

# The Ghosts of Christmas Past: Folklore, Archaeology, and Place Abandonment at Haffjarðarey, Western Iceland

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*On Christmas Eve in 1563, on a small island off the Western coast of Iceland, the priest and parishioners of the Catholic Church of St. Nicholas on Haffjarðarey decided to walk back to their farms over the frozen tidal flat. About half way home the ice broke and the entire congregation drowned. Overnight the church was abandoned and the cemetery deconsecrated. From ca. 1200 - 1563 the Church and Cemetery of Haffjarðarey served as the primary burial location for the entire region of Eyjahreppur. Twentieth century excavations at the site revealed the largest Icelandic cemetery population in this period, with numerous overlapping, intercut, and simultaneous burials suggesting a dedication to place surpassing that of other churches further inland. Whether the Christmas Eve event really took place is less important than the impact that the story would have had on the psyche of the surrounding population. Sudden and improper death, or death under unusual circumstances, were commonly associated with the conception of the restless dead –ghosts- in medieval Iceland. The production of this tale during the Protestant Reformation reinforced place abandonment at a once revered community sacred space. Abandonment of Haffjarðarey is tackled through the concept of topophobia and an interpretation of local folklore and bioarchaeological data. This paper focuses on the relationship between place and cultural practice at Haffjarðarey specifically related to socio-religious belief systems during a period of religious reformation.*

## Introduction

*Munnmæli vestra herma, að margt kirkjugesta, er var Þar síðasta aðfangadagskvöld áður en kirkjan var lögð niður, haft farizt á leið til lands.*

*It is said that the priest and many parishioners, on the last Christmas Eve before the church closed, died on their way back to land.*

- Luðvik Kristjánsson, 1935

On Christmas Eve in 1563, on a small island off the Western coast of Iceland just north of Borgarnes, the priest and parishioners of the Catholic Church of St. Nicholas on Haffjarðarey were walking over the frozen tidal flat after mass when they fell through the ice to their untimely deaths.<sup>1</sup> It is unknown when this folk tale was first conceived, however the message that it contains is clear; the island is dangerous and should be avoided. In Iceland, folk tales such as this serve several purposes. Most importantly here are their effects on moral and social behavior as well as the ascription of historical and mythological significance to the landscape.<sup>2</sup> The fact that this event took place on Christmas, or Yuletide, would have had a considerable impact on the efficacy of this story. Saga literature, folk tales, and church records are full of incidents concerning revenge killings, death, and hauntings taking place on or near Christmas.<sup>3</sup> This temporal confluence at Christmas-time has been attributed to the long periods of darkness where the dead and other supernatural beings have more power than the living.<sup>4</sup> Adding to this temporal association is the manner in which the parishioners at Haffjarðarey died. Death at sea or by drowning was

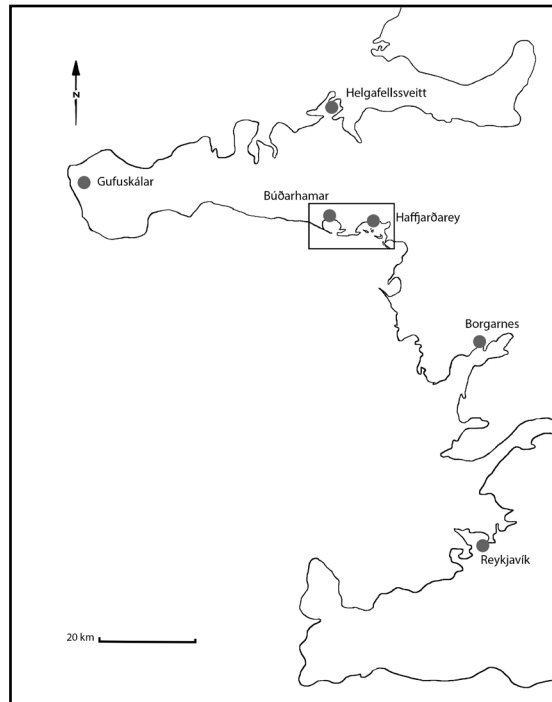


Figure 1: Western Iceland showing the locations of Haffjarðarey and Búðarhamar in relation to Reykjavík.

thought to result in deceased individuals remaining trapped between worlds.<sup>5</sup> They would be both “innocent and unsatisfied,” virtually ideal conditions for the production of the restless dead.<sup>6</sup> This paper argues that the folklore produced at Haffjarðarey would have directly referenced, and drawn upon, longstanding traditions regarding death at sea, ghosts, and the restless dead. In turn the production of this folk tale served to reinforce the abandonment of one of the largest Catholic Church parishes in medieval Iceland at the onset of the Protestant Reformation.

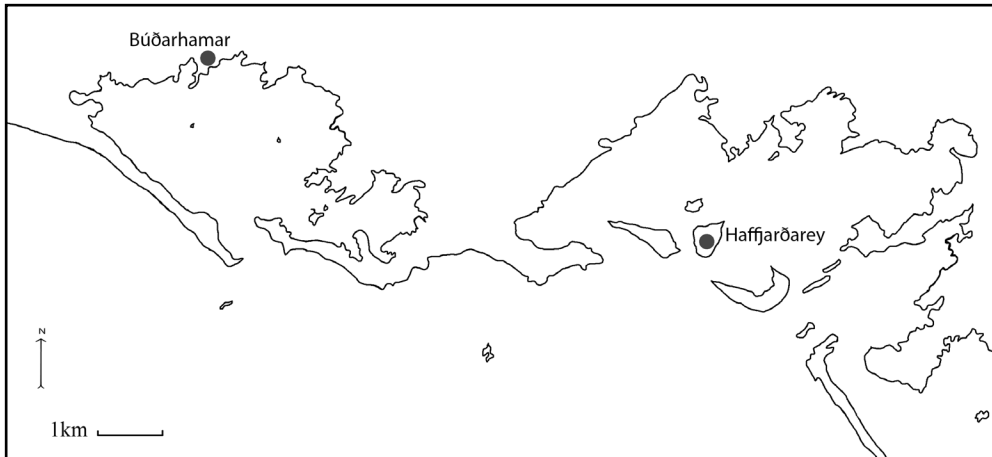


Figure 2: Showing the island of Haffjarðarey and immediate surrounding region.

### Haffjarðarey (1200-1563)

Haffjarðarey (Hafsfjardarey or Bæjarey) is a small islet directly off the southeastern coast of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula, approximately 50km north of the modern city of Borgarnes (Figs. 1 and 2).<sup>7</sup> According to medieval máldagar (church property records), the church at Haffjarðarey was established in 1223 and was dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of fishermen.<sup>8</sup> During the course of this research project several concerns have emerged regarding this date. The máldagar listing all regional church properties within the bishopric of Skalholt was continuously updated until the 14th century, making it difficult to securely date any of the churches listed within it.<sup>9</sup> In 1946 Jon Steffensen compared population data from an 18th century regional census to the cemetery population size from Haffjarðarey and determined that the cemetery must have been in use from at least the 11th century onward.<sup>10</sup> Saga literature from the 13th century describes a wealthy land owner living on Haffjarðarey in the 11th cen-

ture. During a political dispute recorded in *Eyrbyggja Saga*, Thorstein of Hafsfjardarey is able to assemble an army and move an assembly site to Straumfjörður bay, directly adjacent to Haffjarðarey.<sup>11</sup> This saga has been demonstrated to include historically and archaeologically valid descriptions of important people and places within the landscape, and records some of the most notable episodes of hauntings found within the sagas.<sup>12</sup>

The presence of a wealthy family farm on Haffjarðarey in the 11th century fits with the pattern of church construction in early Christian Iceland. Almost all of the earliest churches in Iceland were paid for and constructed on the land of wealthy farmers.<sup>13</sup> The various rights, duties (taxes), and properties of this church included: the beaches on the land belonging to the nearby farm at Hausthús, seal hunting rights along the coast, a tithe of homespun wool or *vaðmal* (a common form of currency), as well as some kind of image or statue of Saint Nicholas.<sup>14</sup>

While active, the church serviced the entire region of Eyjahreppur, today Eyja-og-Miklaholtshreppur, with ten farms and five smaller chapels within its purview, each of which would have likely had their own small cemeteries.<sup>15</sup> As a large regional parish, Haffjarðarey is set apart from other contemporary churches that served single farms and smaller communities. The success of the parish was only amplified by the possibility of an international merchant population coming and going to the nearby trading site of Búðarhamar.<sup>16</sup> This merchant community may have utilized church services, thus boosting production within the local fishing community and foot traffic at the local church. Close trade relationships with international entities from central and northwestern Europe were integral in the introduction of the new Lutheran faith. The church remained in use until 1563 when the land was deconsecrated during the Lutheran Reformation; the

last priest of Haffjarðarey is recorded to have moved to another parish in that year.<sup>17</sup>

### Removal of the Dead

Skeletal remains from Haffjarðarey were removed from the site in three distinct phases, two of which are available for study today. By 1714 erosion had significantly affected the coastal island, and it is possible that human remains began to become visible on the surface at this time.<sup>18</sup> In 1883 inhabitants of local coastal farms gathered the remains of approximately 109 individuals exposed on the surface of the island and reburied them at a newer church further inland.<sup>19</sup> About 20 years later, in 1905, two researchers on a geological expedition from Harvard University, John W. Hastings and Vilhjálmur Stefánsson, visited the sites of Áftanes and Haffjarðarey and collected human remains from both sites that were later transported back to Boston.<sup>20</sup> This col-

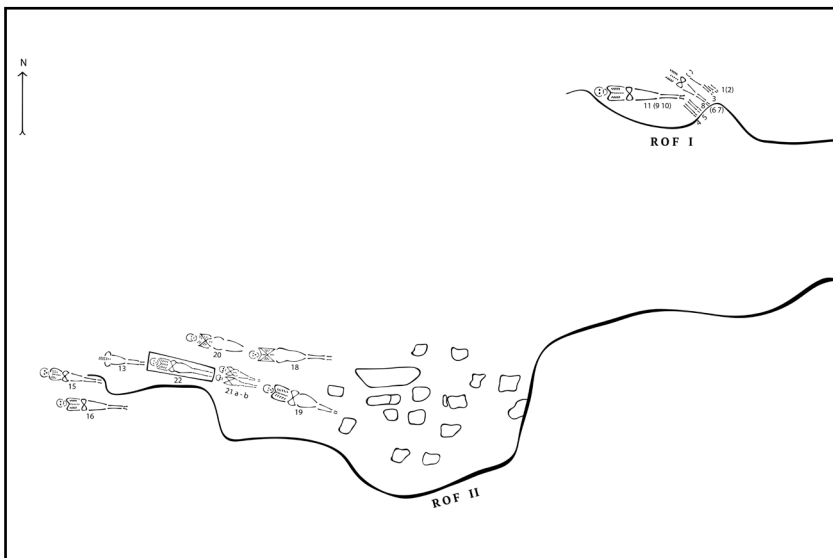


Figure 3: Site plan of Haffjarðarey by Kristján Eldjárn showing multiple overlapping and intercut burials (after Steffensen 1946, digital image by Alana Tedmon).

lection includes the remains of approximately 61 individuals that were removed from the surface of the beach. This expedition was met with almost universal disapproval by the Icelanders, as Hastings and Stefánsson only had tentative permission from a local priest to take what was already exposed due to erosion.<sup>21</sup>

Finally in 1945 an archaeological team from Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (The National Museum of Iceland), led by Jon Steffensen and Kristjan Eldjarn, excavated the remains of approximately 67 individuals.<sup>22</sup> Their excavations again focused on graves in danger of coastal erosion. The 1945 excavation uncovered 24 in-situ burials facing east-west, with several overlapping and intercut graves.<sup>23</sup> There were also vertically stacked burials as well as one enigmatic multiple burial containing the remains of at least 15 individuals (Figure 3).<sup>24</sup>

Overall the cemetery population of Haffjarðarey (1883 [MNI= ~109], 1905 [MNI= 61], and 1945 [MNI=67]) totals to approximately 237, making it the second largest cemetery in Iceland from this period. It is surpassed only by the monastic hospital site of Skriðuklaustur (1493-1554) in East Iceland.<sup>25</sup> While skeletal pathology can provide insight into health within a coastal fishing community with heavy ties to international trade, it is the structure and landscape of this church and cemetery that are particularly relevant to a discussion of place, politics, religion and folklore.<sup>26</sup>

### Sagas and Folklore in Medieval Iceland

A predominantly Norse population settled Iceland in the late 9th century C.E.<sup>27</sup> These settlers brought with them a pre-Christian belief system that continued

to influence daily life even after the conversion to Christianity. This early settlement period saw the establishment of wealthy farms and a system of government lead by a semi-democratic regional community gathering called the Alþing.<sup>28</sup> It was at the Alþing of 999/1000 that the population voted on the issue of Christianity.<sup>29</sup> Unable to come to a decision the lawspeaker, a non-Christian himself, determined that Christianity should be the national religion of Iceland.<sup>30</sup> This determination was not without caveats. Specifically, several non-Christian practices were still legally allowed, including sacrifices made to non-Christian gods.<sup>31</sup>

The earliest Catholic churches were paid for and constructed on the property of wealthy farmers, who also occasionally acted as priests.<sup>32</sup> When churches became financially independent from their farm counterparts, they took the land and property rights with them.<sup>33</sup> With the introduction and spread of Christianity in Iceland came literacy and writing. Some of the earliest records are the aforementioned church máldagar, listing properties, land rights, possessions, and saintly dedications of each church.<sup>34</sup> In the 13th century, priests, clerics, and those affiliated with churches and monastic institutions began recording what we now refer to as the sagas. Based in an earlier oral tradition of storytelling, the Íslendingasögur (Icelandic Family Sagas) describe the settlement period, the decades surrounding the conversion to Christianity, and the violent long-lasting feuds between prominent families in the 13th century.<sup>35</sup> There is a clear permutation of non-Christian beliefs well into the Christian period, highlighted by these saga and folklore traditions.

While archaeologists frequently draw upon the sagas for information regarding important places within the landscape, later folklore is not typically consulted in the same manner. Icelandic folklore, recorded long after the sagas in the 18th-20th centuries, is a treasure trove of information for place name studies.<sup>36</sup> This information is seen as providing a map of the “geographical, mental, historical, and spiritual” landscape in which the Icelanders resided from the settlement period to the modern era.<sup>37</sup> In fact, it was as a part of a large-scale early 20th century place name study that the story of the Christmas Eve incident at Haffjarðarey was first recorded. Many folk legends are parables used to teach lessons to a younger generation regarding social values and even unsafe places within the landscape.<sup>38</sup> They can provide factual and statistical data regarding historical social contexts, local beliefs, and traditional understandings and worldviews.<sup>39</sup>

Many folklore legends focus on places and boundaries, both real and ephemeral. Real in that many folk tales create a literal map of the landscape, with places, roads, hills, mountains, rivers, bays, and beaches all having stories detailing how they acquired their names.<sup>40</sup> Ephemeral in the sense that some of these boundaries are between worlds, separating the living and the dead as well as the realms of creatures such as elves and ghosts.<sup>41</sup> It is when these borders break down that the ephemeral world interacts with the real world. Legends featuring horrifying elements such as ghosts, the restless dead, revenants, trolls, ogres and the like frequently appear at times when these borders –or road maps- are impaired for whatever reason.<sup>42</sup> This impairment can be related to moral confusion as well as

unforgettable events that might impact the local or regional psyche.<sup>43</sup> It is not surprising then, that many ghost stories, both in saga literature and folklore, take place during important transitional periods throughout Icelandic history. Specifically, during the conversion to Christianity (ca. 1000 C.E.), the Age of Sturlungs (ca. 13th century) when prominent families at war with one another altered the landscape through new farm ownership, when Norway – and later Denmark- gained control over Iceland (13th-14th centuries) and power was removed from local hands, during the introduction of novel international trade relationships which (14th-15th centuries) inverted the importance of farming and fishing, and during the Protestant Reformation which dramatically transformed the landscape through the closing of Catholic churches and monastic sites (16th century).

### Discussion: Afturgöngur- Revenants and Reformation

#### *Revenants*

The afturgöngur -or revenants- that return to life to torment the living with death, madness, disease, or even general malicious shenanigans are not the ghosts that we see on television or in movies today. Rather they are solid corporeal beings that appear as the deceased before their death, and occasionally in folklore as revived skeletons or unseen forces (Figure 4).<sup>44</sup> The dead are easily recognizable to the living, except when they appear as symbolic pseudo-animal creatures that wreak havoc on farms or as allegorical madness and disease.<sup>45</sup> These restless dead often emerge as a result of improper death or unfinished business, frequently overlapping with Christmas



Figure 4: A woman in church confronts a skeletal revenant (after Booss 1984: 593).

or Yuletide. The *Saga of the Men of Flói* (13th century), *Eyrbyggja Saga* (13th century), and *Grettis Saga* (14th century) all describe incidents of malevolent life after death during the winter, at Christmas, or Yuletide.<sup>46</sup> In the *Saga of the Men of Flói*, a group of Christian men stranded in Greenland for the winter experience disease and madness as the result of one restlessly dead individual.<sup>47</sup> In *Grettis Saga*, the hero Grettir faces the undead Glámr at Christmas to put an end to the fear and madness that this revenant spread.<sup>48</sup> Finally, and most importantly to this paper, is the Christmas haunting that takes place in *Eyrbyggja Saga*.

Ghosts and hauntings are typically associated with specific events, places, and even buildings, however this fear is not static and, “must be maintained by the art of storytelling.”<sup>49</sup> *Eyrbyggja Saga* was first recorded from an oral history in the 13th century and copied several times

throughout the 14th and 15th centuries. The saga focuses on several powerful families in the Snæfellsnes Peninsula during, and directly after, the conversion to Christianity. This saga has been used by archaeologists to identify international trading sites along the southern coast of the peninsula, directly adjacent to the island of Haffjarðarey.<sup>50</sup> The haunting in this saga begins during the summer that Christianity came to Iceland in the year 1000, at a farm in Snæfellsnes.<sup>51</sup> A wealthy woman from the Hebrides dies at a farm on the peninsula where she was living. The haunting begins when the inhabitants of the farm fail to burn all of her belongings upon her death. She then appears as a revenant to the individuals taking her body to burial, and a series of strange events begin to take place at the farm shortly after. Shortly before Christmas odd omens occur, a seal-type creature with an ox tail destroys stores of dried fish, and the farm owner and all of

his fishing comrades drown at sea only to return to haunt the farm. It is only when the (Christian) hero of the story takes action that the hauntings abate and all of the restless dead disappear.<sup>52</sup>

All of the above episodes of hauntings take place during important episodes of religious and social transition and are set during Christmas and Yuletide. They are all said to take place before or during the conversion to Christianity, but feature Christian heroes, of course. They were written during the period when Iceland lost its independence to Norway and Denmark and was experiencing the violent socio-political events of the Age of the Sturlungs. Saga narratives typically take place during discrete periods of time, more specifically they have dates or reference religious holidays or seasons in order to place the narrative in time. On the other hand folklore, or folk legends, often has no solid dates in terms of when they take place or where they were first recorded. They are of undetermined age, passed from generation to generation within local regional memory and can be used as parables for younger children.<sup>53</sup>

Several folk tales describe incidents of drowning at sea and unidentified bodies washing up on shore, some specifically at Christmas, all resulting in the production of the restless dead.<sup>54</sup> Folk tales such as these outline social protocols and general attitudes toward local and foreign dead bodies that appear on the coast.<sup>55</sup> This phenomenon was apparently well known to those living along the coast, especially those living near areas of shipwrecks, like Haffjarðarey.<sup>56</sup>

Specifically relevant to the site of Haffjarðarey are two concepts that can be understood from folklore regarding

those who perish at sea. First, such individuals are regarded as being trapped between worlds, both “innocent” and “unsatisfied,” as they committed no specific crime in life, but receive no proper Christian burial.<sup>57</sup> Second, if an individual should come across a dead body, they must do something about it and cannot simply walk past, lest they be haunted for the rest of their lives.<sup>58</sup> Two folk legends exemplify these concepts: one of two brothers who go for an ill-fated walk on the beach at Christmas and the tormented love story of The Deacon of Myrká.<sup>59</sup>

The first story concerns two brothers who were “probably asking for trouble” walking along an empty beach at Christmas when they stumbled upon a badly decomposed body.<sup>60</sup> Instead of doing something about it, they kicked the body and went on their merry way. As a result, they experienced strange forces trying to pull them toward the sea.<sup>61</sup> One brother moved far away and the other was found dead not far from the site of the original body.<sup>62</sup>

In the story of The Deacon of Myrká, a deacon in Eyjafjörður fell in love with a woman named Guðrún who lived on the opposite shore of a fjord valley. One day near Christmas, the deacon attempted to cross the frozen river to meet his beloved, only to fall through the ice to his death.<sup>63</sup> His ghost returned to torment Guðrún for two weeks, and while a priest was unable to help, a sorcerer “skilled in witchcraft” finally managed to exorcise the ghost.<sup>64</sup>

These stories exemplify not only the restless dead as a result of death at sea or drowning, but also what happens when an unburied body is ignored and is not provided a proper Christian burial, a situation that also occurs in the sagas. These



stories serve to invoke fear, not only of death and the appropriate responses to it, but fear of the landscape in which they take place (topophobia).<sup>65</sup>

### *And Reformation*

At Haffjarðarey the church and cemetery were active from ca. 1200 to 1563 when the church was closed and the land deconsecrated. The church itself would have likely been a small structure constructed from turf, stone, and possibly driftwood in the same manner as other contemporary churches.<sup>66</sup> The church cemetery at one point contained the bodies of at least 237 individuals, not taking into consideration the likelihood that many bodies were disturbed or removed by coastal erosion prior to any collection, and the minor possibility that some burials remain unidentified and unexcavated on the island.<sup>67</sup> The burials that were excavated using mid-20<sup>th</sup> century procedures featured interesting cases of overlapping, intercut, and vertically stacked burials, a somewhat unique feature not typically seen in contemporary cemeteries.<sup>68</sup> These burials, as well as the presence of an enigmatic mass burial containing the remains of at least 15 individuals, suggest that the church needed to accommodate many burials within a short period of time, or ran out of space within the normal parameters of the cemetery.

A lack of space could be indicative of site popularity or may represent an episode of disease outbreak necessitating multiple burials within a short period of time. In terms of popularity, the church and cemetery at Haffjarðarey were ideally located to serve a coastal-based fishing community along the southern coast of the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. Dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of fish-

ermen, the church clearly catered to this community. The fishermen of this coastal region could easily access the island church by boat and apparently also walk to the church over the tidal flat at low tide.<sup>69</sup> While most churches served one farm, or a small group of close-knit farms, Haffjarðareyjarkirkja (the church at Haffjarðarey) served a large coastal region that encompassed at least ten farms and five chapels.<sup>70</sup> The site must have been in contact with the international trading port and/or assembly site at Búðarhamar that could only have added to the size of the parish community.<sup>71</sup> All of these factors paint the picture of a widely popular and successful church parish; that is of course, until disaster struck.

The last Catholic bishop in Iceland, Jón Arason, was executed in 1550 during the height of the Lutheran Reformation.<sup>72</sup> The 'new' religion was introduced into Iceland in the early 1500s by Hanseatic merchants from Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>73</sup> The reformation spread rapidly and was supported by the intellectual community of Iceland as well as the Danish Crown.<sup>74</sup> As with elsewhere in Europe, with the Reformation came the closing of many churches and monasteries.<sup>75</sup> When Haffjarðarey was closed, several new Lutheran churches were established further inland.<sup>76</sup> Given these facts, it would not have been unusual for a Catholic church such as that at Haffjarðarey to be closed during this transition. What is unusual is the story that developed out of this closing.

### The Creation of a Haunted Landscape

In 1935 Luðvik Kristjánsson recorded a single sentence regarding the fate of Haffjarðarey in the midst of a document detailing place names and farm owner-

ship throughout Iceland.<sup>77</sup> He notes that this accident was likely related to the expansion of a stream in the tidal flat and undoubtedly was the rationale behind the closing of the church and cemetery.<sup>78</sup> As discussed above, within a coastal community death at sea was not an unusual phenomenon and those who died that way were resigned to a life after death trapped between worlds.<sup>79</sup> Hauntings associated with those who died at sea were not uncommon and the additional timing of the incident on Christmas Eve would inevitably invoke episodes from popular –even specifically regional– saga literature concerning the restless dead. Consider still that coastal erosion began to expose human remains on the surface of the beach in 1714 resulting in the abandonment of the only farm on the island. The social protocols discussed above concerning corpses that wash up on shore, may also apply to those slowly emerging from sand of the beach.<sup>80</sup>

This story draws on longstanding traditions involving unusual deaths on Christmas and drowning at sea to serve a very specific purpose; reinforce the closing of the church by creating a fear of place (topophobia) based in traditional systems of belief. Clearly, a long-standing focal point within the socio-religious landscape, the church at Haffjarðarey had roots that reach as far back as the conversion to Christianity. If access to the church became dangerous due to the onset of coastal erosion, or religious transition necessitated its closure, it is possible that the surrounding community may have demanded more than a simple church edict to abandon the sacred landscape. The abandonment of the island was reinforced through the creation of this folklore. Eighteenth century exposure of human remains on the surface

only solidified the already present notion of danger at the island. Danger not only in the ability to access the site, but also in the presence of so many dead bodies that were literally rising to the surface. The gathering and reburial of these remains in the late 19th century recalls social protocol and moral demand outlined in numerous sagas and folk tales to provide a proper burial to those washed up on the surface of the beach. But for more than 100 years these remains were simply exposed to the elements, visible to any and all that might approach the island.

### Conclusion

The site of Haffjarðarey is unique in many ways, specifically in its origins, location, popularity, size, international influence, and its abandonment. Whether through natural or socio-religious causes, the site was deconsecrated and abandoned. Unlike other closed religious houses, folklore describing mass death and danger developed to reinforce the closure. Regardless of historical accuracy, this site exemplifies the need to include such stories within the interpretation of place and landscape at archaeological sites. Archaeologists working within Icelandic, and wider Scandinavian archaeology, frequently use saga literature as road maps or in their interpretation of archaeological data. Folklore is not treated the same way, despite the fact that it can provide important information concerning social context and deeper meanings ascribed to the landscapes in which past populations lived and interacted on a daily basis.

Lucy Franklin writes that, “within landscapes, stories and legends help create histories which eventually come to be accepted as truths”.<sup>81</sup> If there were other motivations behind the church closure,

such as Reformation policy or environmental change, these motives are overshadowed by the creation of a landscape of fear; fear that was necessary to ensure the deconsecration and abandonment of the church and cemetery at Haffjarðarey.

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Endnotes:

- 1 Kristjánsson, 1935 and Gestsdóttir 2014, 40.
- 2 Gunnell 2005, 70.
- 3 Gunnell 2005, 75; Gunnell 2009, 315; Pettit 2017, 31; Jakobsson 2008, 212.
- 4 Gunnell 2009, 315.
- 5 Gunnell 2005, 70-71.
- 6 Gunnell 2005, 70-71.
- 7 Pronounced Haff-yar-thar-ey. Hafsfiardarey is a seemingly older version of this place name recorded in saga literature and the *Diplomatarium Islandicum* and Bæjarey is frequently used to refer to a group of several islets within this tidal flat that may have at one time been one larger island.
- 8 Sigurðsson and Þorkelsson 1857-72, 421; Þorkelsson 1888, 80; Nielsson 1869, 98.
- 9 Vésteinsson 2012, 128.
- 10 Steffensen 1946.
- 11 Quinn 2003, 179.
- 12 Gardiner and Mehler 2007, 410-411; Chadwick 1946; Kanerva 2013; Kanerva 2014; Kanerva 2015; Tulinius 2011.
- 13 Friðriksson and Vésteinsson 2011, 55 and Hastrup 1990, 49; the presence/absence of this theorized farm and its relationship to the church and cemetery is the focus of the upcoming 2018 field season in Iceland.
- 14 Sigurðsson and Þorkelsson 1857-72, 421-423.
- 15 Sigurðsson and Þorkelsson 1857-76, 421.
- 16 Gardiner and Mehler 2007, 410-411.
- 17 Sigurðsson and Þorkelsson 1857-76, 421.
- 18 Steffensen 1946, 146.
- 19 Steffensen 1946, 146.
- 20 Pálsson 2005, 51-57.
- 21 Pálsson 2005, 53.
- 22 Steffensen 1946, 149.
- 23 Steffensen 1946 and Eldjárn 1945.
- 24 Steffensen 1946 and Eldjárn 1945.
- 25 Kristjánsdóttir 2015, 154.
- 26 Osteological analysis of the Hastings-Stefánsson collection was carried out in 2012/13 during the completion of the MSc. Paleopathology at Durham University. In June/July of 2017, with support from the Institute for European and Mediterranean Archaeology (IEMA) Travel Scholarship, paleopathological and bioarchaeological analysis were carried out at Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (The National Museum of Iceland) on the 1945 Haffjarðarey skeletal collection. This funding additionally facilitated access to historical folklore records at the Örnefnasafn stofnunar Árna Magnússonar í Íslenskum fræðum (Onomastic Department of the Arne Magnusson Institute).
- 27 Helgason et. al 2000; Helgason et. al. 2001; Hallgrímsson et. al. 2004.
- 28 Hastrup 1985.
- 29 Jakobssen 2010, 7.
- 30 Hastrup 1985 and Vésteinsson 2000, 17.
- 31 Vésteinsson 2000, 17.
- 32 Jakobssen 2010, 8 and Mundal 2011, 114.

- 33 Hastrup 1985.  
34 Jakobsen 2010, 8.  
35 Lethbridge 2016, 56.  
36 It should be noted that the sagas are also consulted for Place Name studies.  
37 Gunnell 2009, 308.  
38 Gunnell 2009, 315.  
39 Gunnell 2009, 311-316.  
40 Gunnell 2009, 308.  
41 Gunnell 2009, 314.  
42 Gunnell 2005, 70.  
43 Gunnell 2005, 70.  
44 Kanerva 2013, 111-112; Kanerva 2014: 220.  
45 Kanerva 2011, 28-30.  
46 Kanerva 2013, 111 and Kanerva 2014, 219.  
47 Kanerva 2014, 219.  
48 Kanerva 2013, 117.  
49 Tuan 2013, 128.  
50 Gardiner and Mehler 2007, 410-412; It is also in this saga that the aforementioned Thorstein of Hafsfjardarey appears.  
51 Quinn 2003, 165.  
52 Quinn 2003, 165-176.  
53 Gunnell 2009, 309.  
54 Gunnell 2005, 70-75.  
55 Gunnell 2005, 70 and Gunnell 2009, 312.  
56 Gunnell 2005, 70, and Edvardsson and Egilsson 2015 for an investigation of the Danish shipwreck at Haffjarðarey.  
57 Gunnell 2005, 71.  
58 Gunnell 2005, 71.  
59 Gunnell 2005, 75. The story of two brothers was recorded in audio format in the mid-20th century, the storyteller insists that the event was local history rather than an allegorical folk tale. The Deacon of Myrká is recorded by Claire Booss in her 1984 collection of folklore from throughout Scandinavia.  
60 Gunnell 2005, 75.  
61 Gunnell 2005, 75.  
62 Gunnell 2005, 75.  
63 Booss 1984, 653-655.  
64 Booss 1984, 655.  
65 Tuan 2013.  
66 Kristjansdóttir, Lazzeri, and Macchioni 2001.  
67 This possibility will be investigated during the upcoming 2018 field season.  
68 Eldjarn 1945 and Steffensen 1946.  
69 Walking to the site is no longer possible as sea levels have risen to make this extremely unsafe see Saher et al. 2015. Also the author tried to reach the island 4 times on foot at low tide and sank hip deep into mud.  
70 Sigurðsson and Þorkelsson 1857-76, 421.  
71 Gardiner and Mehler 2007, 410-412.  
72 Cunningham 2011, 65.  
73 Cunningham 2011, 67.  
74 Cunningham 2011, 67.  
75 In Iceland there is the interesting incident of the raiding of the monastery at Viðey, see Cunningham 2011, 73.  
76 Sigurðsson and Þorkelsson 1857-76, 421.  
77 Unpublished manuscript: Hausthús. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum.  
78 Luðvík Kristjánsson 1935: "*Talið er, að eftir því sem sundið stækkaði hafi slys af kirkjuferðum í eyrna aukizt og hafi það orðið til þess, að kirkjan var lögð niður.*"  
79 Gunnell 2005, 70-71.  
80 Gunnell 2005, 71.  
81 Franklin 2006, 145.  
82 Tuan 2013.

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