

KLAUS JOHAN MYRVOLL

## GÍSLI SÚRSSON AS EGÐA ANDSPILLIR

### *An Obscure Kenning and its Implications for Tribal Identities in Tenth-Century Iceland*

#### Introduction

*GÍSLA SAGA SÚRSSONAR* (thirteenth century) is famous for the tragic destiny of its main character, the Norwegian settler and outlaw Gísli Súrsson, a destiny that to some extent is predicted by the many dream stanzas Gísli utters in the saga. In one of these stanzas, Gísli refers to himself as *Egða andspillir* ‘confidant of the *Egðir*’, i.e. the people of the Norwegian region of Agder.<sup>1</sup> This kenning has puzzled skaldic scholars and editors of *Gísla saga*, and no satisfactory explanation has so far been proposed. In the present article, this kenning will be explained as a *við(r)kenning*, that is, a description in terms of a person’s attributes, which is based on factual knowledge about the person involved. I will evaluate the stanza as authentic, which implies that Gísli actually was the friend of people in Iceland in the tenth century who could be called *Egðir*. I will show who these *Egðir* most likely were, and the reasons why they could be regarded as such in Iceland in the tenth century – far away from their ancestors’ homeland Agder in Norway. This involves close reading of *Landnámabók*, which implies that these *Egðir* were related to people involved in the battle of Hafrsfjord (ca. 900).

There is a total of twenty stanzas that relate Gísli’s dreams, arranged in six sequences of three to four stanzas each, spread throughout his saga, coming at shorter intervals towards the end of the saga. The main function of the dreams is to presage the death of Gísli and to relate his expectations

1 *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning* (= *Skj.*), ed. by Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols, A: *Tekst efter håndskrifterne*, B: *Rettet tekst* (København – Kristiania: Gyldendalske Boghandel / Nordisk Forlag, 1912–1915), vol. A 1, p. 104; B 1, p. 98; *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit VI (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1943), 71.

of the afterlife. Moreover, the dreams provide insight into the tormented mind of Gísli, and thus add a deeper psychological dimension to the saga.

The first of these dream sequences is placed within the saga narrative six years after Gísli is outlawed, in ch. 22 of the saga (following the edition in *Íslensk fornrit*). After staying at home in Geirþjófsfjörður for three years and wandering around Iceland without finding any chieftain who will give him shelter, Gísli is now back in Geirþjófsfjörður at his wife Auðr's farm, where he has made two hiding places for himself. Þorkr, the brother of Þorgrímr whom Gísli killed and who is now married to Þórdís, Þorgrímr's widow and the sister of Gísli, has started to search for Gísli, and two men whom Þorkr has hired, Eyjolfr inn grái and Njósнар-Helgi, have been in Geirþjófsfjörður and looked for him. Gísli now clearly realizes that he is living on borrowed time, and at this point the saga introduces his bad dreams. The saga tells that one night, as he awakens from another bad dream, he explains to Auðr that there are two dream women ("ek á draumkonur tvær") who repeatedly come to visit him in his sleep. While one of the women is friendly, the other prophesies his downfall.<sup>2</sup> This concept of one good and one bad dream woman may be an invention of the saga author, and there is in fact nothing in the stanzas themselves to suggest the existence of two separate women.<sup>3</sup> In one of his dreams, Gísli enters a hall where many of his relatives and friends are sitting and where seven fires are lit. The "good" dream woman tells him that the fires symbolize the remaining years of his life, and she advises him to abandon heathendom and to do good for the deaf, lame, poor and powerless. "Eigi var draumrinn lengri", Gísli ends his retelling of the dream, and the saga author adds: "Þá kvað Gísli vísur nokkurar" and cites four stanzas in a row, without further comment.<sup>4</sup>

The four stanzas that make up this first poetical dream sequence are somewhat diverse from a formal perspective. Whereas in the first three

2 *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 70.

3 See further Klaus Johan Myrvoll, "The Authenticity of Gísli's Verse", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 119 (2020): 220–57, at p. 256. For recent discussions of Gísli's dreams and dream women, see P.S. Langeslag, "The Dream Women of *Gísla saga*", *Scandinavian Studies* 81 (2009): 47–72, and Christopher Crocker, "All I Do the Whole Night Through. On the Dreams of Gísli Súrsson", *Scandinavian Studies* 84 (2012): 143–62. None of them discuss, however, the possibility of merging the saga's two dream women into one.

4 *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 70–73.

stanzas (sts 16–18 in the saga), Gísli relates his dream, with some interference of direct speech by the dream woman, marked by “kvað [WOMAN]”, the last stanza (st. 19) is one long speech uttered by the dream woman. It is this last stanza that bears the clearest marks of Christian thought within the whole corpus of Gísli’s verse, and it is reasonable to regard this particular stanza as a later addition.<sup>5</sup>

### An obscure kenning: *Egða andspillir*

It is the second stanza of this poetic dream sequence that will be the focal point in this article, because of a distinctive kenning in which Gísli refers to himself as *Egða andspillir* ‘confidant of the *Egðir*’, i.e. the people of the Norwegian district of Agder (ON *Agðir*). This kenning has puzzled skaldic scholars as well as editors of *Gísla saga*, and no satisfactory explanation has so far been proposed. The whole stanza runs as follows, with variants, prose order and translation:<sup>6</sup>

Hyggið at, kvað Egða  
andspilli Vqr banda,  
mildr, hvé margir eldar,  
malmrunnr, í sal brunnu.  
Svá átt, kvað Bil blæju,  
bjargs ólifat marga,  
veðrs Skjöldunga valdi,  
vetr. Nú’s skammt til betra.

- 5 See Fredrik Paasche, “Estras aabenbaring og Pseudo-Cyprianus i norrøn litteratur”, *Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson den 29. maj 1928*, ed. by Johs. Brøndum-Nielsen *et al.* (København: Levin & Munksgaards Forlag, 1928), 199–205. Cf. Myrvoll, “The Authenticity of Gísli’s Verse”, 252.
- 6 The normalization of the stanza as well as the translation are my own, but I have been guided by Kari Ellen Gade’s forthcoming edition of Gísli’s poetry for *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages (SkP)*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross *et al.* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007–). Compare also *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 71. The manuscripts are AM 556 a 4to (the M-version), dated to ca. 1475–1500; the S-version, probably from the mid-fourteenth century, now lost, but copied in AM 149 fol. (1690–1697) and Ny kgl. Saml. 1181 fol. (ca. 1780); and the fragment (B) in AM 445 c 1 4to (ca. 1390–1425).

Hyggið] *so M*, Hugðir *B*, Dvelr þú *S*; Egða] *so B*, Agða *M*, *S*; and-spilli] *ann- M*; brunnu] *brunni M*; bjargs] ‘baurks’ *B*; marga] *marg-ann M*; veðrs] *so S*, veðr *M*, *B*; betra] *betri B*

“Hyggið at, mildr malmrunnr, hvé margir eldar brunnu í sal”, kvað Vör banda Egða andspilli. “Svá marga bjargs vetr átt ólifat”, kvað Bil blæju Skjöldunga veðrs valdi. “Nú’s skammt til betra.”

“Pay attention, generous weapon-tree [WARRIOR], how many fires burned in the hall”, said the Vör (goddess) of ribbons [WOMAN] to the confidant of the Egðir (i.e. Gísli). “So many winters of safe-keeping you have un-lived”, said the Bil (goddess) of the head-dress [WOMAN] to the ruler of the Skjöldungs’ storm [BATTLE > WARRIOR]. “Now it is a short time until something better.”

We notice that there are some variant readings to the stanza, but none that alters the meaning. In the kenning *Egða andspillir* ‘confidant of the *Egðir*’, only one of the manuscripts, the fragmentary AM 445 c 4to (B), has the reading *Egða*; the other two have *Agða*. Nevertheless, it is clear that the skald is referring to the people of Agder – the *Egðir* – here; there is no Old Norse word \**agði(r)*.<sup>7</sup> The form *Agða* is thus most easily explained as secondary to *Egða*, formed by analogy with the provincial name *Agðir*, even though the manuscript evidence (two of three manuscripts) would seem to indicate that *Agða* is the most original reading.<sup>8</sup>

7 There are admittedly some apocryphal persons in the sagas named *Agði*, but in most instances the name is clearly extracted from place-names (eponyms). That must be the case with the mountain dweller (*bergbúi*) *Agði* in *Sneglu-Halla þátr*, based on *Agðanes* (*Eyfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Jónas Kristjánsson, Íslenzk fornrit IX (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1956), 265), and *Agði* Þrymsson in *Hversu Nóregr bygðist*, based on *Agðir* (*Flateyjarbok. En Samling af norske Konge-Sagaer med indskudte mindre Fortællinger om Begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt Annaler*, ed. by Guðbrandr Vigfusson and C.R. Unger, 3 vols (Christiania: P. T. Mallings Forlagsboghhandel, 1860–1868), vol. 1, 23). Apparently, the troll *Agði* jarl in *Þorsteins þátr bæjarmagns* is not linked to a place-name, cf. *Die Saga von Þorsteinn bæjarmagn. Saga af Þorsteini bæjarmagni*. Übersetzung und Kommentar, ed. by Andrea Tietz, Münchner Nordistische Studien 12 (München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2012), 52 ff.

8 Finnur Jónsson, *Norsk-islandske kultur- og sprogforhold i 9. og 10. årh.* (København: Andr. Fred. Høst & Søn, 1921), 303, believed that this was an old, unmutated genitival form *Agða* to *Egðir*, similar to the forms that form the first parts of the provincial names *Rogaland* and *Belamørk*. A gen. pl. *Agða* would, however, be difficult to explain as original in accordance with the rules of Old Norse sound change. Judged by its form, *Egðir* must originally have

The base-word of the kenning, *andspillir* ‘confidant’, is found only here, but the corresponding abstract *andspilli* n. ‘confidential talk’ is attested in both skaldic and eddic poems, for instance by Sigvatr (*Vestv* 2) and in *Guðrúnarkviða* II, 11.<sup>9</sup> The last citation is particularly interesting in light of the numerous other parallels between *Guðr* II and Gísli’s poetry.<sup>10</sup> It seems therefore safe to regard *andspillir* as a word for ‘confidant; intimate friend’. The question remains, however, why Gísli is referring to himself as “the confidant of the people of Agder”.

The standard interpretation of *Egða andspillir* has been that this is a kenning for ‘Norwegian’, and that it reflects the fact that Gísli was born and raised in Norway. This interpretation is already in Sveinbjörn Egilsson’s original *Lexicon poeticum* in Latin from 1860:

ANNSPILLIR, m., qui colloquium habet cum aliquo, familiaris alicui: a. *Agða*, qui cum Agdensibus sermones miscet, familiaris Agdensium, vir Norvegicus, GS. 10.<sup>11</sup>

The same interpretation is reproduced, but more condensed and in Danish in both editions of the *Lexicon poeticum* by Finnur Jónsson (1913–1916;

been an *ija*-stem derived from a primary place-name \**Agð* (now lost) to which the provincial name *Agðir* (f. pl., older \**Agðar*, an *ð*-stem) later was formed as a kind of collective (cf. Alf Torp, “Gamalnorsk ordavleiding”, *Gamalnorsk ordbok med nynorsk tyding*, ed. by Marius Hægstad and Alf Torp (Kristiania: Det Norske Samlaget, 1909), xxviii, as well as the correct *ija*-stem formation acc. pl. *Egða* in BjHall *Kalffl* 2, ca. 1050, *SkP* I, 880). In the gen. pl. of an *ija*-stem like *Egðir* one would expect *i*-mutation, and the attested form (outside *Gísla saga*) is indeed *Egða*. The first, genitival parts of *Rogaland* and *Þelamörk* should most likely be explained differently: these cannot be old *i*-formations as previously held (cf., e.g., Adolf Noreen, *Altisländische und altnorwegische grammatik (laut- und flexionslehre) unter berücksichtigung des urnordischen*, 4th ed. (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1923), § 392, and latest Dietrich Hofmann, “Hálogaland – Rogaland – Þelamörk. Zur Entwicklung der *i*-Deklination im Urnordischen”, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 97 (1982): 144–54), but may, however, be remnants of old *a*-stems (Proto-Nordic pl. \**rugōr* and \**þelōr*, respectively), which in due course were replaced by *ija*- and (later) *i*-stem formations (cf. ON *Rygir* and *Þilir*).

- 9 See *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ septentrionalis. Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog* (= *Lex.poet.*). Oprindeligt forfattet af Sveinbjörn Egilsson. Forøget og påny udgivet for Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab ved Finnur Jónsson, 2nd ed. (København: I kommission hos Lyng & Søn, 1931), s.v. *andspilli*.
- 10 See Magnus Olsen, “Gísla saga og hellediktningen”, *Festskrift til Finnur Jónsson den 29. maj 1928*, ed. by Johs. Brøndum-Nielsen et al. (København: Levin & Munksgaards Forlag, 1928), 6–14.
- 11 Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ septentrionalis* (Hafnia: J.D. Qvist & Comp, 1860), s.v. *annspillir*.

1931): “**andspillir**, m, som fører samtaler (med en anden), fortrolig ven, a. *Agða* (om Gisle) GSúrs 14”.<sup>12</sup> In his skaldic edition, Finnur translates the kenning in accordance with Sveinbjörn’s analysis as “Egðernes ven (Nordmanden, mig)”.<sup>13</sup> In the appendix with verse commentary in his 1929 edition of *Gísla saga*, Finnur does, however, allow for some doubt as to how this expression should be interpreted:

*Egða andspillir*, ‘som fører samtaler med Agðerne’, Gisle selv; det er usikkert, om Gisle bruger ‘Agðerne’ som et slags pars pro toto, = Nordmænd i almlh., eller om der mulig ligger noget bestemt — for os ukendt — til grund for denne betegnelse; i mangel heraf må vi holde os til det første.<sup>14</sup>

Here, Finnur touches on something important: a kenning does not necessarily have to be an empty label, where the different parts reveal nothing specific about the person or object involved; in some instances, a kenning can be characterizing or even situational, in cases where the separate parts of the kenning form a whole that, for instance, characterizes a person, in either a general way or by linkage to the actual situation in the poem. Snorri Sturluson, the great master of Old Norse skaldic art, was aware of this, and in his *Skáldskaparmál* he introduces the terms *viðkenning*, *sannkenning* and *fornafn*, used of kennings for persons where there is a closer tie between the reference (the kenning) and the referent (the person) than in “conventional” kennings:

Enn eru þau heiti er menn láta ganga fyrir nöfn manna. Þat kóllum vér viðkenningar eða sannkenningar eða fornöfn. Þat eru viðkenningar at nefna annan hlut réttu nafni ok kalla þann er hann vill nefna eiganda eða svá at kalla hann þess er hann nefndi föður eða afa; ái er hinn þriði. Heitir ok sonr ok arfi, arfuni, barn, jóð ok mögr, erfingi. [...] Þessi heiti kóllum vér viðkenningar ok svá þótt maðr sé kendr

12 *Lex.poet.*, s.v. *andspillir*.

13 *Skj.*, B, 1, 99. The same interpretation is found in *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 71 (“málvinur Egða: Norðmaður, Gíslí Súrsson”) and in many translations of *Gísla saga* into modern languages.

14 *Gísla saga Súrssonar*. Udgiven efter håndskrifterne af Det kongelige nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (København: Gyldendalske Boghandel / Nordisk Forlag, 1929), 100.

við bœ sinn eða skip sitt þat er nafn á eða eign sína þá er einkanafn er gefit. Þetta kóllum vér sannkenningar at kalla mann spekimann, \*ætluarmann, orðspeking, ráðsnilling, auðmilding, óslækinn, gæimann, glæsimum. Þetta eru fornöfn.<sup>15</sup>

Anthony Faulkes defines *við(r)kenning* as “circumlocution, a description (of a person) in terms of something else (i. e. in terms of an attribute or ‘accidental’; cf. *kenna við*), and *sannkenning* as “true description, a description (of a person) in terms of their qualities or essence”.<sup>16</sup> Snorri’s third term, *fornafn*, Faulkes defines as “substitution (of a name or description for the normal one), replacement (of a proper name), ‘pronomination’”.<sup>17</sup> This must in fact be the overarching category for both *við(r)kenning* and *sannkenning* – both types of kenning replace the name of the person, irrespectively of the kenning’s verbal content. The difference between these two terms is, in other words, whether the description is based on the person himself or on something that only belongs to or is associated with the person. Common to *við(r)kenning* and *sannkenning* is that both depend on facts of real life, for instance who one’s father is, e.g., *Haralds arfi* ‘Haraldr’s heir’ and *sonr Tryggva* ‘the son of Tryggvi’ for Óláfr Haraldsson and Óláfr Tryggvason in *Sigv Berv* 6,<sup>18</sup> or, in the case of mythological kennings, the name of a man’s spear, e.g., *vófuðr Gungnis* ‘the swinger of Gungnir (Óðinn’s spear)’ for Óðinn in *Bragi Frag* 4;<sup>19</sup> they do not rely on a totally different, often mythological world, as the more conventional kennings do. They are kennings “without metaphorical content”, as Margaret Clunies Ross puts it.<sup>20</sup> I believe that in *Egða andspillir*, this is exactly the case; in Snorri’s terminology this is a *við(r)kenning*, in which Gísli is *kendr við* his friendship with the *Egðir*.

I will soon explain how I believe this relationship should be understood, but first I will take a closer look at the earlier interpretation of *Egða andspillir* as ‘Norwegian’: Gísli was born and raised in Norway – accord-

15 Snorri Sturluson, *Edda. Skáldskaparmál*, vol. 1: *Introduction, Text and Notes*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), 107.

16 *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. Faulkes, 427, 382.

17 *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. Faulkes, 277–78.

18 *SkP* II, 17.

19 *SkP* III, 59.

20 Margaret Clunies Ross, *A history of Old Norse poetry and poetics* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 115.

ing to the Icelandic annals, his family came to Iceland in 952, at a time when Gísli must have been nearly twenty years old.<sup>21</sup> He would accordingly most likely have been identified as ‘a Norwegian’, if indeed such a term would have made any sense in the mid-tenth century (in Iceland he would more likely have been an *austmaðr* ‘easterner’). It is, however, problematic to take a kenning that literally means ‘confidant of the *Egðir*’ as a term for ‘Norwegian’. If one accepts that *Egðir* here are *pars pro toto* for ‘Norwegians’, a ‘confidant of the *Egðir*’, that is ‘of the Norwegians’, would rather be someone like a Swede or an Icelander; possibly it could also be a kenning for a Norwegian king (see below). If one instead takes the term *Egðir* more literally, then a ‘confidant of the *Egðir*’ would probably be a man from another part of Norway, presumably from a district close to Agder, for instance Rogaland. We know, however, that Gísli Súrsson came from Nordmøre, which is far from Agder, and one gets the impression that something else is at the bottom of the expression *Egða andspillir*.

Both Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson most likely based their interpretation of the kenning *Egða andspillir* as ‘Norwegian’ on a well-known kenning type in which a Norwegian king is referred to in periphrases such as *Dæla dróttinn*, *Hǫrða fylkir* or *Sygna rásir*.<sup>22</sup> But these are obvious cases of *pars pro toto*, in so far as the king is *dróttinn*, *fylikir*, *rásir* etc. over the inhabitants of a certain part of Norway as well as the country as a whole. Moreover, the base-word of such constructions is always a poetic synonym (*heiti*) for ‘king’ or ‘ruler’, as in the examples above. The only exceptions to this are some rare examples of *vinr* ‘friend’: Magnús góði is called *Hǫrða vinr* ‘friend of the *Hǫrðar*’ in Arnórr jarlaskáld’s *Magnúsdrápa* (ca. 1047), st. 1,<sup>23</sup> as is Óláfr Tryggvason in a half-stanza attributed to Hallar-Steinn (twelfth c.) that seems to be modeled on a stanza by Arnórr.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Haraldr Sigurðarson is called *gjafvinr Sygna* ‘gift-friend of the Sygnir’ in the *drápa* Arnórr composed about him (ca. 1066),

21 Cf. *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, xlii. As the ÍF editors note, it is highly unusual for the arrival of a settler to be precisely dated like this in the annals, and the explanation they give is that Ari fróði Þorgilsson (1067–1148) might have recorded the year in his writings.

22 For more examples, see Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden. Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik* (Bonn og Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder, 1921), 353–58.

23 *SkP* II, 207.

24 *SkP* I, 939–40.

st. 9.<sup>25</sup> It seems, then, that it was Arnórr who originally coined kennings for rulers by combining gentile names with words for ‘friend’.<sup>26</sup> A pattern for such periphrases was provided by already existing kennings for rulers like *gumna vinr* (Glúmr *Gráf* 3, ca. 970) and *vinr virða* (Sigv *Ást* 3, ca. 1035), both meaning ‘friend of men’.<sup>27</sup> However that may be, *Egða andspillir* could perhaps have functioned as a kenning for a Norwegian king – even though *andspillir* implies an intimacy (‘confidant’) that neither *vinr* nor *gjafvinr* does – they emphasize the custom of gift-giving and generosity – but it can hardly be a kenning for ‘a Norwegian’ in general.

The closest semantic parallels to *andspillir* among the base-words of kennings that I am aware of are *spjalli* m. and (of-)*rúni* m., both covering the meaning ‘confidant’. These words are used mainly in mythological kennings (e.g., *spjalli Hrungrnis*, a giant, *Hym* 16; *Þórs of-rúni*, i.e. Loki, *Þjóð Haustl* 8) or in kennings for ‘ruler’ (e.g., *gotna spjalli* ‘men’s confidant’, Arn *Hryn* 8; *rekka rúni* ‘warriors’ counsellor’, *Ótt Hfl* 13).<sup>28</sup> The only occurrence with a possible gentilic determinant is the Óðinn-kenning *Gauta spjalli* in Egill’s *Sonatorrek* 21, which could possibly be translated ‘the confidant of the Gautar’ and refer to a special association between Óðinn and the inhabitants of Götaland.<sup>29</sup> This could just as well, however, be a simple *heiti* for humans in general.<sup>30</sup> If so, the kenning *Egða andspillir* seems to be isolated from a semantic point of view as well. The closest match is represented by a verbal echo in Sigvatr’s *Vestrfararvísur* 2, vv. 1–2, with the collocation of a demonym and the neutral counterpart of *andspillir* in exactly the same metrical positions as in Gísli’s stanza: *Útan varðk, áðr Jóta | andspilli fekk’k stillis*, compare *Hyggið at, kvað Egða | andspilli Vör banda*.<sup>31</sup> Of course, here *Jóta* functions not as a determinant for *andspilli*, but the meaning is rather

25 *SkP* II, 270.

26 There are, however, Anglo-Saxon examples in *Beowulf*, e.g., *wine Scyldinga* (ll. 30, 2026), *wine Deniga* (l. 350). These certainly predate Arnórr’s poetry, even if the very latest date proposed for *Beowulf* is accepted.

27 *SkP* I, 251, 649.

28 *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, ed. Gustav Neckel, 4th ed. by Hans Kuhn (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1962), 90; *SkP* III, 443; *SkP* II, 192; *SkP* I, 756.

29 So Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden*, 252.

30 Cf. *Lex.poet.*, s.v. *Gautar*, and *SkP* I, 175, commenting on the Óðinn-kenning *Gauta-týr* in *Eyv Hásk* 1.

31 *SkP* I, 618.

*áðr fekk'k andspillir stillis Jóta* 'before I got an audience with the ruler of the Jótar (DANISH KING = Knútr)',<sup>32</sup> so the parallel is purely on the surface. Gísli's kenning thus remains unique.

### Who were Gísli's *Egðir*?

As already hinted at, I believe that there must be something concrete behind Gísli's referring to himself as *Egða andspillir* 'confidant of the *Egðir*'. There seems to have been some with whom Gísli was acquainted who could be called *Egðir*, and to whom Gísli alludes in one of the stanzas in which he relates the dream that reveals how much time he has left to live. These "friends" do not necessarily have to come from Agder themselves; it would probably suffice if their family hailed from there. Both *Landnámabók* and the sagas of Icelanders demonstrate that the early Icelanders had knowledge about their ancestors back in the places in Norway where the original settlers came from, and that this type of knowledge was kept in memory for a long time; in the introductory chapters in the family sagas it is customary to account for the forefathers of the leading characters, the *landnámsmenn*, and their background in one or more districts of Norway. One obvious reason for this wide-spread interest in genealogy in Iceland was the detailed legal regulation of inheritance, maintenance responsibilities and homicide fines in the Old Norse laws, which were also adopted in Iceland. These regulations made it necessary to keep trace of one's relatives at least up to fourth cousins.<sup>33</sup>

We may ask, then, whether there is anyone with forefathers from Agder mentioned in *Landnámabók* or in the sagas who could be connected to Gísli in one way or another? The one who first comes to mind is of course Vésteinn, Gísli's sworn brother and dearest friend, but his father came from Sogn, as so many other settlers in Iceland.<sup>34</sup> If instead we start at the other end and look for people in *Landnámabók* who are said to have come from Agder, there is one entry that stands out. It concerns a certain Þrándr mjóbeinn who arrived in Iceland together with the chieftain

32 So *SkP* I, 618.

33 See Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslands historie i mellomalderen. Fristatstida*, trans. by Hallvard Magerøy (Oslo – Bergen – Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 11.

34 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit I (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1968), 180, 188.

Geirmundur heljarskinn. About this Þrándr and his family, *Landnámabók* relates:

(S 114, H 86) Maðr hét Þrándr mjóbeinn; hann fór til Íslands með Geirmundi heljarskinni; hann var ættaðr af Qgðum. Þrándr nam eyjar fyrir vestan Bjarneyjaflóa ok bjó í Flatey; hann átti dóttur Gils skeiðarnefs; þeira son var Hergils hnappraz, er bjó í Hergilsey. Dóttir Hergils var Þorkatla, er átti Már á Reykjahólum. Hergils átti Þórqrnu, dóttur Ketils ilbreiðs; Ingjaldr var son þeira, er bjó í Hergilsey ok veitti Gísla Súrssyni. Fyrir þat gerði Borkr enn digri af honum eyjarnar, en hann keypti Hlíð í Þorskafirði. Son hans var Þórarinn, er átti Þorgerði, dóttur Glúms <Geirasonar>; þeira son var <Helgu->Steinarr. Þórarinn var með Kjartani í Svinadal, þá er hann fell.<sup>35</sup>

In other words: Ingjaldr in Hergilsey, who according to *Gísli saga* gave Gísli shelter for as many as three winters, during which Gísli built him three boats – one for each year –,<sup>36</sup> was a third-generation “*Egðr*” in Iceland (in a direct male lineage Þrándr > Hergils > Ingjaldr). Ingjaldr was important to Gísli and would be a good candidate for being his *andspillir* ‘confidant’, which *Gísli saga* bears witness to in an afterthought when Gísli has escaped from his enemies with the help of Ingjaldr:

Ok þat hafa menn mælt, at Ingjaldr hafi Gísla mest veitt ok þat at mestu gagni orðit; ok þat er sagt, at þá er Þorgrímr nef gerði seiðinn, at hann mælti svá fyrir, at Gísla skyldi ekki at gagni verða, þó at menn byrgi honum hér á landi; en þat kom honum eigi í hug at skilja til um úteyjar, ok endisk því þetta hóti lengst, þótt eigi yrði þess á lengðar auðit.<sup>37</sup>

The opening formula here – “þat hafa menn mælt” (in the S-version: “þat hafa menn oc sagt”)<sup>38</sup> – indicates that this is an appraisal which the saga author supposedly has taken from oral tradition about Gísli and is not

35 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 153–54.

36 *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 79.

37 *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 84.

38 *Membrana regía deperdita*, ed. by Agnete Loth, Editiones Arnarnagnænae, Series A 5 (København: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1960), 56.

something he has made up himself. In this context it is important that *Landnámabók* and *Gísla saga* are relying on totally different traditions about Ingjaldr in Hergilsey. In *Landnámabók* he is, as already noted, a third-generation “Egðr” in Iceland, and the island on which he lives, *Hergilsey*, is named after his father, Hergils, who was the first to settle there. (Islands are often named after the persons who settle there, and there is no reason to doubt the tradition here.) In *Gísla saga*, however, Ingjaldr is referred to as Gísli’s kinsman who arrived in Iceland together with him; he is introduced as a “systrungr Gísla at frændsemi ok hafði með honum farit út hingat til Íslands”.<sup>39</sup> As is pointed out in a comment in the ÍF edition, it is likely that the saga author confused Ingjaldr in Hergilsey with another Ingjaldr, who is introduced earlier in the saga and who actually was a kinsman of Gísli, i.e. the father of the siblings Geirmundr and Guðriðr who came with Gísli’s family to Iceland and were divided between Gísli and Þorkell when they parted households.<sup>40</sup> Both Geirmundr and Guðriðr play central roles later on in the saga.

Another difference between *Landnámabók* and *Gísla saga* concerns what is said about Ingjaldr’s subsequent destiny. In *Landnámabók* we are told that because Ingjaldr had given shelter to Gísli, Þorkr inn digri

39 *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 78; similar wording in S (*Membrana regia deperdita*, ed. Loth, 53).

40 The name of the father is mentioned only in the longer version of the saga (S): “þat voro born ij, het sveinninn Geirmundr enn mærin het Guðriðr, þessi voro born Ingialldz frænda þeiRa, Guðriðr for med G(isla) enn Geirmundr með Þorkeli” (*Membrana regia deperdita*, ed. Loth, 24). The fact that this first Ingjaldr is needed to explain the alternative genealogy that Ingjaldr in Hergilsey is given in *Gísla saga* (in both versions) is a strong argument in favour of the longer version having in this case the most original text. For the relationship between the different versions of *Gísla saga*, see Vésteinn Ólason and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, “Sammenhængen mellem tolkninger og tekstversioner af *Gísla saga*”, *Den fornordiska texten i filologisk och litteraturvetenskaplig belysning*, ed. by Kristinn Jóhannesson, Karl G. Johansson and Lars Lönnroth (Göteborg: Litteraturvetenskapliga Institutionen, Göteborgs Universitet, 2000), 96–120; Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, “Editing the Three Versions of *Gísla saga Súrssonar*”, *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, ed. by Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2010), 105–21, as well as Klaus Johan Myrvoll, “Islanding gjeng seg vill i norske fjell og dalar. Dei norske stadnamni i *Gísla saga* og fylgjone for teksthistoria”, *Þórðargleði slegið upp fyrir Þórð Inga Guðjónsson fimmtugan 3. desember 2018* (Reykjavík: Menningar- og minningarsjóður Mette Magnussen, 2018), 57–58.

“gerði [...] af honum eyjarnar” ‘took the isles from him as a fine’,<sup>41</sup> and that Ingjaldr had to move to the farm Hlíð in Þorskafjörður. In *Gísla saga* we hear nothing at all about these measures taken by Þorkr; the saga simply states (in both versions) that “Berki þykkir eigi þat til liggja at veita Ingjaldi atgöngu, landseta sínum” (M); “B(orkr) þottiz eigi mega veita atgöngu Ingjalldi landseta sinom, oc qvez eigi nenna at lata drepa hann” (S).<sup>42</sup> Even though Þorkr did not want to kill Ingjaldr, he could, of course, have driven him off the islands. In any case, it is conspicuous that the author of *Gísla saga* does not include any of the information that *Landnámabók* has to offer, namely, that Ingjaldr after having given refuge to Gísli, was forced to move from Hergilsey and settle anew in Þorskafjörður. This strengthens the hypothesis that the versions given in *Landnámabók* and *Gísla saga* must be traced back to different (oral) traditions about Ingjaldr, and they need to be assessed independently of each other.

The chapter about Ingjaldr’s family (see above, p. 209) is fairly similar in two of the versions of *Landnámabók*, *Sturlubók* and *Hauksbók* (of which the latter is most likely based on the former), but it is not found in the third version, *Melabók*.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, Björn Magnússon Ólsen argued convincingly that this chapter is a later addition to *Landnámabók*, introduced in the *Sturlubók*–*Hauksbók*-recension from an older, now lost version of *Þorskfirðinga saga* or *Gull-Þóris saga* (“Ældre Gull-Þóris saga”), which is referred to towards the end of the chapter about Ingjaldr in *Landnámabók*: “af því gerðisk Þorskfirðinga saga”.<sup>44</sup> In the extant version of *Þorskfirðinga saga*, which was written probably in the fourteenth century, we find statements about Ingjaldr in Hergilsey similar to those in *Sturlubók*:

Þórir eignaðist Flatey eptir Hallgrímu ok hafði þar sæði, en Hergils, son hennar, bjó í Hergilsey, sem fyrr var ritat. Hann var faðir Ingjalds, er þar bjó síðan, ok hann barg Gísla Súrssyni, ok fyrir

41 Translation from Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic–English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. by William A. Craigie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874), 225.

42 *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 84; *Membrana regia deperdita*, ed. Loth, 57.

43 *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, xv.

44 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 154; Björn Magnússon Ólsen, “Landnáma og Gull-Þóris (Þorskfirðinga) saga”, *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie*, 2nd series, vol. 25 (1910): 55–58.

þat gerði Börkr inn digri af honum eyjarnar, en Ingjaldr fór í Þorskafjarðardali ok bjó á Ingjaldsstöðum. Hans son var Þórarinn, er átti Þorgerði, dóttur Glúms Geirasonar. Þeira son var Helgu-Steinarr.<sup>45</sup>

The only major difference in the text of Sturlubók (see above, p. 209) is the name of Ingjaldr's farm in Þorskafjörður: in *Þorskfirðinga saga* it is called *Ingjaldsstaðir*, but *Hlíð* in Sturlubók. Whereas *Ingjaldsstaðir* is otherwise unknown, *Hlíð* is the name of a farm in Þorskafjörður to this very day. Kálund thought *Ingjaldsstaðir* could be an invention of the saga redactor because he did not know where in Þorskafjörður Ingjaldr actually lived or, less likely, that *Hlíð* may have been called *Ingjaldsstaðir* for a time.<sup>46</sup> Whether the redactor of the younger *Þorskfirðinga saga* copied this part from Sturlubók or took it over from the older *\*Þorskfirðinga saga* (as Björn Magnússon Ólsen believed), is irrelevant for our purposes. The crucial fact is that *Landnámabók* and *Þorskfirðinga saga* bear witness to a distinctive tradition about Ingjaldr in Hergilsey that is not represented in *Gísla saga*. According to this tradition, Ingjaldr was forced to re-settle in Þorskafjörður when his landlord, Þorkr, heard about his dealings with Gísli, and in this tradition, Ingjaldr was a descendant of the settler Þrándr mjóbeinn from Agder. This relationship may thus explain why Gísli, in one of his stanzas composed during his outlawry, refers to himself as the *Egða andspillir* 'confidant of the people of Agder'.

It is evident from certain other differences between the two texts concerning Gísli's closest family that the author of *Gísla saga* did not make use of *Landnámabók* as a source. In this case, there are also some discrepancies between the different versions of *Landnámabók*. It is probably the Hauksbók-version, which in addition to Sturlubók built on the older and now lost Styrmissbók, that represents the oldest layer of this chapter.<sup>47</sup> In Hauksbók, we are told that Þorbjörn súrr had the children Gísli, Þorkell and Þórdís, but no Ari is mentioned as in the saga. Further, it is said that

45 *Harðar saga*, ed. by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, Íslenzk fornrit XIII (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1991), 198.

46 P.E. Kristian Kálund, *Bidrag til en historisk-topografisk Beskrivelse af Island*, 2 vols (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1877–82), vol. 1, 519–20.

47 See Jón Jóhannesson, *Gerðir Landnámabókar* (Reykjavík: Félagsprentsmiðjan H.F. 1941), 105–06.

Porkell was married to a certain Sigríðr Sléttu-Bjarnardóttir, whereas in the saga his wife is Ásgerðr Þorbjarnardóttir. In the Sturlubók-version, these discrepancies are smoothed out in such a way that Ari is added as the last of Þorbjörn súrr's sons, and the mention of Þorkell's wife is deleted along with that of Gísli's wife Auðr.<sup>48</sup> In other words, Sturla Þórðarson must have known *Gísla saga* when he wrote his version of *Landnámabók*, and he brought the latter up to date with the information he found in *Gísla saga*, which he – for obvious reasons – considered more reliable. This strengthens the hypothesis that *Landnámabók* and *Gísla saga* were built on totally different traditions about Ingjaldr in Hergilsey as well. Moreover, it is reasonable to conclude that *Landnámabók* has the most reliable tradition about Ingjaldr, that he really was a descendant of settlers from Agder, and that he did not arrive in Iceland together with Gísli as *Gísla saga* relates.

### Is the stanza composed by Gísli?

The information gleaned so far leads us to a most important question: is the stanza composed by Gísli? Is it the historical person Gísli Súrsson who referred to himself as *Egða andspillir*, or is it someone else, later in the tradition about Gísli, who put these words in his mouth? In a recent article, I analyse in detail the stanzas in *Gísla saga* and rely on formal criteria for dating only, that is, numerous linguistic and metrical criteria as well as distinctive rhyme patterns that disappeared after the tenth century.<sup>49</sup> These formal criteria lead me to conclude that the stanzas of *Gísla saga* divide into four groups: authentic, inauthentic, uncertain (where no dating criterion applies) and ambiguous stanzas. The first group is the largest by far, with 19 out of a total of 35 complete stanzas, followed by 8 uncertain and 5 inauthentic, and finally 3 ambiguous stanzas, in which different criteria point in different directions. If one isolates the stanzas that have diagnostic criteria – 27 stanzas – there are almost four times as many authentic (19) as inauthentic (5), which indicates that four fifths of the stanzas in *Gísla saga* are authentic. For details, I refer to my article.

The stanza that contains the kenning *Egða andspillir*, st. 17 in the saga, was grouped among the “uncertain” stanzas in this analysis; that means

48 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 180–81.

49 Myrvoll, “The Authenticity of Gísli's Verse”.

that it did not have any diagnostic criteria. In other words, from a formal perspective it is as likely to be authentic as inauthentic. Its status must, if possible, be established on the basis of other arguments, and it seems reasonable to place some emphasis on the peculiar kenning *Egða andspillir*. This kind of *við(r)kenning* (see above, p. 204 f.) presupposes some specific knowledge about the person referred to (in this case Gísli) that would not necessarily be available to someone outside his closest circle. It depends, of course, on what exactly the person is *kendr við*, but in this instance, the kenning must have been difficult to decipher for someone outside Gísli's inner circle even in his own time; the kenning bears a clear stamp of being a covert nod to a select audience, which is reasonable to believe that Gísli at any rate would have had during his outlaw years. Since Ingjaldr in both versions of *Gísla saga* is made into a relative of Gísli, and the saga author does not know or ignores the tradition about Ingjaldr and his family transmitted in *Landnámabók* and *Þorskfirðinga saga*, it is highly unlikely that the author of *Gísla saga* could have composed st. 17 – even though he may have been responsible for a few other stanzas in the saga.<sup>50</sup> The fact that the stanza is placed in the narrative two winters before Gísli arrives at Ingjaldr's in Hergilsey would seem to support this conclusion, but only if the stanza in reality was performed for the first time at Ingjaldr's. The saga author may not – as is often the case in Old Norse sagas – have been familiar with the original context of the stanza and has perhaps chosen to put it in where he thought it would fit.<sup>51</sup> This is, however, not necessarily true here: since Gísli sought refuge with Ingjaldr and was received in such a friendly manner, they must have known each other well before Gísli arrived in Hergilsey. It would, then, perhaps not be unexpected that Gísli should allude to this acquaintance in a stanza composed and performed elsewhere – he might just have invented the kenning to satisfy metrical requirements. The author of *Gísla saga* has Gísli recite all his poetic dream sequences to his wife Auðr in Geirþjófsfjörður. This may or may not be historically correct – we cannot be certain – but there are some indications of this in the stanzas themselves: st. 16, whose content is closely connected to st. 17, describing Gísli entering the hall with the fires, twice addresses

50 See Myrvoll, "The Authenticity of Gísli's Verse", 250–51.

51 For some examples of stanzas that appear to have been misplaced in the narrative in *Gísla saga*, see Myrvoll, "The Authenticity of Gísli's Verse", 254–55.

a woman (*fold unnfúrs* ‘land of the wave-fire (gold)’ and *Eir aura* ‘goddess of the gold’). It would make perfect sense if the woman was Auðr, as the saga author clearly understood it, which implies that st. 17, including the kenning *Egða andspillir*, was first performed for Auðr as well.

With regard to the special kenning *Egða andspillir* as a *við(r)kenning*, I find it quite implausible that someone could have fabricated this stanza before the written saga came into being. Many scholars have attributed spurious poetry in the sagas to the twelfth century, under the assumption that there was a flowering of saga-like, “prosimetrical” oral tradition at that time.<sup>52</sup> There is, however, nothing in the Old Norse sources to suggest such a development; instead, the actual comparable texts that we have from the twelfth century are either lengthy skaldic poems in which the whole narrative is contained within the poem without any accompanying prose (e.g., *Plácitusdrápa*, *Rekstefja*), or rather rudimentary prose works with little poetry or none at all (e.g., *Íslendingabók*, *Ágrip*). A supposed prosimetrical “oral saga”, developed through the continuous production of spurious skaldic stanzas, thus seems unlikely at this stage of Old Norse literary development.<sup>53</sup> Even if one were willing to accept the possibility of such productions at a general level, it would be very difficult to argue in favour of this in the particular case of *Gísla saga* st. 17: the stanza requires a poet who knows Gísli’s story inside out and who is aware of the fact that Ingjaldr in Hergilsey was of Agder descent – an “*Egðr*” – and who finds it appropriate for Gísli to insert a hidden allusion to his friend in one of his stanzas. I cannot think of any person being capable of this other than Gísli himself, and for that reason I regard the stanza as authentic.

## Another stanza about Ingjaldr

Relevant in this context is the fact that Ingjaldr is mentioned in yet another stanza by Gísli, in st. 23 of the saga. That stanza is quoted when Gísli real-

52 See, e.g., Peter Foote, “An Essay on the Saga of Gísli and its Icelandic Background”, *The Saga of Gísli*, trans. George Johnston (London: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 93–134; Russell Poole, “Compositional Technique in some Verses from *Gumlaugs saga*”, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 80 (1981): 469–85; *idem*, “The Origins of the *Máblíðingavísur*”, *Scandinavian Studies* 57 (1985): 244–85.

53 For a full rebuttal of this kind of reasoning, see Mikael Males, “1100-talets pseudonyma skaldediktning: En kritisk granskning”, *Maal og Minne* 2017 (1): 1–24.

izes that he must flee from his enemies after having stayed at Ingjaldr's for three winters. The content of the stanza fits rather well with its context in the saga. The stanza runs as follows, with variants, prose order and translation:<sup>54</sup>

Ráðs leitar nú rítar  
 ruðr – vekjum mjöð Suðra –,  
 skorð, þvít skiljask verðum,  
 skjaldsteins, frá Ingjaldi.  
 Þó munk, hyrs, at hvóru  
 hafa, bláfoldar skafla  
 snyrtigótt, né sýtik,  
 snauð, þats mér verðr auðit.

mjöð] mjök *B*; skjald-] skáld *S*; hyrs] hlys *B*, hlyrs *M*; -gótt] -lát *B*;  
 snauð, þats] snúð þanns *S*; verðr] verð *S*, er *B*

Rítar ruðr leitar nú ráðs, skorð skjaldsteins, þvít verðum skiljask frá Ingjaldi; vekjum mjöð Suðra. Þó munk at hvóru hafa, þats mér verðr auðit, snauð bláfoldar skafla hyrs snyrtigótt. Né sýtik.

The shield's shoot [WARRIOR = Gísli] now looks for a plan, prop of 'shield-colour' [= *baugr* 'ring'] [WOMAN], because we [I] must part from Ingjaldr; we [I] stir the mead of Suðri [POETRY]. Yet I will nonetheless accept what is fated for me, poor blue-land's crest's fire's adorned door [SEA > WAVE > GOLD > WOMAN]. Nor do I complain.

This stanza attests what “menn hafa mælt” (see above, p. 209), namely, that Ingjaldr was in fact important to Gísli. The skald mentions Ingjaldr by name, and he includes a meta-comment that he is “stirring the mead of Suðri”, that is, the mead of poetry or the poem itself. Apparently, Gísli has had ample opportunity to make use of his skaldic gift during the years he has stayed at Ingjaldr's, and his poetry has probably found resonance in the household of the *Egðir*. In this context, one should attach importance to the fact mentioned in both *Landnámabók* and *Þorskfirðinga saga* (but not

54 Once again, the normalization of the stanza as well as the translation are my own, but I have been guided by Kari Ellen Gade's forthcoming edition of Gísli's poetry for *SkP*. Compare also *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, 82.

in *Gísla saga*) that the son of Ingjaldr, Þórarinn, was married to a daughter of the skald Glúmr Geirason, who stayed at the court of King Haraldr gráfeldr in Norway and composed *Gráfeldardrápa* in the memory of him ca. 970, about the same time as Gísli is supposed to have been in Hergilsey.<sup>55</sup> This points to a certain poetic milieu around Ingjaldr. Ingjaldr possibly showed an interest in the skaldic art himself, and when Gísli alludes to him and his family with the rather obscure kenning *Egða andspillir*, he might have had Ingjaldr as one of his addressees and thought that Ingjaldr would grasp the allusion. In any case, through these stanzas Gísli and Ingjaldr would share a common literary destiny. We may now understand better the desperation of st. 23, in which Gísli comes straight to the point: “Ráðs leitar nú ritar ruðr”, ‘the warrior [I] now looks for a plan’, – and then: “Þvíit skiljask verðum frá Ingjalði”, ‘because we [I] must part from Ingjaldr’. The peaceful time at the friend’s house in Hergilsey is now over; Gísli must run away.

Incidentally, as was the case with st. 17, st. 23 was not included among the clearly authentic stanzas in the analysis in my article for *JEGP*. Rather, it was categorized as “ambiguous” because of an uneven rhyme in verse 6 (*hafa: skafla*), where *f* rhymes with *fl*; at that point I regarded this either as an early feature – with the only parallel in Bragi’s *Ragnarsdrápa* v. 14.3 – or as a late, misconstrued rhyme.<sup>56</sup> In light of the findings presented in this article, I am now inclined to regard this as an early feature. There is otherwise nothing in the stanza to suggest a late date. To conclude positively: if we now, for reasons of content, accept both stanzas 17 and 23 as genuine compositions by Gísli, the number of authentic stanzas in *Gísla saga* increases from 19 in my previous article to 21 (of a total of 35 complete stanzas).

## Inherited regional identities?

The question that arises is to what extent the kenning *Egða andspillir* ‘confidant of the *Egðir*’ by Gísli can be used as an indication of inherited regional or tribal identities in Iceland in Gísli’s times. If the kenning in the foregoing is understood correctly and the stanza is placed in its original

55 See the chronology in the introduction to *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, xli–xliii.

56 See Myrvoll, “The Authenticity of Gísli’s Verse”, 245; *SkP* III, 47.

context, this implies that Ingjaldr, whose family had lived in Iceland for three generations, still could be identified by the home district of his paternal grandfather, Þrándr mjóbeinn, who arrived in Iceland from Agder some time around the year 900 (judged from the count of generations; Ingjaldr in Hergilsey was probably about the same age as Gísli or a bit older, and born around 930). Was this a common phenomenon in Iceland in the tenth century, or was there something special about these *Egðir*? Could people who had lived in Iceland for a couple of generations still be characterized and identified by the home district of their ancestors back in Norway? One could point to the fact that Iceland at that time still was a community of settlers; the people who arrived in Iceland during the 870s came to a land almost without any previous population – the people who may have been present, the Christian *Papar*, soon left.<sup>57</sup> There could then hardly have been any local or regional *Icelandic* identities; such identities would need some generations to develop, after people had had time to establish roots in the new country. It is thus a reasonable hypothesis that the first couple of generations of settlers in Iceland were more strongly tied to the districts in Norway where their family had come from than to the fjords and headlands in Iceland where they had recently settled.<sup>58</sup>

There is a parallel from more recent times: in North America, immigrants from Europe identified with their homelands and could regard themselves as “Norwegian”, “Swedish”, “German”, “Irish”, “Italian” etc., a long time after their forefathers had left the countries referred to. In spite of the apparent similarities, however, there are also differences between this tendency and tenth-century Iceland. The most important is that, in Iceland, language did not distinguish immigrants coming from different parts of Norway – or from different parts of Scandinavia for that matter – whereas in nineteenth-century North America it most certainly did so. A common Old Norse language – at least as long as Irish-speaking thralls

57 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 5. The oldest excavated settlements in Iceland are found just above the tephra plane caused by the volcanic eruption in South Iceland ca. 871, see Orri Vésteinsson, “The Archaeology of *Landnám*. Early Settlement in Iceland”, *Vikings. The North Atlantic Saga*, ed. by William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward (Washington – London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 164.

58 We noted above that knowledge about the roots of one’s family was important among other things for lawsuits about inheritance. The Icelandic family sagas provide several examples, for instance the famous case of *Egils saga*.

are set aside – served to facilitate a greater integration in Iceland. Nor did there exist any strong national identities in the Viking Age, whereas the reverse was clearly the case at the time of the great immigration waves to North America in the nineteenth century. What we today know as “Norway” was probably still in the making.<sup>59</sup> We may be quite certain that old Norwegian districts such as Hålogaland, Møre, Sogn, Hordaland and Rogaland can be traced far back in time, and in the Viking Age people probably had more or less strong identities tied to these smaller “home-lands”. It would not then be remarkable if a family that came to Iceland from Agder in the early 900s continued to consider themselves and – more importantly – continued to be considered by others as *Egðir* for a long time after they had migrated.

These are, of course, just more or less persuasive hypotheses; we are left with very little material on which we base our assumptions. Nevertheless, it seems worth-while to consider whether the alternative hypothesis, that there was something special about these *Egðir*, could have something to recommend itself. If so, the existence of a certain “*Egzk*” identity in the tenth century would not have to be assumed for all families in Iceland, irrespective of their origin. There are some circumstances, particularly in *Landnámabók*, that suggest that there was something distinctive about the families who came to Iceland from Agder. For one thing, it is not obvious why someone should be identified by such a vast area as Agder. To the contrary, Gísli Súrsson and his family were not regarded as *Mærir*, but rather as *Súrdælir*, and Gísli’s patronym is *Súrsson*, not \**Þorbjarnarson*, so here the ties seem to be to a particular place in Møre (today’s Surnadalen, ON *Súrnadalr*), rather than to Møre as a district. That also goes for such nick-names (of early settlers) as Þorbjörn gaulverski (from Gaular), Heyjangrs-Björn and others. What, then, could be so distinctive about people from Agder? Interestingly, we see that there is a certain link between settlers from Agder and participation in the battle of Hafrsfjord (ca. 900), and this connection could have been even stronger in reality than it appears in *Landnámabók*. Here, it is important to remember that the battle of Hafrsfjord and its alleged consequences – Haraldr hárfagri’s *ofríki* ‘harsh rule’, which forced many to flee the country – has become an integral part

59 See, e.g., Claus Krag, *Vikingtid og rikssamling 800–1130*, Aschehougs Norgeshistorie, vol. 2 (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995), 89–91.

of Icelandic national mythology.<sup>60</sup> Hence it may well be that the “veterans” from Hafrsfjord and their descendants enjoyed a special status in Iceland, or at least regarded themselves as distinct from the rest of the settlers, and that the characteristics of this exceptional branch of people were later, in the Icelandic historical tradition, generalized to apply to all Icelanders; they had apparently all resisted the consolidating efforts of Haraldr hárfagri, if not necessarily at the battle of Hafrsfjord.

There is some evidence to suggest that those who fought against Haraldr at Hafrsfjord represented one or perhaps even two petty kingdoms to the south and south-east of Haraldr’s original kingdom, which most likely was limited to Hordaland, though it possibly also included Sogn.<sup>61</sup> In Þorbjörn hornklofi’s *Haraldskvæði*, which describes the battle in most lively terms and which was probably composed shortly thereafter, the skald speaks of ships that came from the east (“knerrir kvómu austan”, st. 7) and that the “austkylfur”, ‘the east-cudgels’, “of Jaðar hljópu / heim ór Hafrsfirði” ‘ran across Jæren, homewards from Hafrsfjord’ (st. 11).<sup>62</sup> The last sentence in particular makes the most sense geographically if the home of Haraldr’s adversaries was somewhere in Agder. We dimly perceive the contours of a lost kingdom of Agder, possibly also a smaller, conjoined kingdom in Rogaland, since Haraldr, judging from *Haraldskvæði*, had two opponents in Hafrsfjord, Kjotvi and Haklangr (both nicknames). In *Heimskringla*, there is a whole coalition of kingdoms opposing Haraldr at Hafrsfjord, among them “Kjotvi inn auðgi, konungr af Qgðum, ok Þórir haklangr, sonr hans”.<sup>63</sup> This identification is probably only an interpretation of the poem on the part of the saga author, but in the case of at least these opponents the connection to Agder seems to be correct. Before the battle, a kingdom of Agder might have existed side by side with Haraldr’s *Hjorða*-kingdom and the Vestfold-kingdom of the kings of *Ynglingatal*.

60 See, e.g., Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslands historie i mellomalderen*, 22–25, who admittedly is well on the way to accepting the “official” version of these events.

61 The reconstruction of Haraldr’s original kingdom is based in part on *Haraldskvæði*, in part on the royal estates that the kings’ sagas say that Haraldr possessed. The southernmost of these, at least Utstein and perhaps also Avaldsnes, he might have won at Hafrsfjord. See also Krag, *Vikingtid og rikssamling 800–1130*, 84–86.

62 *SkP* I, 100, 106.

63 Snorri Sturluson. *Heimskringla* I, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit XXVI (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941), 114.

It is possible that the king of Agder was a vassal under the Danish king just like the king of Vestfold.<sup>64</sup> Naturally, the most prominent leaders (of those who had not fallen) must have had the most compelling reasons to flee the country after such a decisive battle as Hafrsfjord. People further down the social ladder would have had better opportunities to come to terms with the new rulers. On this assumption, it follows that a substantial number of the settlers coming late to Iceland from Agder would have been prominent aristocrats in the then fallen kingdom of Agder, and this circumstance may have strengthened their identity as *Egðir* even long after they had arrived in Iceland, as a precious family memory.

These people from Agder, including the veterans of Hafrsfjord, would, however, amount to only a small minority of the settlers in Iceland, and they must have come later than most other immigrants, about a generation after the first settlers in the 870s. A passage of *Landnámabók* (see below) indicates as much, and it is also evident from a plain count of generations based on genealogies in *Landnámabók* and other sources. Archaeological excavations indicate that large parts of Iceland were settled within a relatively short period of time; the archaeologist Orri Vésteinsson claims that the best land was taken already by the 880s.<sup>65</sup> That is relatively long before the battle of Hafrsfjord, which most likely was fought in the last decade of the ninth century or as late as around the year 900.<sup>66</sup> In other words, the

64 Krag, *Vikingtid og rikssamling 800–1130*, 89.

65 Orri Vésteinsson, “The Archaeology of *Landnám*”, 167.

66 The traditional dating of the battle of Hafrsfjord to 872 cannot be correct, as pointed out by Halvdan Koht, “Um eit nytt grunnlag for tidrekninga i den elste [*sic*] historia vår”, in *idem, Imhogg og utsyn i norsk historie* (Kristiania: Aschehoug, 1921), 34–51. Koht relied to a large extent on the number of generations in otherwise uncertain royal lineages when he argued for a dating of the battle closer to the year 900. A more reliable method would be to base the dating on the fact that the son of Haraldr hárfagri, Eiríkr blóðøx, must have been still going strong and able to bear arms when he fell in combat in 954 on Stainmore in Cumbria on the Yorkshire border, and he was thus probably born around 895 at the earliest (so also Koht, “Um eit nytt grunnlag”, 41; Claus Krag, “Eirík 1 Blóðøks”, *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, vol. 2, *Bry–Ernø*, ed. by Jon Gunnar Arntzen (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget 2000), 435–36). Even though the kings’ sagas say that Eiríkr took over the kingdom after his father because he was the only queen-born of the brothers, it is more likely that Eiríkr inherited the kingdom by virtue of being the eldest (*pace* Krag, “Eirík 1 Blóðøks”); he was probably born about the same time as the battle, and not more than twenty years later (as the traditional dating implies). This is confirmed by the fact that his mother, Queen Ragnhildr, is mentioned in *Haraldskvæði*, in a manner that on the one hand gives the impression that she had been married to Haraldr for a while, and on the other lends confidence to the authenticity

*Egðir* from Hafrsfjord had to be satisfied with less fertile land than Ingolfr and his men who had arrived earlier; a fellow named *Qunndr tréfotr*, for example, whose participation in the battle of Hafrsfjord is mentioned in *Landnámabók*,<sup>67</sup> settled on a farm with the telling name of *Kaldbakr* ‘cold back’.

Recent DNA-studies of the Icelandic population have shown a considerable genetic element from the British Isles, and particularly so in the maternal lineage (mitochondrial DNA): as much as 62 percent of the maternal lines of today’s Icelanders can be traced back to Gaelic women, whereas between 75 and 80 percent of the male lines lead back to Scandinavia.<sup>68</sup> The simplest explanation of this is that a considerable contingent of the men who settled Iceland had lived in the British Isles for some time, that they had intermarried with Gaelic women, and had children by them. This explanation may be backed up to a certain extent by *Landnámabók* and the sagas, where it is a topos that Irish kings’ daughters were brought to Iceland and eventually married to Icelandic chieftains. Such intermarriages were probably not as common among the settlers that came somewhat later from Agder, who most likely were of Norse origin in both male and female lines. Even this may have contributed to distinguish them within the early Icelandic population.

of the stanza in question (st. 13 in the editions, e.g., *SkP* I, 107–08). A dating of *Eiríkr blóðøx*’s birth to about 895–900 and the battle of Hafrsfjord to ca. 900 seems on the whole to give the most likely chronology.

67 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 198.

68 Agnar Helgason *et al.*, “Estimating Scandinavian and Gaelic Ancestry in the Male Settlers of Iceland”, *American Journal of Human Genetics* 67 (2000): 714; *idem*, “mtDNA and the Islands of the North Atlantic: Estimating the Proportions of Norse and Gaelic Ancestry”, *American Journal of Human Genetics* 68 (2001): 731. A recent study of skeletons from the settlement period indicates a somewhat larger Gaelic element in the male lines (Y-chromosome) in a sample of 24 pre-Christian and 1 early-Christian individual, which shows a median of 57 percent Old Norse origin (S. Sunna Ebenesersdóttir *et al.*, “Ancient genomes from Iceland reveal the making of a human population”, *Science* 360 (2018): 1028–32). This is, as the authors call attention to, best explained by assuming that the men of Gaelic ethnicity came to Iceland as slaves and had inferior opportunities for successful reproduction than men of Norse origin. This must have been the case both short and long term, since their inferior socio-economic status would in most instances be inherited by the next generations.

## Evidence of people from Agder and Hafrsfjord-veterans in *Landnámabók*

How do these hypotheses about a lost kingdom of Agder and latecoming *Egðir* to Iceland fit in with the written sources? We have seen that Ingjaldr's paternal grandfather, Þrándr mjóbeinn, supposedly came to Iceland as one of the men of the chieftain Geirmundr heljarskinn. According to *Landnámabók*, Geirmundr was a “herkonungr” and “átti ríki á Rogalandi”.<sup>69</sup> We learn that his reason for emigrating to Iceland was that he had been away from his kingdom for a long time “í vestrvíking”, and when he turned home, the battle of Hafrsfjord had taken place, and Haraldr had won all of Rogaland. Geirmundr then saw no other possibility except leaving for Iceland to seek his fortune there. According to *Landnámabók*, “Úlfr enn skjálgi frændi hans ok Steinólfr enn lági, son Hrólfhs hersis af Qgðum ok Qndóttar, systur Qlvis barnakarls” travelled together with him, and a little later we hear that also Þrándr mjóbeinn was with Geirmundr.<sup>70</sup> In other words, two of Geirmundr's closest allies came from Agder, and one of them is explicitly said to have been the son of a *hersir* and thus belonged to the aristocracy. Geirmundr's relative Ulfr, on the other hand, was most likely from the same district as Geirmundr himself in Rogaland. All these men took land in Breiðafjörður and in the Westfjords: Geirmundr first settled in Skarðsströnd, but later moved to the far north of the Westfjords and had his home at Hornstrandir;<sup>71</sup> Ulfr inn skjalgí settled in Reykjanes,<sup>72</sup> Steinólfr inn lági in Fagradalur in Skarðsströnd<sup>73</sup> and Þrándr mjóbeinn in Flatey.<sup>74</sup> Apart from those men who were closely associated with Geirmundr, there were other settlers from Agder in the same area as well. For example, there is one Eyvindr kné who “fór af Qgðum til Íslands” and took land in Álftafjörður and Seyðisfjörður.<sup>75</sup>

69 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 152.

70 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 152–53.

71 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 153–54.

72 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 161.

73 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 156.

74 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 153.

75 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 187, 189.

These people were further connected through marital bonds: the son of Ulfr, Atli inn rauði, was married to a daughter of Steinolfr, Þorbjörg,<sup>76</sup> and their son, Már, was married to Þorkatla, the daughter of Hergils hnappraz after whom Hergilsey is named,<sup>77</sup> and whose father was Þrándr mjóbeinn; in other words, she was the sister of Ingjaldr in Hergilsey. The wife of Þrándr mjóbeinn was the daughter of Gils skeiðarnef, whose other daughter, Þorbjörg knarrarbringa, married Jorunðr, the son of Ulfr inn skjalgi.<sup>78</sup> There were thus multiple bonds for generations between these families from Agder.

Aside from this clustering in Breiðafjörður and in the Westfjords, there is mention of some people from Agder who settled in other areas, but these are fewer by far. Several places in *Landnámabók* mention a certain Qndóttir kráka, “er bjó í Hvínisfirði á Qgðum” and was married to Signý Sighvatsdóttir from Hlíðir in Víkin, and who was a kinsman by marriage to Helgi inn magri.<sup>79</sup> Qndóttir’s sons were Ásmundr and Ásgrímr, who came separately to Iceland and both settled in Eyjafjörður; in *Landnámabók*, the family of Ásgrímr is traced down to Hvamm-Sturla.<sup>80</sup> Together with Ásmundr a certain Bøðolfr ór Hvíni came to Iceland,<sup>81</sup> the son of a Grímr Grímolfsson “af Qgðum”, who took land at Tjörnes in Suður-Þingeyjarsýsla in North Iceland.<sup>82</sup> Later, a daughter of Bøðolfr, Þorgerðr, was married to Ásmundr.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Qndóttir kráka had a sister’s son, Þrándr mjòksigliandi.<sup>84</sup> Of him it is told that he “var í Hafrsfirði mót Haraldi konungi ok varð síðan landflótti ok kom til Íslands síð landnámatiðar”; here we have an explicit reference to someone who fought in

76 In *Sturlubók* and *Hauksbók* it is said that Þorbjörg was a *sister* of Steinolfr, but she was more likely his daughter, as related in *Melabók* (see comment in *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 161).

77 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 161.

78 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 161, 163.

79 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 248. Peculiarly, this Qndóttir kráka has the same name, but in masculine form, as Qndótt, the mother of Steinolfr inn lági (see above). Possibly, different persons have been mixed up here, since the name, whether male or female, is uncommon.

80 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 264–67.

81 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 265.

82 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 278–80.

83 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 265.

84 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 249, 260.

Hafrsfjord and came “late” to Iceland. Þrándr took land between Þjórsá and Laxá and lived at Þrándarholt.<sup>85</sup>

Finally, there were some people from Agder within the area claimed by Ingolfur on the Reykjanes peninsula, among them a certain Alfr inn egzki who “stókk fyrir Haraldi konungi af Qgðum ór Nóregi”.<sup>86</sup> He lived at Gnúpar in Ölfus in Southwest Iceland. Alfr had no children but brought with him to Iceland a brother’s son, Þorgrímr Grímolfsson, who would inherit from him. Þorgrímr was the paternal grandfather of Þóroddr goði (the maternal grandfather of Bishop Ísleifr) and Qzurr, who married Bera, the daughter of Egill Skalla-Grímsson.<sup>87</sup> Just before Alfr inn egzki, *Landnámabók* (both S and H) mentions Ormr inn gamli, “son Eyvindar jarls, Arnmóðssonar jarls, Nereiðssonar jarls ens gamla”, who took land in the same area; he lived at Hvammur in Ölfus. It is told of his father Eyvindr jarl that he “var með Kjøtva auðga mót Haraldi konungi í Hafrsfirði”.<sup>88</sup> This Ormr Eyvindarson probably came from Agder as well; Magnus Olsen has placed him among the members of the aristocratic Oddernes-family, which he reconstructs on the basis of two runic inscriptions on one and the same stone monument in the central church site Oddernes outside today’s Kristiansand.<sup>89</sup> The oldest of these inscriptions, from the tenth century, however fragmentary, mentions a (n)iriþs sun, and the other, from ca. 1025–1050, an ayintr (= *Æy[v]indr*), who states that he karþi kirkiu þisa (= *garði kirkju þessa* ‘made this church’) ... aopali sinu (= *á óðali sínu* ‘on his property’) and adds that he was kosunr olafs hins hala (= *go[ð]sunr Óláfs hins hal[g]a* ‘godson of St Óláfr’).<sup>90</sup> This Eyvindr is probably identical with the Eyvindr úrarhorn who, according to *Heimskringla*, was a close friend of Óláfr inn helgi.<sup>91</sup> The similar names (*Nereiðr*, *Eyvindr*), the place (Agder) and the high positions that these men

85 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 379.

86 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 390, cf. pp. 391, 393.

87 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 392–93.

88 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 390.

89 *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer* (= *NlyR*), ed. by Magnus Olsen, 5 vols (Oslo 1941–1960), vol. 3, 97–100.

90 *NlyR*, vol. 3, 78, 80.

91 Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla* II, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit XXVII (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1945), 82–85.

held – *jarls* in *Landnámabók* and church builder and the king’s godson in the Oddernes-inscription – seem to confirm Olsen’s hypothesis.

*Landnámabók* provides information about other men who fought against Haraldr in Hafrsfjord without revealing any link to Agder. About a certain Balki, who is supposed to have been “son Blæings Sótasonar af Sótanesi” (i.e. Sotenäs in Västergötland), it is told that “hann barðisk á mót Haraldri konungi í Hafrsfirði”. Balki took the whole of Hrútafjörður and lived at Bær.<sup>92</sup> Balki was the paternal great-grandfather of Björn Hítöelakappi, the main character of *Bjarnar saga*. Likewise, *Landnámabók* places a Hallvarðr ságandi, who “var í orrostu móti Haraldri konungi í Hafrsfirði”, in “Súgandafjörður ok Skálavík til Stiga”,<sup>93</sup> which is in Ísafjarðarsýsla in North-West Iceland, close to the aforementioned Eyvindr kné.<sup>94</sup> Finally, Qnundr tréfótr, “son Ófeigs burlufótar, Ívarssonar beytils”, was “í móti Haraldri konungi í Hafrsfirði ok lét þar fót sinn”. Afterwards, he left for Iceland and settled in Strandir in the Westfjords and lived at Kaldbakr,<sup>95</sup> not far from one of the farms of Geirmundr heljarskinn. Qnundr, according to *Landnámabók*, was the paternal great-grandfather of Grettir Ásmundarson, the hero of *Grettis saga*, and the brother of Guðbjörg, who was supposedly the paternal grandmother of Ásta Guðbrandsdóttir, the mother of Óláfr inn helgi. The historicity of this last lineage could be contested, but it would not be surprising if Óláfr, who was clearly of Norwegian descent, had ancestors in the fallen kingdom of Agder.

To sum up: there is a clear match in *Landnámabók* between an Agder origin and participation in or association with the battle of Hafrsfjord. That applies to Geirmundr heljarskinn and his men, as well as to Þrándr mjøksiglandi, who came to Iceland “late in the settlement period”, Alfr inn egzki and Ormr inn gamli, the son of a *jarl* and probably of the Oddernes-family. This is hardly accidental, but lends credence to the hypothesis that Haraldr’s main adversaries in Hafrsfjord were aristocrats from Agder.

92 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 89, 200.

93 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 186.

94 See the settlement map of the Westfjords in *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, “Vestfirðir”.

95 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, 198.

## Conclusions

In this article, we have seen that the kenning *Egða andspillir* in st. 17 of *Gísla saga* most likely should be understood as a *við(r)kenning*, as a factual statement about Gísli, that he indeed was ‘a confidant of the *Egðir*’, that is the people from Agder. We have further seen that the *Egðir* referred to are most likely to be the family of Ingjaldr in Hergilsey, who according to *Gísla saga*, *Landnámabók* and *Porskfirðinga saga* housed the outlaw Gísli, for three full winters if *Gísla saga* is to be believed. According to *Landnámabók*, Ingjaldr’s paternal grandfather, Þrándr mjóbeinn, came to Iceland from Agder as one of the men of the legendary chieftain Geirmundr heljarskinn. The author of *Gísla saga* evidently did not know this tradition and confused Ingjaldr in Hergilsey with another Ingjaldr who plays a marginal role earlier in the saga and who was a Norwegian relative of Gísli. This, in turn, is a strong argument in favour of the authenticity of the stanza that contains the kenning *Egða andspillir*: it was not composed by the author of *Gísla saga*, notwithstanding that he may have composed other stanzas in the saga.<sup>96</sup> The obscure kenning *Egða andspillir*, which would make sense only to a select group of people, is a strong indication that this stanza belongs to the core of Gísli’s authentic compositions. The circumstance that Ingjaldr is mentioned in another of Gísli’s stanzas (st. 23 in the saga) – this time by name – where Gísli is lamenting that the good days at Ingjaldr’s in Hergilsey have come to an end, and that he has to run away to escape his enemies, points in the same direction: both stanzas (17 and 23) should be regarded as genuine productions of the historical Gísli, and there is nothing formal about them, in language, metre or rhyme, that precludes such a conclusion.

These observations on Gísli’s poetic language raise the question whether the mention of Ingjaldr’s household as the *Egðir* implies that such classification or characterization of the settlers according to their ancestors’ home districts in Norway was a common feature of early Icelandic society. There is nothing unreasonable about such a hypothesis in itself, given that Iceland at the time was a recently settled community, but a study of persons who are said to have come to Iceland from Agder in *Landnámabók* rather suggests that they came relatively late (about one generation after

96 See Myrvoll, “The Authenticity of Gísli’s Verse”, 250–51.

the first settlers in the 870s) and had a special identity and status linked to the fact that the military leaders among them had fought against Haraldr hárfagri in the decisive battle of Hafrsfjord around the year 900. Although it is not stated explicitly in *Landnámabók*, the forefathers of Ingjaldr in Hergilsey most likely belonged to the retinue of aristocrats who had to flee from the conquered kingdom of Agder after Haraldr hárfagri's victory in the battle of Hafrsfjord. Later this originally small contingent of settlers would occupy a prominent place in Icelandic historiography, where those Norwegians who were forced to leave their homeland because of Haraldr's *ofriki* became a symbol of the independent and freedom-seeking Icelanders who insisted on being their own masters and refused to be subjugated by the Norwegian Crown. Thus, the *Egðir* of Hafrsfjord became the seeds of a crucial part of Icelandic national mythology.

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## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, skaldic poetry, kennings, the settlement of Iceland, the battle of Hafrsfjord

*Gísla saga Súrssonar* (thirteenth century) is famous for the tragic destiny of its main character, the Norwegian settler and outlaw Gísli Súrsson, a destiny that to some extent is predicted by the many dream stanzas Gísli utters in the saga. In one of these stanzas, Gísli refers to himself as *Egða andspillir* 'confidant of the *Egðir*', i.e. the people of the Norwegian region of Agder. This kenning has puzzled skaldic scholars and editors of *Gísla saga*, and no satisfactory explanation has so far been proposed. In the present article, this kenning is explained as a *við(r)kenning*, that is, a description in terms of a person's attributes, which is based on factual knowledge about the person involved. I evaluate the stanza as authentic, and so implying that Gísli actually was the friend of people in Iceland in the tenth century who could be called *Egðir*. I show that these *Egðir* most likely were members of the family of Ingjaldr in Hergilsey, who according to the saga hid Gísli from his enemies for three years, and whom Gísli mentions in one of his other stanzas. *Landnámabók* tells us that Ingjaldr's paternal grandfather came to Iceland from Agder together with the chieftain Geirmundr heljarskinn, and that Geirmundr and his men had to flee from Norway because of the new centralized rule of Haraldr hárfagri. The story about Haraldr's *ofríki* ('harsh rule') is probably exaggerated in the Icelandic tradition, but there is support in the sources for the hypothesis that a retinue of men who lost against Haraldr in the battle of Hafrsfjord (ca. 900) left Agder for Iceland. The fact that Ingjaldr and his family could be considered *Egðir* two generations and more than sixty years after they had left Agder calls for an explanation.

This article argues that the special background of these families in a lost kingdom of Agder may have contributed to strengthening their identity as a special group of people in the recently populated Iceland.

## ÁGRIP

**Lykilorð:** *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, dróttkvæði, kenningar, landnám Íslands, Hafursfjarðarorrusta

Gísli Súrsson sem *andspillir Egða*: Einkennileg kenning og það sem hún gefur til kynna um sjálfsmynd Íslendinga á 10. öld

*Gísla saga Súrssonar* (frá 13. öld) er þekkt fyrir harmþrungin örlög Gísla en hann var landnámsmaður frá Noregi og síðar útlagi. Þessi örlög koma meðal annars fram í mörgum draumvísum sem Gísli mælir í sögunni. Í einni vísunni kallar Gísli sig *Egða andspilli*, 'málvin Egða', en Egðir eru þeir sem byggja Agðir í Noregi. Útgefendur og vísaskýrendur hafa brotið heilann um þessa kenningu en ekki komist að sannfærandi niðurstöðum. Í þessari grein er kenningin skýrð sem *við(ur)kenning*, það er að segja mannkenning sem byggist á staðreynd um tiltekinn einstakling. Ég tel að Gísli sé raunverulega höfundur vísunnar og að hún gefi þar með til kynna að hann hafi átt vini á Íslandi á 10. öld sem hægt hefur verið að kalla Egði. Ég sýni að Egðir þessir voru líklegast ættmenn Ingjalds í Hegilsey en Gísli nefnir Ingjald í einni vísunni og samkvæmt sögunni faldi hann Gísla fyrir óvinum hans í þrjú ár. Landnámabók segir að föðurafi Ingjalds hafi komið til Íslands frá Ögðum með höfðingjanum Geirmundi heljarskinni en Geirmundur og menn hans flýðu undan Haraldi hárfagra. Sennilega gera íslenskar frásagnir of mikið úr „ofriki“ Haralds hárfagra en heimildir styðja þó að þeir sem biðu ósigur fyrir Haraldi í Hafursfjarðarorrustu (um 900) hafi flúið til Íslands frá Ögðum. Þá á þó eftir að skýra hvers vegna Ingjaldur og hans fólk gætu nefnst Egðir tveimur kynslóðum og sextíu árum eftir flóttann frá Ögðum. Hér legg ég til að fólkið sem um ræðir hafi verið upprunnið í föllnu konungdæmi í Ögðum og það hafi styrkt tengslin í nýja heimalandinu.

*Klaus Johan Myrvoll*

*Professor of Nordic Linguistics*

*Department of Cultural Studies and Languages, University of Stavanger*

*P.O. Box 8600 Forus, NO-4036 Stavanger*

*klaus.j.myrvoll@uis.no*