like to think that my paper has supported Bjarni Einarssons theories on a North Norwegian origin of settlers that migrated to the northern parts of Iceland, adding that the topography in the west fjord peninsula is highly similar to that of Northern Norway, especially the fjords in *Finnmark*, which also supports his theories on an ecological heritage.

Further, I have tried to show how the complex Sámi mythology is closely related to both the Norse mythology and Icelandic folklore. It seems as though the myths of the different groups are very similar, with few exceptions. I pointed out that elements such as burials on dramatic places, and the usage of large rock formations in ritual purposes, might have been shared with the Norse, and especially Norse groups from Northern Norway, where the Sámi and the Norse cultures/people had interacted for a long time. Further, both parties learned from each other, both culturally and economically, which shows the diversity of “cultures” and that “cultures” cannot be determined by simple means.

The post-colonial approach on the matter of cultures and how they should be viewed shows that deeper research is needed on the cultural backgrounds of the Icelandic settlers. I like to think that this paper has shown that Sámi myths cannot be ignored when discussing cultures of Norse Viking Age; especially in relation is Northern Norway. A clear connotation is present and the roots of Icelandic culture lie deep, spread over the *whole* of Scandinavia and the British Isles.

In the light of the similarities found in the traditions in the North I researched place names in Norway, to discover that Iceland and Norway share a large number of place names. This could be as a result of similarities in landscape and language, or that place names simply were imported to Iceland, not unlike how the Europeans did in America, where many old place names got the prefix “New” in front of them. One of my findings was that one fjord in Norway, *Kjøllefjord*, did not only have highly similar name, but shared other topographical features and a place name with *Kollafjörður* in Iceland. Both fjords have large rock pillars at mountains endings on the northern side of the fjord, where the Norwegian ones are called *Finnkirka*, implying that the locale was used as a ritual ground for the Sámi. Also, I traced possible origin of the name *Kollafjörður* in Iceland, to find out it was connected to mountain ridges.
My short study on place names in Norway and Iceland shows that great similarities are to be found between the two countries. A study on the overall similarities regarding major place names in Iceland and Scandinavia would be a research issue worth taking a closer look on, which would benefit studies on origin of the settlers of Iceland. In order to begin such research I consider it most appropriate to start the process by comparing place names from Iceland with place names in Northern Norway, whereas the place names there have kept their old identities to a greater extent than elsewhere in Norway (Nes 1997:45).

Other place names around the locale in Iceland, along with the myths about the settlers of the fjord, hinted that the monument under the cape had strong contact to the manor Fell at the bottom of Kollafjörður. The names of the farms around the locale were probably named after the rock pillars which may have been seen as natural guiding landmarks and, considering the cultural blend in Norway, a sacred ground.

My final results were that the monument was a Norse grave from the latter part of the Viking Age, erected by a family or clan, which probably had roots in Northern Norway, even Finnmark. The choice of locale was no coincidence. It is highly plausible that the locale was seen as sacred, and clearly as a landmark. By erecting the grave at this location, the family tried to establish a sacred ownership right of the fjord and the routes around it.

I have also suggested that there might be some truth behind the myths of “dying into mountains” through the custom of burials at mountain base. I hope this paper has shown that graves are to be found at such locations, a location that probably hosts graves all around Iceland, especially on the West fjord peninsula. More thorough research on the matter is needed along with archaeological investigations of “dramatic” landscapes.
Main results
The main results of this paper are that the settlers of Iceland were a diverse group that came from a broad area within Northern Europe. It seems clear that many elements found in Icelandic culture descended from Northern Norway and the sub-arctic cultures in Northern Scandinavia. Numerous Icelandic cultural phenomena have obvious similarities to the sub-arctic cultures, and ritual usage of landscape and natural locales in the far north have clear parallel in Iceland, as the monument under the cape indicates.

This research shows that Icelandic Viking Age archaeology needs to be more thoroughly investigated. It has been identified that there is a need to explore more graves and to conduct systematic research in a more comprehensive manner, which considers the archaeology, literature and landscape of Iceland as well as the lands of its settlers and their cultural backgrounds.

8. Chapter – Icelandic summary

Undir Ennishöfða í Kollafirði á Ströndum fyrirfinnst náttúrufyrirbrigði sem kallast Broddar, það eru þrír töluvert háir klettadrangar sem ganga úr höfðanum og út í haf. Þessir drangar, ásamt klettahamri nokkrum, mynda svæði sem kallast Ennisstigi. Þar var áður leið á milli bæja og í fyrndinni lá þar þjóðleið, en svæðið er erfitt yfirferðar. Sunnanmegin við Broddana er manngerður hóll og segir sagan að þar sé maður heygður. Samkvæmt erfisögn hét sá maður Broddi og byggði fyrstur bæ nálæg höfðanum sem kallast Broddanes.

Manngerði höllinn undir höfðanum kallast „leiði Brodda“ og likist lágum haug á margan hátt. Höllinn er um það bil 50cm há, 4,5m lög og 3m á breidd þar sem hún er breiðust. Kindastígar liggur við höllinn og því gæti hann jafnvel verið lengri, en hefur verið troðin niður af fé, fólki og skriðum í gegnum árin. Höllinn hefur þriðyrnd drög og steinar liggja á efsta punkt hans. Stærð og lögun benda til þess að höllinn sé í raun gróf og þá frá Vikingatímanum (mun kalla höllinn gróf héðan í frá), auk þess liggur grófin nálægt landamerkjum og gæti því verði frá seinasta skeiði vikingaaldar á Íslandi.
Það er í sjálfu sér ekkert nýtt við gröfinu sjálfa, en staðsetningin undir höfðanum er þó sérstök. Slíkar staðsetningar eru sjaldséðar og graﬁr við mikilfenglegt landslag nærri óbekkta hjá Norrænum mönnum, en þeir virðast helst hafa jarðsett menn nálægt byggðum bóulum. Ég bar gröfinu saman við hinari og þessar graﬁr á Norðurlöndum og á Bresku eyjunum. Svipaðar graﬁr var viða að finna og þríhyrðar norrænar graﬁr voru algengar á öllum stöðunum og þá sérstaklega á Orkneyjum, en graﬁr undir höfðum og við kletta voru sjaldgæfari. Slikt fyrirkomulag finnst þó á Norðurlöndum og þá einna helst meðal Sama í Norður Noregi, ásamt þríhyrðum kulum.

Sönum þotti fínt að jarðsetja fólk undir klettum og fjöllum. Þeir trúðu því að stórir steinar og klettadrangar væru heilagir og söttust eftir að grafa menn í mikilfenglegu landslagi. Átrúnaður þeirra á klettadranga endurspegluðist í því að þeir dyrku „stokka og steina” og trúðu því statt og stöðugt að stórir klettar sem liktust mönnum eða dýrum væru sérstaklega heilagir. Svæðið í kringum þannig náttúruþrykbrigði voru alitin heilög og ef fjöll voru nálægt voru þau einnig talin heilög. Samar grófu menn sjaldan alveg ofaní heilögustu klettunum, en gerðu þó undantekningar á því ef um var að ræða mikilfenglega menn, sem höfðu unnið sér inn þann heiður að fá að hvíla við þannig náttúruundur. Óft álitu þeir að sál hins látta flyttist þá inn í klettana eða heilaga fjallíð.

Ef vel er að gáð er margt líkt með íslenskum menningararfi og samískum, fyrst ber að nefna galdraformið seið, sem svo oft er nefnt í fornsögunum, en Samar kunnu þá list best allra manna og stunduðu langt fram eftir öldum. Einnig er hinn forni síður norrænna manna keimlíkur náttúrutráðgöðum Sama. Margt annað ber þess keim að vera runnið af sömu rót og má þar nefna trú Sama á mikilfenglega steina eins og áður var nefnt, en Samar trúðu því að inni í sliktum steinum, klettum og fjöllum byggju andlegar verur, ekki ósvipaðar mónnum að öllum háttum, nema að þær voru ósýnilegar og höfðu betri lífsfílyrði en mennskir menn og gátu vitjað manna ef þeim sjálfum listi. Ýmsar verur voru á kreiki á slóðum Sama í kringum vetrarsólöstöður og heimsóttu þá mannabyggðir, og var þeim gestum boðinn matur sem skilin var eftir á borðum eða í úthúsum. Börnum stafaði sérstök hætta af þessum jólagestum. Sérstaklega er vert að minnast á að bæði huldfólks og tröllatrú Íslandinga ber þess vitni að klettar og fjöll hafi verið þýđingamikil fyrir þjóðina og verið álitin dulræn.


Gröfin undir Ennishöfða mætti túlka sem slika fjallaför framliðna. Þessu ætti að gefa meiri gaum í framtiðinni og athuga mætti hvort fleiri dæmi sé að finna undir rótum fjalla viðar um landið ásamt því að rannsaka hvort forminjar sé að finna á stöðum sem af náttúrunnar hendi gætu talist mikilfenglegir.

Í rannsókn minni benti ég einnig á að gröfin undir Ennishöfða gæti tengst bænum Felli í Kollafirði. Samkvæmt Landnámu var Fell landnámsjörðin í firðinum og þar átti maður að hafa numið land sem allaður var Kolli. Þessa manns er aðeins getið með örfaum línun í Landnámu og ekki er þess getið hvaðan hann kom né hverja manna hann er. Samkvæmt Þjóðsögum Jóns Árnasonar er Kolli þessi heygður í Mókollsdal, sem gengur inn af Kollafirði. Í þeim dal eru
sannarlega mikilfenglegir haugar, en þeir virðast afturámóti vera náttúrulegir og benda má á að dalurinn er frægur fyrir steingervinga og var megineldstöð á forsögulegum tíma. Þar fyrirfinnast ýmsar steinategundir, og haugurinn, sem Kolli á að vera heygður í, kallast Mókollshaugur, en Kolli er nefndur Mókollur í þjóðsögunum. Til að gera langa sögu stuttu þá fyrirfinnst brennanleg steintegund sem kallast mókol, eða brúnkol og vel má vera að brúnkol hafi verið í dalnum og í haugunum og þaðan komi nafnið sem ætti að vera Mókolsdalur en ekki Mókollsdalur.

Sagnir um fyrrnefndan Brodda, sem á að hvíla undir Ennishöfða eru meinlíkar sögunum um Kolla. Til að ná í fjársljóð Brodda þarf mey ásamt ungabarni að dvelja á leiði á leiði Brodda yfir haustnótt og er henni þá óhætt að grafa í hauginn. Þessi arfstög fyrir á sér kristin blæ og minnir um margt á Mariu og Jesús. Á Felli var bændakirkja og var hún tileinkuð Mariu en umfram allt Ólafí helga Noregskonungi. Næsta vík við hölðina á „leiði Brodda“ heitir Ólafsvík og átti Fellskirkja rétt á hverju því sem rak þar á land. Svo virðist vera sem að Fellskirkja hafi haft sterk ítök á svæðinu kringum „leiði Brodda“.


Lokaniðurstaða mín var sú að grófin við Stiga sé norræn, en eigi rætur að rekja til þeirra síða að líta á mikilfenglegt landslag sem heilagt. Þær hefðir bárust til Íslands frá nyrstu hjörum Noregs
þar sem Norrænir menn og Samar höfðu ruglað saman reitum í árhundruð. Í örðu lagi þá tengdi ég gröfina við höfuðbólið á Felli og lítið svo ú að gröfin sé frá lok landnámsaldaðar eða stuttu eftir landnámsöld og þjónaði þeim tilgangi að merkja eigur landeigendanna á Felli (sem komu frá Norður Noregi) og tel að Fell hafi á þeim tíma átt Kollafjörð allan, en ekki hluta af Bitrufirði eins og nefnt er í Landnámu, hvernig svo sem ástandið var þegar land fyrst var numið. Staðsetningin þjónið þó einnig þeim tilgangi að merkja eignarrétt yfir leiðum um fjörðinn auk þess sem greftrunin átti sér stað á heilögu svæði og mætti því vel tala um heilaga greftrun sem nú þjónar sem minnisvarði um glejmda fortíð. Einstaklingur dór í fjallið til að vaka yfir jarðneskjum og himneskum eigum ættarinnar.
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Interviews


