



Peasant Food Culture
A Theoretical Approach to Regional Cultural Comparison (with a Case Study)

Jan Aksel Harder Klitgaard

Lokaverkefni til BA-gráðu í Þjóðfræði

Félagsvísindasvið



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til BA-gráðu í Þjóðfræði og er óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyfi rétthafa.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of food culture as a means of examining regional identity and includes a comparative case study of nineteenth-century peasant foodways in western Denmark and northern Iceland respectively. It has been conducted in order to clarify certain issues concerning foodways as a lens for examining notions of group, identity and tradition and their connection to the natural environment, using older and contemporary anthropological and folkloristic works on these topics and modern cultural theory. In its case study, the thesis reflects upon answers to questionnaires sent out by the national museums in both countries during the mid-twentieth century using qualitative research method to look for normative statements with regard to foodways. The project argues that food is a highly applicable means of studying culture. It argues in particular in the case study that notions of belonging and group identity are of the utmost importance for communities and their behavior; that foodways are rarely as self-evident as expected; and that human agency plays a significant role with regard to which food sources are chosen by people.

Útdráttur

Í þessari ritgerð er matarmenning rannsökuð sem leið til að kanna landsvæðabundna sjálfsmýnd einstaklinga og í henni er að finna samanburðarrannsókn á matarmenningu bænda í vesturhluta Danmerkur og norðurhluta Íslands á 19. öldinni. Markmið ritgerðarinnar var að öðlast skýrari mynd af tilteknum sviðum matarmenningar og matarvenja og nota þá sýn til að kanna tilhneigingar sem ríkja hvað varðar hópa, sjálfsmýndir og hefðir og tengsl þeirra við náttúrulegt umhverfi einstaklinganna. Við rannsóknarvinnuna var bæði stuðst við eldri rit og samtímarit í mannfræði og þjóðfræði sem hafa með þessi viðfangsefni að gera og einnig við menningarfræðikenningar samtímans. Í sjálfri raundæmisrannsókn ritgerðarinnar voru skoðuð svör við spurningalistum frá þjóðminjasöfnum beggja landanna sem sendir voru út um miðja 20. öldina og notast við eigindlega rannsóknaraðferð til að leita að lýsandi yrðingum fyrir heimsmynd sem hafa með matarmenningu að gera. Í ritgerðinni er því haldið fram að rannsóknir á matarmenningu séu fullgild leið til að að rannsaka menninguna í heild sinni. Því er einnig haldið sérstaklega fram í raundæmisrannsókninni að hugmyndin um að tilheyra og hópsjálfsmýnd

manneskjunnar hafi einkar mikið gildi fyrir samfélög og hegðun einstaklinga innan þeirra, að matarmenning sé sjaldnast eins sjálfgefin að byggingu og búast mætti við og að mannleg athafnasemi og mannlegt eðli spili stórt hlutverk þegar kemur að því hvaða matartegundir fólk velur sér.

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Foreword

This thesis is the final project of my BA degree in Folkloristics at the University of Iceland. I would like to make it explicitly clear that the thesis is purely my own work. Thus unless otherwise noted, the analysis and comments contained within the text are solely mine as are any mistakes in interpretation of the empirical data used for the purpose of this thesis. Before I go any further there are a number of people to whom I owe my thanks for assisting and helping me with this project. Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Terry Adrian Gunnell for his advice, encouraging comments, for pushing me further and getting the best out of me. Secondly I would like to thank all the teaching staff at University of Iceland and also those outside the university community who have been involved in this thesis providing factual information; revealing new approaches that could possibly be applied; or simply being available for an informal chat about food and culture. Thirdly I would like to thank my proof-readers Steve Whiting and Davíð Stefánsson, and finally I would like to thank my children Hanna Björk, Helena Sól, Jónas Hrafn, Sæbjörn Árni and Inga Lilja for their patience during the writing of this thesis and the BA student programme as a whole. Most of all I would like to offer my thanks to my wife Sigga Valdís for often having to put up with me at the dinner table sitting withdrawn, deep in thought over foodways theories. Ég elska þig!

I would also like to say to the reader of this thesis that I hope you will enjoy and find this topic as fascinating and intriguing as I do.

1 Introduction

Entering a bookshop, skimming the magazine section in the local supermarket or browsing through the weekly list of TV programmes quickly makes you realise the significance of food and topics connected to food for human culture. The trends and tendencies in foodways surrounding our lives offer a spectacular display of one of the most fundamental human social activities. Eating is something we all do and share. Indeed human societies have always been interconnected and have long exchanged ideas and world views (and thus also recipes and uses of food sources). The pace at which this process is implemented today is obviously far swifter than in earlier periods. In the case study included in this BA thesis, however, I will be turning to a time of a less swift exchange of ideas and foods, a time when people lived more explicitly from what the land in their immediate environment could offer; and where simplicity in foods was an accomplished fact.

The fact that food remains a fundamental part of human lives and culture has prompted scholars from a variety of disciplines to find food a highly applicable lens for analysing culture (Counihan and Esterik, 2013: 2). It thus seems fair to try to make use of food and views on food sources as the centrepiece in a folkloristic comparative study, aiming to assess the interconnectedness of and dynamic between environmental aspects of choices of food sources and local culture.

As implied above, in this thesis, I mean to look at ways to use food as a means of analysing culture and will provide a case study of the foodways in the nineteenth-century rural communities in Þingeyjarsýsla (district) in northern Iceland and in addition the Skast and Gørding Herred (counties) in western Jutland, Denmark, both individually and as part of a comparative study, applying a folkloristic approach to assess what the incentives for choices of food sources were, and their connection to the folkloristic concepts of group, identity and tradition. In the case study I will assess the extent to which we can say that food sources influence group, identity and tradition and, vice versa, to what extent notions of group, identity and tradition influence choices of food sources. The central research question of the case study is: To what extent can choices of food sources in nineteenth-century rural societies in northern Iceland and western Denmark, respectively, be determined as being linked to

the specific natural environments and/or the cultural landscape? I mean to answer this question primarily by scrutinising answers to ÞÞ (*Þjóðhátta safn Þjóðminjasafnsins*) and NEU (*Nationalmuseets Etnologiske Undersøgelser*) questionnaires.

In structuring the thesis I will start by taking a broad overview on what has been written earlier about food and culture by scholars of ethnology and anthropology. I will focus on looking at what has been written about nineteenth-century rural food in Denmark and Iceland, and what approaches have been applied in these writings. In addition I wish to look into some of the different methods of researching food culture that have been used within the social sciences in recent years. I will briefly introduce some of the classic works in which food culture has been a main topic of the research and look at in particular more contemporary works. Following on from this I will describe the approaches chosen for the case study in this thesis. I will start by describing and explaining the folkloristic concepts of group, identity and tradition, and from there move on to describing and explaining the comparative method. I will then take a brief look at the particular comparative spaces chosen for this thesis, and describe their environmental, political and economic settings. Next I will give a critique of the source material, the ÞÞ and the NEU material. I will then link this critique to the methodology of the thesis and assess among other things how choices of food sources linked to the concepts of group, identity and tradition can illustrate how various food sources in different areas are categorised as proper food or non-proper food. Finally I will use these approaches and food as a means of scrutinising and interpret various utterances and expressed norms concerning foodways found in source material, and hopefully throw some light on the fact that food source choices were controlled as much by cultural issues as they were by the immediate environment. In short it seems clear that food choices in nineteenth-century rural societies were not always as self-evident as one could expect in societies often viewed as being self-sufficient.

2 Studies into Nineteenth-Century Rural Food

2.1 Introduction

Even though food studies have increased significantly during the last two or three decades, topics connected to food have regularly attracted the interest of academic scholars over the last century or so. In the following chapter I will go through some of the scholarly work that has been conducted during the last 100-150 years in Denmark and Iceland, as a means of showing how approaches have developed over time.

2.2 Denmark

In the Danish context, two scholars stand out from others with regard to rural culture studies and documentations on the heath in the western part of Jutland in the last part of the nineteenth century. The first is Henning Frederik Feilberg (1831-1921) who was born in Zealand but moved very early to western Jutland with his parents, where his father was inducted as a priest in Ulslev near Varde. Feilberg himself also entered the ministry and ended his ministry in the same geographic area where his father worked from 1835-39, living in Darum parish, just north of the cathedral town of Ribe. Besides conducting his ministry, Feilberg was a devoted folklore collector who identified himself with the peasants with whom he interacted while collecting and came to be regarded by them as an old acquaintance (Feilberg, 1910: III). Feilberg published his key works *Dansk Bondeliv* I and II in 1889 and 1899, respectively, works in which he describes many aspects of the lives and culture of the nineteenth-century peasants in western Jutland. Though no specific chapter in the books is dedicated only to food, food connected issues imbue almost every chapter in some way or other.

Another contemporary Danish folklore collector from the same area was Evald Tang Kristensen (1843-1929). Tang Kristensen was educated as a teacher and though mostly recognised for his collection and publication on oral tradition, many attitudes towards foods can be found in his contribution entitled "Heden", written for M. Galschiøt's monumental book *Danmark* from 1887. In their works both Feilberg and Tang Kristensen describe attitudes towards different foods as well as the social function of food on the Jutlandic heath during the 1800s including for example, a degrading utterance by an ostler referring to the disgust and social indignity invoked in the eating

of horses (Christiansen, 2014: 132). These works are clearly much more than just historical records of what foods were eaten.

It was not until 1964 that any comparable works appeared, the first being a comprehensive book solely dedicated to the peasant woman and her contribution to the survival of the peasant family: In *Landbokvinden* the curator at NEU Ole Højrup (1924-2008) uses NEU material to describe the different tasks women undertook in the past. Food-related issues constitute a substantial part of the book, as Højrup tries to describe the culture of peasant women throughout Denmark. As though he explicitly recognises regional differences, stating that '[b]ondens levevis var endnu på tid på mange områder lokalt udformet' (Højrup, 1964: 11), he nevertheless seeks to make the book appear as an account of a uniform Danish peasant woman culture, an approach which has various weaknesses. I will return to issues concerning difficulties regarding regional definition and borders between cultures in chapter 5.3. Højrup's book is to a large extent a historical descriptive account in which working procedures, preservation methods and recipes are listed.

Else-Marie Boyhus is a Danish historian who has been regarded as a pioneer in the studying of historical food in Denmark. Her focus has to a large extent been placed on historical cookbooks from 1616, when the first cookbook in Danish was published, to 1910. In the 1970s she published a series of five smaller books, all called *Historisk kogebog*, which in 2013 was joined into a rewritten and supplemented edition. In the introduction to this edition, Boyhus writes that even though the book is not about the orally transmitted tradition of cooking, but rather the culinary art as displayed in cooking books, both issue from part of the same history of food (Boyhus, 2013: 7). As historical accounts, these cookbooks provide a good insight into the foodscape of the specific time and thus also into the time period of our inquiry. Although Boyhus's joint edition of *Historisk Kogebog* is from 2013, the most recent contributions to the discourse of nineteenth-century food studies in Denmark come from, among others, the historian Ole Hyldtoft. After having edited the anthology *Syn på mad og drikke i 1800-tallet* in 2010, Hyldtoft wrote the book *Mad, drikke og tobak 1800-35* (2012), in which he scrutinises consumption patterns and food culture in the beginning of the nineteenth century in Denmark. In this book Hyldtoft effectively bridges the gap between Højrup and Boyhus by referring both to cookbooks and orally transmitted

recipes, for example with regard to the dessert *æblegrød med fåremælk*. Hyldtoft writes:

Kogebogsforfatter K. H. Seidelin betegner i 1801 denne ret for de danskes egen septemberret, som snart vinder alle fremmedes yndest, når de først får den at smage. Bønderne brugte dog næppe at komme kirsebærmarmelade på den som i den gengivne opskrift (Hyldtoft, 2012: 129-130).

Hyldtoft also looks at social and cultural aspects with regard to various food sources and mentions among others prejudices towards eating horse-meat, explaining that the reluctance towards horse-meat was due to horse-meat being the predominant food source in the prisons at the time (Hyldtoft, 2012: 14).

The main emphasis in the different articles in the earlier anthology *Syn på mad og drikke i 1800-tallet* is on the city-dwellers, contemporary writings on food and the emerging bourgeoisie social class. The fact that most contemporary writings have been focused on the bourgeoisie and only very few on the peasant is recognised by ethnologist Signe Mellemsgaard in her article about eighteenth-century dietician J. C. Tode (1736-1806). Here Mellemsgaard states that only one of Tode's publications was aimed at the peasants and that Tode actually: 'tilbød [...] en betragtelig rabat, hvis nogen ville uddele dem [his publications] blandt almuen' (Mellemsgaard, 2010: 15). Peasants at the time were obviously seen as second-class.

These publications on food culture in Denmark are all quite different in their approaches. However at the same time they all reach out towards each other and intermingle, and hence provide a powerful tool for scrutinising nineteenth-century foodways and attitudes toward food and food sources.

2.3 Iceland

While Feilberg was working and collecting in Denmark a colleague of his (both with regard to being a pastor, but also with regard to interest in the peasant cultural heritage of his homeland), Jónas Jónasson (1856-1918), was living in the Eyjafjörður area in northern Iceland. It was actually Feilberg that took the initiative and contacted Jónas in 1905 and asked him for information about the life of the Icelandic common people (Gunnell, 2007: 29-30). While fulfilling his ministry Jónas collected information

from a variety of sources and later, when he turned to teaching because of poor health, he collected information from his pupils who for the most part came from northern Iceland (Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 2010: XXVI). In 1934, 16 years after Jónas's death, many of his writings and notes were compiled by the Icelandic scholar Einar Ól. Sveinsson in a comprehensive book about the peasant way of life in Iceland in the eighteenth and nineteenth century - a book called *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir* (reprinted later in revised form in 1945 and 1961). In this book, most aspects of peasant life are addressed. Besides various chapters dedicated to dealing with the livestock, one specific chapter deals with food. Jónas's approach is mostly just to describe the food occasionally also trying to show how harsh and sparse life was by referring to various rhymes and proverbs such as 'Hjónin borða hangiket / hjúin svöng það vita / smalinn sárt af sulti grét / samt fékk engan bita' (Jónas Jónasson, 2010: 34), to clarify his points of view.

If you want to address the history of the research of food in Iceland it is difficult, if not literally impossible, to omit the Icelandic historian Hallgerður Gísladóttir (1952-2007). Hallgerður besides having written a significant amount of articles and chapters in various books wrote the only comprehensive book on Icelandic food traditions. Her book *Íslensk matarhefð* was published in 1999. Hallgerður herself states in the introduction that her book is 'eins konar alþýðleg sýnisbók um íslenska matarhætti fyrr á tímum.' As she has noted 'í starfi [hennar] á Þjóðminjasafni Íslands [...] slíkt efni hefur vantað, einkum um starfshætti sem þessu tengjast' (Hallgerður Gísladóttir, 1999: 7). It thus seems there has been a gap of at least 70 years in Iceland in which food was not on the agenda. As Hallgerður writes, the main topic of the book is to describe working procedures when processing raw food materials into edible foods.

Two articles by Hallgerður, both from 2000, refer to the environmental impact on foods in Iceland. In her article "Substitutes for Corn in Iceland" she describes the Icelanders' response to the environmental fact that corn grows poorly in Iceland due to the cold climate. Hallgerður argues that the cultural response to this environmental threat was to use indigenous plants such as Iceland moss and dulse in bread, blood-sausages and porridge instead of corn (Hallgerður Gísladóttir, 2000b: 149), as well as dry fish spread with butter which was sometimes eaten instead of bread (Hallgerður Gísladóttir, 2000b: 154). In the article "Súrt í broti", from the book *Manneldi á nýrri öld*

(2000), Hallgerður describes various food preservation methods used in Iceland from the time of settlement and onward. She argues that due to the lack of salt and the shortage of wood to burn in Iceland the main preservation method was *súrsun*¹. Thus the *súrsun* food preservation method can also be understood as essentially a cultural response to an environmental fact, similar to the reacting of the lack of corn. Hallgerður nonetheless recognises that salt gradually became more and more accessible in Iceland during the nineteenth century and hence curing meat became more common, although the use of *súrsun* continued (Hallgerður Gísladóttir, 2000a: 95-97).

A very different approach to traditional peasant food is taken by Icelandic folklorist Árni Björnsson in his book about the annual winter gathering *Þorablót* (1986; revised 2008). Here Árni describes how city-dwellers in Reykjavík in a state of nostalgia, by the middle of the twentieth century, were responsible for a revival which accentuated traditional peasant food (Árni Björnsson, 2008: 73).

Most recent is an article in *Saga* from 2012 by the Icelandic historian Hrefna Róbertsdóttir, “Munaðarvara og matarmenning”, dealing with luxury goods and food culture in eighteenth-century Iceland, and focusing on an order form from 1784. Here Hrefna shows just how many luxury goods were available to the elite in the Icelandic society at that time. Although she acknowledges that the common people did not have access to these goods, the fact that 30 sorts of vegetable seeds came with the order (Hrefna Róbertsdóttir, 2012: 76), and her statement concerning common farmers that ‘[þ]ar sem matjurtarækt hafi komist á legg sé grænmetis einnig neytt á kvöldin’ (Hrefna Róbertsdóttir, 2012: 79-80), shows explicitly there were various social dynamics at work in food sources in Iceland in the eighteenth century, even amongst the peasants.

2.4 Conclusion

All of the above mentioned scholars and their works try to throw some light onto nineteenth-century peasant food culture from often quite different angles. As

¹ A method where meat is cured in fermented whey (lactic acid).

indicated in Chapter 2.2, it is only by using these different approaches in unison that we can go even further in elucidating and interpreting issues connected to the peasant food culture of the nineteenth century. The more or less strictly descriptive accounts, like those by Jónas Jónasson, Hrefna Róbertsdóttir, Højrup and Boyhus, of course, often lie at the basis of any attempt of interpretation. Nonetheless looking at the material in a social and environmental context, as Feilberg, Hyldtoft, Árni Björnsson and Hallgerður Gísladóttir do, and building on these works, in conjunction with other significant works from within the social sciences, which I will address in the next chapter, enables us to analyse various other important issues concerning the dynamic intermingling of food, identity, group, tradition and environment.

3 Food Culture Studies within the Social Sciences

3.1 Introduction

On a larger, more universal scale, food has also been researched and scrutinised for a significant period of time by various social-science scholars, using often quite diverse approaches in their research. In this chapter I will look at some of the chief works from a historical perspective, mainly addressing older anthropological and sociological works, in addition to selected contemporary works by folklorists and ethnologists which can be made use of in case studies. This exposition should by no means be seen as exhaustive, but merely understood as a selected overview.

3.2 Anthropology and Sociology

Although few social-science pioneers of the nineteenth century directly refer to food in their analysis of societies and cultures, the topic of food often lies more or less latent as minor inputs to their descriptions and their analyses. For example English anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) mentioned in his search for the origin of religion how the Sioux tribe of the American plains dealt with the presence of wild rice in their environment. In his essay “The Science of Culture” from 1871 Tylor noted that the Sioux believed that ‘The Great Spirit [...] made all things except the wild rice; but the wild rice came by chance’ (Tylor, 2008: 39).

One of the first scholars to make significant use of food in his anthropological analysis of society and culture was the British-Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) in his groundbreaking *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* from 1922. In this book, Malinowski examined the tribal economic systems of the Trobrianders in the archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea and immediately recognised the symbolic importance of food. Malinowski wrote: ‘First as to food-stuffs, they are not merely regarded by the natives as nourishment [...] but also [...] they [the Trobrianders] like to display their possessions in food’ (Malinowski, 1984: 168). Malinowski continues by stating:

That the right to display food is highly valued can be seen from the fact that in villages where a chief of high rank resides, the commoners’ storehouses have to

be closed up with coco-nut leaves, so as not to compete with his (Malinowski, 1984: 169).

Here Malinowski emphasises and explicitly shows the symbolic importance of food in Trobriand society.

French sociologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), a contemporary of Malinowski, also incorporated issues of symbolic meaning and value of food in his book *Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* from 1925, a book small in size but great within the scope of significant sociological-anthropological works. In the book Mauss describes the essence of the gift, among other things in connection to everyday life of the tribes of North-West America and British Columbia. Among other things, Mauss mentions the obligation to invite clansmen to eat whenever a seal is killed or even just when a box of berries or roots are opened, acknowledging the fact that every villager needs to be invited to eat when bigger food sources become available, as when a whale beaches (Mauss, 2011: 33). These early works make it quite clear that food is not just about eating. Food and food sources have symbolic and social meaning, and in this way are often an agency for the defining of a people, as well as an agency for the defining of groups of individuals within the people: Food is a means of defining both who people are and who they want to be.

Among anthropological scholars, British anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921-2007) stands out with regard to taboo and food studies). In her book *Purity and Danger* (1966) Douglas seeks to explain the mechanisms which cause humans to come up with, to use Douglas's own words, "bizarre taboos" (Douglas, 2002: xi). Not all the taboos scrutinised in the book are directly connected to food, but many are. In an attempt to explain the abominations of *Leviticus* Douglas discloses just how bizarre many of these taboos are. She asks among other things '[w]hy should the camel, the hare and the rock badger be unclean? Why should some locusts, but not all, be unclean?' (Douglas, 2002: 51). She states that these taboos are not to be understood symbolically, but rather ethically and as disciplinary rules (Douglas, 2002: 55). In answer to her questions, Douglas suggests that food taboos are often to be understood as a physical expression of holiness, and the oneness of God, seeing the dietary laws and thus every encounter with the animal kingdom and every meal as 'signs which at every turn

inspir[e] meditation on oneness, purity and completeness of God' (Douglas, 2002: 71). In addition, food taboos can be seen as ritualistic behaviour to keep people to their roles in society and as concepts that 'instil sentiments of respect for seniority' (Douglas, 2002: 81), just like a war dance infuses sentiments of aggression. Douglas explicitly shows how concepts of group and identity mixed with respect for the old ways and traditions are controlled in part by taboo, and, vice versa, how taboo is often defined by group identity.

In addition to the above one should also note the works of the British anthropologist Jack Goody and, though not strictly a social scientist, the American photographer and filmmaker Lisa Law. In an article from 1982 Goody analysed the emergence of industrial foods in the world as a whole and argued for a move towards what he terms as the development of a "world cuisine" through the industrialisation of foods. Goody argues that many changes in foods in the western world are due to the industrialisation of foods and retailing systems with 'larger stores offer[ing] lower prices, wider choices and the impersonality of selection that a socially mobile population often appears to prefer' (Goody, 2013: 87). Goody continues by saying that these tendencies are spreading out with 'these industrial foods of the "West" hav[ing] now become incorporated in the meals of the Third World' (Goody, 2013: 87). Despite the spread of these food systems and the overall dynamics in the changing of food habits, which is difficult to deny, humans tend to be comparatively conservative with regard to food choices. It might be said that the food you eat, and the sensual experience of eating it, helps you define and maintain your own perception of who you are. For example the taste of roasted pork on Christmas Eve for a Dane strengthens and maintains the experience of being Danish. This is recognised by Lisa Law in her book chapter "Home Cooking" (from the 2006 anthology *Empire of the Senses*) about the recreation of Manila through foods by Filipino women in Hong Kong. Here Law argues that '[the senses] are a situated practice that can shed light on the way bodies experience different spaces of culture' (Law, 2006: 225). Law argues furthermore that through the cooking of certain foods and eating with the hands, Manila 'is experienced each Sunday through a conscious invention of home [...] [where] [h]ome cooking thus becomes an active creation [...] a sense of home' (Law, 2006: 234). Thus even though Goody is arguing for a movement towards uniform food occurring in the world, at least

in the short run, it seems clear that psychological and traditional factors will in many ways work against this uniformity.

3.3 Folkloristics and Ethnology

A second aspect of Goody's analysis is his discussion of preference towards the impersonality of selection (Goody, 2013: 87), whereby a personal relationship between producer and consumer is no longer part of the transaction experience. In this context Icelandic folklorist Jón Þór Pétursson has made some interesting recent work on what he terms as 'personalised food relationships' (Jón Þór Pétursson, 2013: 17). In an article from 2013, Jón Þór addresses the paradigm shift which has occurred with regard to food's social, political and cultural connectedness now being made available to the consumers and no longer hidden away (Jón Þór Pétursson, 2013: 17), as is exemplified by for example Farmers' Market Movement. Thus it might be said that a reaction to Goody's scenario of disconnection and impersonality can also be recognised in scholarly works, even though the globalisation of foods and a development towards a world cuisine is undoubtedly continuing with unabated strength. Other arguments supporting this reaction and interpretation are found in works by other folklorists and ethnologists, such as the Estonian ethnologist Ester Bardone in her analysis of wild berries in Estonian food culture, where she states that wild berries are considered in Estonia as local, seasonal, ecological and natural (Bardone, 2013: 41). In short they are often considered a food that connects to the land and the immediate environment and gives 'feelings related to belonging' (Bardone, 2013: 30). Bardone's arguments underline that far from Goody's idea of impersonality with regard to foods, food carries meaning. The arguments of both Jón Þór and Bardone are clearly connected to concepts of *identity* and the idea of belonging to certain *groups* as well as *tradition*, all concepts well-defined and described within folklore theory. In the following chapter, I will elaborate and discuss these three concepts in depth. However I would like to finish this chapter with a review of the approaches to food culture outlined by the Swedish ethnologist Nils-Arvid Bringéus in his book *Man, Food and Milieu* (2001).

In Bringéus's book, many of the above-mentioned mechanisms with regard to humans and food are both recognised and elaborated on. Bringéus states among other

things that 'food habits had ideological overtones' and that '[f]ood was associated with notions of honour' (Bringéus, 2001: x-xi). Bringéus acknowledges that these tendencies are not only shared by our closest social circle but also by much larger groups of people, a fact Bringéus relates to our cultural identity (Bringéus, 2001: 10-11). In the first chapter of the book Bringéus describes various aspects of eating habits and their cultural aspects. In his analysis of nineteenth-century peasant food in Sweden, Bringéus points to one category of aspects which might turn out to be very useful for this study, in other words the edibility category. Bringéus uses a triangle model consisting of an empirical/traditional aspect, an ideology aspect and a technology aspect. As he underlines these three aspects influence each other in a dynamic way and help determine what is perceived as edible in a culture. The empirical aspects are the eating habits that we share with most people in the place where we live, which help us to create our identity as the people from a specific area, while this shared knowledge of eating habits is passed down through generations through oral tradition (Bringéus, 2001: 3). Aspects with regard to the preparation, preservation and acquisition methods of foods make up the technology aspect of the triangle model. The ideology aspect is then explicitly linked to our above discussion of the taboos connected to food, as Bringéus writes that 'ideologies are concerned with valuations. They do not mention what is edible or inedible, but what is clean or unclean, useful or useless' (Bringéus, 2001: 5).

3.4 Conclusion

To summarise all the studies above, they all in some way relate to concepts of belonging and who you are. Even the earliest examples of Malinowski and Mauss recognise the importance of food as an indicator for position and identity in society and how these are maintained through practices of the sharing of food. The studies of Douglas reveal other aspects of defining identity through the notion of taboo, the clean and the unclean, which is clearly recognised by Bringéus as well. Law, Jón Þór and Bardone, in various ways, all show how food connects people in groups.

In the above pages I have often referred to the notions and concepts of group, identity and tradition. In the following chapter I will elaborate on these concepts and

suggest a definition of group, identity and tradition, which from a folkloristic and ethnological approach can be related to foodways.

4 Group, Identity and Tradition

4.1 Introduction

The three concepts of *group*, *identity* and *tradition* are today regarded as quite integrated central concepts within the scope of folkloristics and ethnology theory. In the introduction to the anthology *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture* (2003) American folklorist Burt Feintuch lists eight words that ‘we [folklore scholars] use when we talk about creative expression in its social context. We teach with them. Much scholarship rests on them’ (Feinbuch, 2003: 1). The list begins with the word *group* and ends with the words *tradition* and *identity* (Feinbuch, 2003: 1). However, the idea that these words and concepts are self-evident features within folkloristics theory has not always been the case, although allusions to them and other concepts with similar wording have always been at the roots of folklore studies. It is certainly noteworthy that the word and concept of *identity* did not figure in the 1995 edition of *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture* (Feinbuch, 2003: ix). Nonetheless American folklorist William Bascom (1912-81) had suggested, as early as in 1954, that a prime function of folklore is to educate people and thereby maintain ‘conformity to the accepted patterns of behavior’ (Bascom, 1965: 294), thus assisting in creating identity. Although Bascom never specifically mentioned the word identity in his article, fellow American folklorist Elliott Oring has underlined that ‘a concept of identity has always been central in folklore studies’ (Oring, 2012: 25). Indeed American folklorist Alan Dundes (1934-2005) dedicated a whole chapter to the issue of identity and its connection to folklore in his book *Folklore Matters* (1989), stating that ‘one of the ways in which individuals define their own identity is through folklore’ (Dundes, 1989: 2). Naturally, foodways being folklore par excellence (see for example; Toelken, 1979: 73-80; Jón Þór Pétursson, 2013: 17-29; Bardone, 2013: 30-46), this chapter will explore the key concepts of group, identity and tradition from a historical context, attempting to define what they encompass and how they intermingle, support and rely upon each other, the aim being to apply these concepts on foodways of nineteenth-century peasants later in this thesis.

4.2 Group

The concept of group is probably the concept that has been part of the folkloristic endeavour for the longest period of time, even though Dundes states in his article “What is Folklore?” that folklore is mostly defined by the study of the lore rather than the folk (Dundes, 1965: 2). This is exemplified if we trace the discipline of folkloristics back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the works of German scholars such as folklore collector Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) was recognised as having a preoccupation with collecting ‘from the *common* German *country-people*’ (Grimm, 1999: 5. My italics). This is an allusion we can also recognise when examining the work of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and his emphasis on *folk* poetry (Wilson, 1989: 27-32). This understanding and definition of the folk as the *common people* lasted well into the twentieth century, and was recognised by Dundes who argued in 1965 that there ‘[were] still folklorists who mistakenly identif[ied] the folk with *peasant* society or rural groups’ (Dundes, 1965: 2). However, by distinguishing the folk as a distinct rural group and thereby defining them in opposition to other population groups (Dundes, 1980: 2), nineteenth-century scholars perhaps unconsciously acknowledged, that the concept of group was crucial to the study of folklore. As mentioned above Alan Dundes was one of the first scholars to question this definition by asking ‘who are the folk?’ answering ‘Among others, *we* are!’ (Dundes, 1980: 19). For Dundes ‘[t]he term “folk” can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor’ noting that ‘what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some tradition which it will call its own’ (Dundes, 1965: 2).

It is noteworthy though that most of the above contributors to folk group definition fail to a large extent to recognise that groups have ever-changing powerful dynamics. American folklorist Dorothy Noyes describes the impossibility of neat definition of the group in her contribution to *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*. Noyes thereafter ascribes several notions to the group dynamics. The first of these is *segregativity* - an ability to move between groups as an individual. Secondly comes *integrativity* - bridging the gap between two groups, and thirdly is the idea of *encapsulation* - whereby the group is defined by those involved as a product of a *wished tradition* connection (Noyes, 2003: 19-26). In the case of encapsulation, the group concept is often loaded with British historian Eric Hobsbaw’n’s (1917-2012)

definition of *invented traditions* which he links to nationalism and the nation-state (Hobsbawn, 2013: 1-14), nation being defined by American scholar Benedict Anderson as ‘an imagined political community [as] all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined’ (Anderson, 2006: 6). In this sense this brings us back to Herder’s groups of German peasants and their poems which are seen as ‘archives of a nationality’ (Wilson, 1989: 28), whether these are perceived as routines and customs (Hobsbawn, 2013: 2-3), or invented traditions. I would argue that the food we eat can also be seen as such an archive, defining our nationality.

4.3 Identity

As noted above the use of the word, if not the concept of identity was almost absent from the scholarly discourse within folkloristics prior to the 1970s, until it first appeared in an article in 1971 by American folklorist Richard Bauman (Oring, 2012: 3). American folklorist Roger D. Abrahams has since outlined the importance of identity as a tool for creating group feelings, as well as the concept’s ambiguity with regard to group feeling. He begins his chapter “Identity” in *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture* by stating:

Identity has become the encompassing term for cultural, social, and spiritual wholeness. It also emerges in discussions of territorial integrity, often as a rhetorical ploy in struggles for establishing and maintaining domain. [...] This wholeness is a longed-for state of being that emerges in a continuation of romantic rhetoric and the invocations of nostalgia (Abrahams, 2003: 198).

This sense of identity wholeness connected to notions of territory and domain is also recognised by Dundes who argues that ‘place can be [...] an extremely meaningful component of individual identity’ (Dundes, 1989: 13), as Bringéus also points out (see Chapter 3.3). The longed-for state of being related to national identity, often linked to Romanticism and nostalgia can actually be understood as a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which nostalgia creates this state of being, which in turn might create more nostalgia. This process is further explained with American anthropologist Paul Durrenberger’s idea of “self-intensifying loops”. Durrenberger writes:

When an increase in one variable means an increase in another, and *that* increase means an increase in the first one, we have a circle, or a loop, as we call it. The more of the first, the more of the second; the more of the second, the more of the first. This is what we call a self-intensifying loop (Durrenberger, 2010: xxi).

Dundes also acknowledges this dynamic connection of self-intensifying loops, self-fulfilling prophecy and identity, using an example that ‘fat people are not necessary innately jolly, but, upon learning that fat people are assumed to be jolly, a corpulent individual might feel obliged to act out the stereotype’ (Dundes, 1989: 24). In a food context, the more Icelandic you are, the more lamb you eat, making you even more Icelandic, this also being connected to the local territory (Iceland), as Dundes argues above. Abrahams nonetheless recognises that having an identity is not always self-imposed stating ‘[w]e have a duty to have an identity and [...] to feel fulfilled by it’ (Abrahams, 2003: 211). Thus identity can be understood as a negotiation process between an environment and territory, a desirable state of wholeness involving a feeling of being connected to a group and a shared tradition. The importance of identity to folklore studies is self-evident, especially when quoting Oring: ‘*Identity is what binds an idea of folk to a notion of lore*’ (Oring, 2012: 23. Italics in original). Thus identity is the glue between the group (folk) and the tradition (lore), whether that tradition is an invented tradition or a tradition understood in more folkloristic terms (approaches I will describe in more detail below). In this way one might say the consumption of a specific food creates the identity that glues together the group which one wants to belong to, with the group’s tradition of consuming this specific food.

4.4 Tradition

The concept of tradition can be a more difficult term to pin down due to its ever-changing qualities and its dependency on context. American folklorist Barre Toelken argues in his book *The Dynamics of Folklore* (1979) that a tradition is to be understood as a folklore item (for example a food recipe), that can be recognised as having been passed on by predecessors and ancestors to the performer. However Toelken says in the same breath that the performance of tradition is also highly dependent on the performer’s ‘unique talents of inventiveness within the tradition’ (Toelken, 1979: 32)

thereby recognising the dynamics of traditions within a passed-on body of folklore. This dynamic quality of tradition is also described by American folklorist Henry Glassie who writes:

[T]radition [is] constructed by individuals and [is] constructed differently by people who, as a consequence of interaction within different environments, develop ways that, being shared to a degree of mutual comprehension, serve to draw them together, while distinguishing them from others (Glassie, 2003: 180).

In addition to recognising the dynamic interaction between people and context with regard to tradition and the fact that tradition is constructed, Glassie also underlines in the above quote the connections between the creation of tradition, the making of identity and group formation. Oring meanwhile argues for an understanding of the concept of tradition as both a process and a product (Oring, 2012: 221-224), Oring referring to the process of tradition as being essentially a form of cultural reproduction, a reconstruction of cultural practices through repetition and the passing on of traditions (Oring, 2012: 223). Glassie adds that one has to accept that traditions, as history, are 'an artful assembly of materials from the past, designed for usefulness in the future' (Glassie, 2003: 176). Thus we can conclude that tradition is as much connected to the past and future as it is to the present, as is pointed out by American anthropologists Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin who argue that 'tradition is a model of the past and is inseparable from the interpretation of tradition in the present' (Handler and Linnekin, 1989: 41). Thus traditional foods, being traditional only because we cook them over and over again, can be seen as significant for people who are both creating and maintaining their identity.

4.5 Conclusion

The three concepts of group, identity and tradition clearly interact in a dynamic pattern where, as suggested by Oring, the concept of identity is the concept that binds together the two other concepts in a sense of wholeness, where the group's identity is negotiated on a constant basis within Oring's process-understanding of tradition. By looking to the past, the group through its tradition-processes creates its identity for the future in the present.

5 The Comparative Method

5.1 Introduction

Having discussed the key concepts that lie behind the discussion of foodways we can now move on to examining the value of the comparative approach, one of two distinct research methods in the social-sciences commonly applied to the examination of human societies and cultures. While the first method, ethnography, can refer to the process of collecting information, doing fieldwork, and the product of the research, ethnographic writings (Sanjek, 2012: 243), the meaning of comparison or comparative studies, in the simplest form, is more self-evident.

5.2 Cross-Cultural Comparison

Although some of the earliest travelers' accounts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are almost solely descriptive ethnographies and only comparative to a small degree (Dundes, 1989: 58), it is explicitly by applying the comparative method to the ethnographies that we can expect to obtain a deeper understanding of human culture. As American anthropologist Roger Sanjek states, ethnography needs to be 'filtered and interpreted against comparative theory' (Sanjek, 2012: 244). American cultural anthropologists Carol and Melvin Ember reinforce Sanjek's view, stating that '[e]thnography and cross-cultural comparison are not contradictory. They inform each other' (Ember, 2009: 2). British anthropologist Alan Barnard suggests a regional comparison method concerned with limiting the comparison within a region (Barnard, 2000: 57). This method is suitable and applicable within the context of the case study of this thesis, because the cultures and areas scrutinised here (Skast and Gørding Herred in Denmark and Þingeyjarsýsla in Iceland) can be easily connected to the same Nordic/Germanic regional tradition. Regional comparison is a method that seeks both to identify and clarify exactly why cultural traits within a region constantly differ (Barnard, 2012: 598). That is what will be done in this thesis.

5.3 Regional Comparison

The whole process of describing and defining a "region", in connection to its cultural traits is in itself an endeavour that has caused difficulties for scholars. A great project was launched in various European countries during the middle of the twentieth

century aiming to produce ethnological atlases, in which various cultural traits would be plotted onto a map. Sweden got the first part of *Atlas över svensk folkekultur* in 1957. The Danish counterpart, however, never got any further than to the preparation stage, as academic concern arose within ethnological and folkloristic communities in most of Europe (Stoklund, 2003: 17). Danish ethnologist Bjarne Stoklund (1928-2013) stated for example 'at hvis man tegnede alle de påviste grænser for enkeltfænomener ind på det samme kort, så ville kortet ende med at blive helt sort, for så forskelligt (og tilfældigt) er deres forløb' (Stoklund, 2003: 21). In short, at first glance it seems an unachievable task to define regions on the basis of regional cultural differences. However, Stoklund continues by stating that this is 'en temmelig mistrøstig konstatering, og den er da heller ikke helt rigtig. Der er nogle grænser, som går igen på flere kort, og som skiller sig ud som vigtigere end de andre' (Stoklund, 2003: 21).

Swedish ethnologist Nils-Arvid Bringéus agrees with Stoklund and writes that:

Studiet av kulturella variationer har sedan 1930-tallet utgjort en huvuduppgift för den regionala etnologien. Kartering har därvid varit den främsta metoden. Samtidigt har det ofta framhållits att karteringen inte är et självändamål utan ett analytiskt hjälpmedel. Vid tolkningen av regionala variationer har man vanligen tillgripit förklaringar baserade på 1. geografi, 2. ekologi, 3. diffusion, 4. ideologi och 5. social struktur (Bringéus, 2003: 39).

While it is applicable to analyse cultural variation both within and between regions in this way, it should also be recognised that borders between different regional cultures might vary significantly. Different foodways for example can vary significantly, not always showing clear patterns and often overlapping: While modern Icelanders from the Westfjords differ from people from the Mývatn region both with regard to the eating of *skata*, and fermented eggs, they share a common preference for *hangikjöt*. Admittedly in the modern globalised nation state these minor differences diminish.

Diffusionism, a theory which explains how cultural traits spread between populations, can be traced back to the eighteenth century, the first significant diffusionist being German zoologist Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904). Ratzel's main argument was that single cultural traits or items were more likely to diffuse, whilst whole cultural complexes tended to spread through migration (Barnard, 2000: 50).

Another diffusionist was Swedish folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878-1952) who developed the notion of the *oicotype* (Dundes, 1999: 137). Von Sydow wrote (concerning folktales):

A country is often made up of several different cultural districts, with comparatively slight contact with one another. Such districts will then also vary in their folktales: partly in that to a certain extent they have different repertoires, partly in that tales of the same type will form special types, oicotypes in the different districts (von Sydow, 1999: 145).

This idea was later applied to all kinds of folklore. Thus von Sydow argues that just as a plant has to adapt to a specific climate and environment, so too does folklore, including fast-food, have to adapt to local characteristics as they are transmitted from one location to another. In this way one notes that hotdog from manufacturer SS sausages in Iceland contain meat from *sheep* (*Íslendingar borða SS pylsur*), while their Danish counterparts from Danish Crown are solely made of pork meat (*Den gode pølse er smagt til med traditioner*).

5.4 Conclusion

In the above I have shown the possibilities of comparative studies in connection to von Sydow's notion of the development of oicotype when analysing foodways. Indeed Dundes even goes as far as to state that '[o]icotype is a logical extension of the comparative method' (Dundes, 1999: 138). We can now move on to the case study itself.

6 The Environment and the Foodways in the Case Study

6.1 Introduction

The idea that the fundamental link between ‘human activities and climatic and other environmental conditions’ (Müller-Wille, 2014: 32) requires close scrutiny can be traced back to founder of American anthropology Franz Boas (1858-1942) and the earlier mentioned Friedrich Ratzel (Müller-Wille, 2014: 32). Boas argued in 1883, in connection with the Inuit, that resource exploitation depends on ‘changes in the climate’ and that ‘the distribution of the living areas [...] is dependent on the favorable nature of hunting conditions’ (quoted in Müller-Wille, 2014: 48). Boas thus clearly acknowledges the importance of the connection between human culture and the environment when interpreting culture, something that also relates to foodways and food culture.

In order to compare and explain norms with regard to local foodways, it is beneficial to contextualise the empirical data from NEU and ÞÞ, which are the bedrock of the case study of this thesis. Despite the fact that Denmark and Iceland were actually part of the same kingdom during the time-frame for this thesis, significant political, economical and natural environmental differences can easily be recognised.

6.2 Climate

Feilberg begins his *Dansk Bondeliv I* with a description of the environment in which the West-Jutlandic peasant lived. Feilberg writes:

Vesteregnet har ikke uden Grund Ord for sin Barskhed; dog er der i saa henseende Forskel, og Vejrliget er langt fra saa haardt i det sydlige som oppe mod Nord. Omtrent lige syd for Esbjerg [...] begynder den første Antydning til [...] Marsk[en] (Feilberg, 1910: 1).

As Feilberg indicates, the climate is tough in Vesteregnet, the area examined in this thesis. Danish ethnologist Palle O. Christiansen nonetheless recognises that western Jutland is not a uniform environment stating that ‘[j]ordbundsforholdene kunne inden for samme sogn veksle mellem brugbar agerjord og tørre klitter’ (Christiansen, 2014: 26). In the same book Tang Kristensen comments that in good locations it was possible

to grow rye and buckwheat (Tang Kristensen, 2014: 36), thus explicitly making an allusion to this being a relatively warm environment in which rye and buckwheat can mature.

That the environmental conditions were also harsh in Iceland is recognised by Jónas Jónasson in his book *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir* where Jónas explains the Icelandic preoccupation with the weather and ways to predict the weather by stating that ‘hér á Íslandi sé hagur manna bæði til lands og sjávar að mestu undir tíðarfarinu kominn ...’ he adds that it is important ‘að grasviðri sé, svo að tún og engjar spretti,’ due to the fact that some years ‘hrundu þá skepnunar niður úr hor hjá mönnum, hvað lítið sem út af bar’ (Jónas Jónasson, 2010: 131). The fact that grain matures poorly in northern Iceland has long been recognised and can be seen in Þorvaldur Thoroddsen’s book *Lýsing Íslands* IV where it is stated that ‘öll kornyrkja sennilega [have] verið lögð niður á Norðurlandi áður en ritöld hófst’ (Þorvaldur Thoroddsen, 1922: 179). However the same book explicitly acknowledges that vegetables can and have been grown successfully here and that a significant number of vegetable-gardens (244 gardens in 1791, 446 gardens in 1845: Þorvaldur Thoroddsen, 1922: 109) were cultivated in northern Iceland, a significant decline taking place due to *ísaár* and *harðindi* during the first decades of the nineteenth century, leaving only 11 gardens in 1801 (Þorvaldur Thoroddsen, 1922: 105-109). It can therefore be stated that the main differences between our locations of examination are that there was a slightly warmer natural environment in Denmark both with regard to cultivating and growing plants as well as for breeding livestock for food.

6.3 Politics and economics

The political and economical differences between nineteenth-century northern Iceland and western Jutland were perhaps more significant. Denmark was continuing its steep decline from being one of the main political powers in northern Europe, with overseas colonies in the Americas, Africa and Southeast Asia, to almost vanishing from the map. Taking the “wrong” side during the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century had led to the British bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807, the Peace of Kiel in 1814 and the Congress of Vienna (1814-15), which led to Denmark being deprived of Norway (Kjersgaard, 1993: 198-207). After the shattering defeat to

the Prussian army in 1864, Denmark then lost the southern provinces of Slesvig, and Holstein (Kjersgaard, 1993: 242) and as Kjersgaard (1931-95) puts it: 'den tanke måtte melde sig, at landet nu var for lille til at kunne overleve' (Kjersgaard, 1993: 243). Nonetheless the nationalistic feelings of the time also imbued Denmark for example through the saying 'hvad udad tabes, skal indad vindes.'

It was not just the losses suffered through wars that placed Denmark in danger of diminishing as a national state. Strong nationalistic powers were also emerging in Iceland during the beginning of the nineteenth century and consequently went on to undermine the unity within the kingdom, the result being the formation of a new constitution with regard to Icelandic affairs in 1874 (Gunnar Karlsson, 2009: 205). This gradually led to a local ruling Icelandic government in the beginning of the twentieth century, (Gunnar Karlsson, 2009: 263) and eventually full independence in 1944. So while Denmark was almost erased from the map during the nineteenth century, Iceland was increasingly growing in self-confidence and developing its own identity as a progressive independent nation among other nations. A crucial factor that drove this appetite for independence was the remaining Danish trading monopoly from the seventeenth century which in 1876 still was causing 75% of all ship traffic between Iceland and Europe to be Danish (Gunnar Karlsson, 2008: 339). These laws and their consequences limited the possibilities for the local Icelandic peasants to trade, possibilities which were both available to and utilised by their counterparts in western Jutland who were widely known for their trading skills (trading in steers amongst other things). This is recognised both by Tang Kristensen (Tang Kristensen, 2014a: 46) and even more distinctly by Feilberg who states that 'har Vestjyderne en Lidenskab, som er stærkere end alle andre, saa er det handelen' (Feilberg, 1910: 168). This could mean that imported foods and other goods were more widely available to the Jutlanders.

6.4 Conclusion

I conclude that the natural environments as well as the political and economical environments of the two locations in the case study were significantly different in the nineteenth century, something that was bound to influence foodways. The natural environment in Denmark was clearly more suited to growing and raising food sources and more open to trade, even though in a political and economical sense Denmark was

looking inward, Iceland, on the other hand was reaching out to Europe, but still limited in terms of trading.

7 The Source Material for the Case Study

7.1 Introduction

The NEU project was launched in Denmark between 1939 and 1941 (Højrup, 1963: 82), its Icelandic counterpart taking place approximately 20 years later from 1960 onwards (Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, 2004: 164). Obviously the 20-year time difference in starting these collecting projects could have some influence on how we interpret the material in a comparative study. However many other unforeseen issues can have other influences on the outcome of the data as will be discussed below. It should be noted that the Danish informants were born between 1868 and 1898, while the Icelandic informants were born between 1880 and 1898. In this chapter I will look at some of the issues that need to be kept in mind when working with such sources and provide some examples of differences in the nature of the answers. As I will stress, none of these features are powerful enough to prevent the endeavour of comparison.

7.2 The Trustworthiness of Memory

First of all is the issue of truth and reliability of the answers. Two issues with regard to this need to be noted. First of all is the fact that the answers were written down and documented long after the tradition in question took place. As already mentioned, the Danish project was launched around 1940 and many of the informants were born in the 1860s and 1870s, meaning that for a survey of nineteenth-century folklife they were required to recall events and traditions that occurred 70-80 years before the recording, something that also applies with the Icelandic material. However this is not necessarily a disadvantage as research has indicated that memories of childhood and adolescence can become clearer with age (Yow, 2005: 35).

In addition to the issues of remembering the past (which will be addressed in more detail below) one must consider the circumstances in which the information was collected. The Icelandic historian Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon recognises this issue, noting that these answers are 'afurðir tilbúins ferlis' and based on 'forskrift fræðimanna og byggist á akademískum leikreglum' (Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, 2004: 163-164). Sigurður Gylfi continues by arguing:

þær [the answers] hafa [...] þann ókost að minningin sem er dregin fram er að öllu jöfnu þvinguð þar sem um er að ræða „umbeðna“ upprifjun [...] og því verður erfitt að greina hvað er byggt á hans [the informant's] eigin reynslu og hvað er aðfengin vitneskja (Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, 2004: 163-164).

Hence not only *personal memory* but also *collective memory*, the memory stored in the group (Yow, 2005: 36), could have an effect on how the informant chose to answer: As American scholar Valerie Raleigh Yow notes '[r]esearch by historians, sociologists, and cultural anthropologists suggests that collective memory affects personal memory' (Yow, 2005: 53). In her book Yow addresses many different factors that can have an effect on an informant's immediate memory. She highlights for example the effect that mood can have on memories stating that even 'when people remember past events, present emotional needs affect memory' (Yow, 2005: 53). Despite this fragile nature of both questionnaires and memory, the source material being analysed in this thesis remains applicable for norms related to and attitudes toward food and foodways, as is acknowledged by Sigurður Gylfi who states that the material 'nýtist vel í fræðigreinum á borð við þjóðfræði [...] og opnar möguleika til viðtækrar könnunar á reynslu fólks' (Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, 2004: 165). However, it is essential to keep in mind the concise rule of American historians Natalie Z. Davis and Randolph Starn who say that 'whenever memory is invoked we should be asking ourselves: by whom, where, in which context, against what?' (Davis and Starn, 1989: 2).

7.3 Styles

Reading through the pages of the ÞÞ and NEU material, it quickly becomes apparent that there are interesting differences in the nature of the answers. The NEU material is not as systematically presented and the texts seem more fluid and less formal and stiff. One Icelandic informant (b. 1893) writes for example '[e]f skall á dimm þoka, var það venja að halda ánum vel saman og flytja sig nær bænum' (ÞÞ 15260). This answer simply shows cold facts with regard to precautions taken due to the danger of fog but contains no personal emotional memory of the fog. A Danish informant (b. 1893) gives a much more personal answer here on issues concerning his grandmother's apple garden:

Bestemors have, hun var jo saa gammel, saa vi skulde sige I, vi maatte ikke sige du, det var en rigtig gammel Satan, jeg mindes ikke, at jeg nogensinde har faaet er taar kaffe, Æble eller blommer af hende, sel om der var nok i haven (NEU 28154).

Some of the Danish informants even dare to utter their distaste of certain foods. For example an informant born in 1868 says that 'Det tørrede faarekød der altid blev harsk [...] [v]i børn frygtede det harske faarekød, - og jeg har aldrig faaet lært at spise det med lyst' (NEU 5190). Such emotional utterances can nonetheless occasionally also be found in the Icelandic material (if rarely). One Icelandic informant (b. 1880) says for example in defence of his sheep that:

Því hefur verið haldið fram að ofbeit á skógi hafi orsakað eyðingu hans. Þetta er hin mesta fjarstæða. Ég stóð yfir fé bæði sumar og vetur, og sá aldrei kind bregða tönn á skógvið og sjaldan á blöð hans (ÞÞ 692).

7.4 Conclusion

One can thus conclude that interesting and possibly valuable things concerning norms and attitudes toward food and foodways can be recognised in the NEU and ÞÞ source material, as long as one keeps Davis' and Starn's rule in mind about by whom, where, in which context, and against what these expressed norms are given.

8 The Methodology of the Case Study

8.1 Introduction

I recognise that a variety of methodological approaches can be applied to any empirical data material, these approaches generally reflecting the researcher's theoretical background. As American social-psychologist Sonja Peterson-Lewis explains:

One's research *methodology* consists of the underlying network of philosophies and values - the worldviews - that shape and inform how the researcher conceptualizes the problem and how and with whom he/she implements the method (Peterson-Lewis, 2012: 60).

I personally mean to approach the data from the perspective of a student of folkloristics and anthropology: It is on the basis of folkloristic and anthropological theories on comparison, group, identity and tradition (see Chapter 4 and 5) that I will approach the topic of this thesis and have chosen the empirical data suitable for such an endeavour.

8.2 The Process of Obtaining the Data Material

The work on this thesis started with an attempt to make use of a variety of different historical sources in order to analyse the food culture and norms with regard to foodways that existed in nineteenth-century peasant societies in Denmark and Iceland. However it quickly became evident that numerous difficulties took the material beyond the scope of this short thesis. There were also problems with potential sources, for example despite the fact that a significant number of peasant diaries have been published in Denmark, diaries from within the time frame and from the location chosen for this thesis are lacking. I therefore left out diaries and autobiographies, concentrating solely on the NEU and PP material described in Chapter 7.

The data material from Denmark was obtained through a visit to the National Museum in Copenhagen during the summer of 2013. Here a day was spent scanning through pages, occasionally getting immersed in some of the accounts as I attempted to assess whether it was possible to extract norms with regard to foodways, and

whether these norms could be connected to ideas of group, identity and tradition concepts (see Chapter 4). After one day of probing, I was convinced that this was indeed possible and that through the approaches used in qualitative research, it was indeed feasible to analyse norms regarding foodways in these sources, and to also analyse *how* and *why* these norms could be understood in connection to ethnological group, identity and tradition theories. In November 2014 I received copies of 116 pages, from a total of eight informants.

The Icelandic data material was more readily accessible as all the answers I needed had been digitalized and made accessible on sarpur.is. All together 136 pages from a total of 17 informants, were printed out.

8.3 Qualitative Research

This qualitative comparative research of the ÞÞ and the NEU material can be divided into three sections. Firstly I analysed what was eaten and attempted to clarify the informant's attitudes toward these foods. Often statements revealing such attitudes are quite explicit: For example a Danish informant calls the pork slaughtered for Christmas "det lækreste Slagtemad" (NEU 5190). Clearly newly-slaughtered pork was considered very delicious and tasteful. Other statements are more ambiguous and vague. For example an Icelandic informant states that '[ó]viðeigandi var að láta börn innan ferming horfa á, er skepnum var slátrað' (ÞÞ 37). Such a statement needs more interpretation in order to find which norms related to foodways might be revealed. It also raises questions such as: *Why was this considered inappropriate? What were the relationships between children and livestock? Were the livestock seen as pets and friends or merely as food and nourishment?* And so forth. In the following chapters I will apply the theories of group, identity and tradition noted above to the empirical data, considering such questions as: *What can be said about feelings of belonging on the basis of attitudes to food and foodways? How are such attitudes maintained and gradually modified through the concept of tradition? How do such attitudes and the dynamic of traditions reveal themselves in the data?* A statement from one Icelandic informant shows this dynamic explicitly when he writes: 'Hrossakjöt var ekki almennt notað til manneldis [...] [s]kólapiltar vöndust á hrossakjöt á skólanum og fluttu notkun þess heim í sveitirnar' (ÞÞ 50). Finally I will use the comparative method as a means of

revealing key contradictions to the idea of self-sustainable nineteenth-century Icelandic and Danish peasants working closely with their immediate environments and link the sources of these contradictions to ideas of belonging, and to ideas of group, identity and traditions.

In the following comparative case study, I will take a deeper look at some of the nineteenth-century peasant foodways in Þingeyjarsýsla and Skast and Gørding Herred on the basis of the approaches outlined above. Since the aim of the case study is to demonstrate how foodways can be applied as a means of revealing norms with regard to food sources, and there is too little space in this short thesis to include all potential food sources, I will be limiting myself to examining land-based food sources and will therefore not be discussing issues concerning fishing or the sea (which could be a thesis in itself).

9 Analysis of the Danish Material from NEU

9.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have described earlier works on foodways studies and theoretical approaches to group, identity and tradition, to provide context for my approach to this study on peasant foodways in the nineteenth century. In this chapter I will analyse some of the NEU material in order to provide some introduction to nineteenth-century peasants' views and norms with regard to specific foodways in west Jutland.

9.2 Domestic Animals

Reading through the NEU material quickly makes you realise the importance of pork to the Danish foodways. For example with regard to issues with slaughtering, the informants always open their accounts by addressing the slaughtering of pigs (NEU 10422; NEU 8625), and this is echoed in an informant describing the arrangement of the farm beginning by detailing the pigsty (NEU 7517), which the pigs only left to be slaughtered (NEU 7517). However one example in the material is in contrast to this since the informant begins by stating that each autumn a heifer or steer was slaughtered. The informant then continues '[h]vert Efteraar slagtede vi ogsaa for det meste 3 a 4 Faar, Lam eller Beder' before he writes that '[h]en mod Julen slagtede vi altid en stor Gris' (NEU 5190). However, this informant still refers to pork expressing that pork was the best meat even 'hvad sorte Pølser, Fedt og Grever angik' (NEU 5190).

Further allusions to pigs and their elevated position in Danish peasants' views of the world can be found in the accounts. The taste of pork is always praised and referred to by one informant as the meat for 'Julen [...] Barndommens store Fest' (NEU 8625) as well as for "en stor Dag" (NEU 5190). Statements also highlight the special treatment given to pigs during Christmas and reveal that pigs were generally not as ill-treated as other livestock (NEU 7517), confirming their position in Danish peasant society: In every home a *svinetønde* (a barrel) was placed in the scullery in which waste from the kitchen and even water from the washing-up was thrown. The contents of the barrel were used to feed the pigs (NEU 7517), and in this way people transformed litter and

waste into delicious food. The pigs' elevated position in Danish peasant society is further acknowledged by Ole Højrup in *Landbokvinden* alongside an explicit connection to their qualities of being omnivorous transformers of the inedible into foods (Højrup, 1964: 95).

When Danish informants are talking about pigs as good food, one notes it is often in comparison to sheep which are simply not considered as tasty. One informant states that '[g]rekerne af Faaret kaldte man Tællegræver, de var ikk saa gode som Fedtegræver af Grisen' (NEU 10422). Another informant reveals that people were happy to finish the pork even when it started to turn rancid (NEU 10422), in contrast to another who states that rancid sheep were actually feared by the children (NEU 5190). Thus a clear distinction between attitude to pork and sheep can be recognised, even at the level of rancid meat. One informant even stated that he remembered his family having sheep but 'det var vel nærmest for, at faa uld til strømper, jeg mindes ikke, at vi spiste dem' (NEU 28154). Another account reveals that people gradually ceased their desire for sheep meat. It is noted that present expressions such as 'Nej Uha, vi er da *faaret* nok i Forvejen'² were never heard when the informant was a child and sheep were still eaten, 'hvorimod der den Gang var mange, der ikke kunde tænke sig at spise Hestekød [...] som nu [1953] mange steder er en yndet Spise' (NEU 10422). This informant is the only one that addresses human consumption of horses, writing:

Jeg har aldrig været med til at slagte Heste [...] [i] min Barndom var der mange der ikke kunde tænke sig at spise Hestekød. [...] Jeg ved ikke hvad Hestekød blev brugt til, der fortæltes at man brugte kødet til at fodre vilde Dyr med i de omrejsende Menagerier, [however] [o]mkring Aarhundredskiftet, blev det meget almindelig at spise Hestekød [...] at koge Suppe paa Hestekød, jeg har ogsaa smagt den Suppe, den kunde spises (NEU 10422).

It is quite clear that something changed in the attitude towards eating horses in the nineteenth century, the eating of horses in earlier times, being considered

² The expression to be *faaret* means to be stupid. (My italics.)

inappropriate. As mentioned in Chapter 2.2, this fact was addressed by Hyldtoft who states that horse-meat was used in prisons. Tang Kristensen meanwhile connected the consumption of horse-meat to mainly *kæltringer* and *rakkere*, people living on the edge of society (Tang Kristensen, 2014b: 132-135). None of the informants refer to these people, although the aversion to considering horses as fit for human consumption seems to lie dormant in the collective memory, one informant referring to horse-meat as something to be given to wild animals in circuses (NEU 10422). That an element of religious belief might lie behind attitudes to horse consumption can be seen in another statement by Tang Kristensen:

Provst Møller i Breum mistede en hest, og folkene var ikke til at formå til at flå den, iden provsten selv kom ud, tog fat på et ben og gav et lille snit (Tang Kristensen, 2014b: 133).

Despite the fact that one informant refers to heifers and steers (noted above), it is also noteworthy that very little in the accounts refers to the consumption of cattle, a fact most likely connected to cattle being used here for dairy production rather than meat.

The examples provided above stress that human consumption of domesticated animals in nineteenth-century Jutland peasant society was far from straight forward. Certain types of animals were clearly loaded with social and symbolic meaning that gave them the perception of being perceived as more or less suitable to eat, reflecting Mary Douglas's notions of food taboos mentioned in Chapter 3.2 and Bringéus's ideas concerning ideology addressed in Chapter 3.3. In addition we can recognise a dynamic in tradition whereby attitudes to animals can change over time from them being considered appropriate as food, to being seen as distasteful, and vice versa. Clearly, much of this was based on learnt tradition rather than practicality.

9.3 Domestic Plants

With regard to plants for human consumption we need to address both wild plants as well as cultivated ones. The importance for cultivated plants to the nineteenth-century Jutlandic peasants can hardly be overemphasised as is explicitly portrayed below by one informant in connection to rye production:

Vor Tid og vor Slægt forstaar ikke at sige hverken Rug eller "Rou"; der mangler Ærbødighed i Stemmen [...] Slægterne, der gik forud, forstod og vidste, hvor afhængig Hjemmet var af Rugavlen (NEU 2467).

Rye, however was not the only crop of importance. Højrup writes in *Landbokvinden* that 'i de frugtbare egne var man begyndt at dyrke hvede' (Højrup, 1964: 118), noting that wheat bread was seen as *finbrød*, while also acknowledging that in some less fertile locations in Denmark rye was still the only corn grown (Højrup, 1964: 118). One informant also remembers that Shrovetide buns and other cakes made of wheat were bought from a travelling baker (NEU 8625), reflecting that these buns had to be imported into the community and were considered better than home-made buns (NEU 8625).

In addition to corn, fruit was clearly also grown alongside vegetables (see reference to 'grandmother's apples' in Chapter 7.3). One account underlines that all farms and houses in the old days had a small *kålgård* (NEU 11500) and that a variety of cabbages was consumed regularly (NEU 10422). Attitudes can be seen when one informant states that soup made of cured meat was eaten with delight six times a week, but that 'med Suppe uden Kaal kunne der ikke tales om Lyst' (NEU 11500).

9.4 Wild Plants

The western Jutlandic peasants were so fond of adding vegetables to their meat soup that during early summer, when little or no cabbage could be obtained, they would go down to the beach and cut *Søjergræs* which was used in the same way as cultivated cabbages (NEU 11500). One informant writes:

Søjergræsset var som anført fedt (saftig) og kunne give Perler paa Suppen, ligesom Fedt der svømmede rundt. Dog maa der til føjes at Søjersmagen, skulle den enkelte [...] vænnes til. [However] [e]ndnu er der blandt de ældre i marskbyerne der spiser stuede Søjer til Middag som en delikat ret (NEU 11500).

Once accustomed to eating *Søjer*, it becomes something you value. Indeed it becomes part of individual Danish identity reflecting to Durrenberger's ideas of self-intensifying loops and Dundes's example of the fat and jolly people mentioned in Chapter 4.3, in other words a feature reflecting difference and pride.

In addition to *Søjergæs*, a variety of berries and plants were collected from the natural environment. The informant lists that sweet gale was used as an additive to beer and that crow berries were collected because they were considered healthy, whilst lingon berries were mostly collected as a substitute for raisins, and Zante currants used in fruit soup or butter milk gruel (NEU 11500). It is fair to argue that for the western Jutlandic peasant, cultivated plants were of most significance. The wild plants collected were generally seen as additional substitutes for the real thing.

9.5 Wild Animals

It is revealing that few references connected to hunting and the utilisation of wildlife are given in Højrup's *Landbokvinden* and Feilberg's *Dansk Bondeliv*. It is striking that even scholars saw the nineteenth-century peasants as farmers and not hunters. Analysis of the accounts strengthens this view and clearly shows that the peasant's self-image was essentially that of a farmer. One informant begins his account with regard to hunting by stating that 'angaaende jagten her er der ikke noget særligt spændende, her drives alm. Landbrug' (NEU 34952). Later in the account he illustrates his point consisely by adding with sarcasm:

Jægere er i grunden et mærkeligt folkefærd, de haver rundt i timevis efter en hare, eller de sidder om aftenen og fryser for maaske at faa en el. to ænder, men det er jo spændende om man kan ramme - der er mest plads ved siden af! (NEU 34952).

This statement makes it conclusive that such hunters were not considered part of the local peasant community. Another informant nonetheless laments that in the older days there was more wildlife because there were fewer hunters (NEU 15251). This statement can be understood in connection to the first as meaning that in times past only a handful of farmers would hunt for food, the increase in hunters being a result of people coming from outside the peasant community (most likely city dwellers from the bourgeoisie class).

In some respects, it seems that for Jutlanders, nature and wildlife were perceived as a threat. For example magpies and crows were controlled by the community which allowed children to collect the eggs, paying them 25 øre a piece. This strategy however

worked badly as the children sometimes spared the nests in order to make more money later (NEU 15251). The struggle with these birds is referred to in several accounts, reflecting an almost anthropomorphic approach to the bird's evil disposition:

Vi var engang saa plagede af krager og skader saa jagtforeningen maatte gøre noget. [...] [d]et er faktisk nogle grimme røvere, de tager agerhønsenes æg og hakker harekillingerne ihjel. Særlig kragerne er slemme, de forfølger harekillimnger til de ikke kan løbe mere og saa hakker de øjnene ind paa dem først - saa kan de sagtens bagefter hakke dem ihjel (NEU 34952).

The suggestion is that the sole role of hunting is that of pest control. It is also noteworthy that these pests did not threaten the livestock but solely the young and eggs of wildlife.

9.6 Conclusion

Clearly the peasants in western Jutland understood themselves above all as being agriculturalists and horticulturists, rather than hunter-gatherers. Their main food sources came from within controlled systems of foodways where gathering from the natural environment was seen as essentially a substitute to bring supplements or additives to the local mainstream diet. This is not to say that everything from within nature was propagated as being bad or distasteful (as in the case of *søjergræs*): It was essentially an identity issue concerning, how the peasants perceived themselves. I acknowledge that several other food sources were available to the peasants in western Jutland, such as other crops like potatoes. As noted in Chapter 8.3, food sources from the sea are not included in this analysis, indeed it is beyond the scope of this short thesis to discuss all the available food sources. Nonetheless, I believe that on the basis of the limited material given here, one can identify clear cultural tendencies and ideas about group identity in west Jutland.

10 Analysis of the Icelandic Material from ÞÞ

10.1 Introduction

The following chapter will focus on the northern-Icelandic material from the same period and attempt through analysing similar issues to make some comparison to the foodways of the Icelanders' Danish counterparts.

10.2 Domestic Animals

One immediate noticeable difference in these materials is the absence of pigs and the emphasis on sheep. Questionnaire no. 1 is connected with the slaughtering of livestock and here, unlike in Jutland, issues concerning sheep are addressed first. This underlines the importance of sheep to the Icelandic peasant, something that the early Icelandic folklore collectors were clearly aware of: The sheep in questionnaire no. 1 are followed by issues concerning cattle and finally horses. There is no information regarding pigs.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the Icelandic material from Þingeyjasýsla is remarkably free from emotional utterances and unlike in Denmark very little data refers to informants finding food 'tasteful' or 'delicious'. One informant writes that '[g]arnir voru [...] soðnar og gefnar hundum [...] [þ]ó hefi ég talað við menn, sem höfðu þekkt að þær væru notaðar handa fólki, og þótt góður matur' (ÞÞ 37). This statement is typical of the Icelandic material. As most of the meat was *súrsuð* (Hallgerður Gísladóttir, 2000a: 96-97), however, a preference for fresh meat can nonetheless be recognised in a few of the answers: Another informant states that '[s]tundum vissi ég til að gömul ær var látin fram undir jólin til þess að fá nýmeti á hátíðinni' (ÞÞ 50). However, people clearly liked *súrsuð* meat because other methods were successfully tested only to disappear again, as one informant noted:

Um 1860 var einn bóndi hér í sveit, sem vindpurkaði allt sitt kjöt og var það talið heppnast vel. Enginn tók það upp eftir honum og þekktist ekki hér síðan (ÞÞ 68).

Sheep also provided Icelanders with additional dairy products, amongst other things *skyr*. The importance of the sheep as a provider of some dairy produce (as opposed to cows) is explicitly recognised by Jónas Jónasson (Jónas Jónasson, 2010: 162-177) and, as with pigs in Skast and Gørding which, came to be related to festive practice, the

sheep unlike the pigs in Denmark were not merely kept to provide meat. The festive year was connected to them: The event of separating the lambs from the mother sheep before sending the lambs to the mountains for the summer (Jónas Jónasson, 2010:172) was called *fráfærur* and was conducted well into the twentieth century in Þingeyjarsýsla (ÞÞ 15266; ÞÞ 15253; ÞÞ 15256). On most farms *fráfærur* was a festive occasion (ÞÞ 15253; ÞÞ 15256). Indeed, one informant wrote that ‘á Hólsemi var fólki gerður dagamunur á fráfærnadaginn. Þá fékk fólkið sætabrauð og kaffi’ (ÞÞ 15253). Another stated:

[Á] fráfærnadaginn [...] var þá hangikjöt á borðum og rúsínur settar í grautinn úr fyrstu málsmjólkinni, væru þær til, í tilefni af því að þá kom nógur matur í búið (ÞÞ 15255).

The importance of *fráfærur* as a part of the collective and the personal culture is also reflected in the following comment:

Sumir hinna eldri söknuðu fráfærnana. Höfðu alist upp með þessu og kunnu ekki við að fella það niður. Einnig söknuðu þeir matarins, því mjólkurmaturinn var drjúgur og góður matur (ÞÞ 15266).

It was not only the food but the whole event of *fráfærur* that the old people missed, however, but also the general connection with animals and the bonding between man and sheep: One informant stated that ‘[a]ldrei var börnum bannað að kyssa lömb eða sauðfé’ (ÞÞ 15260), thereby underlining the foundation of close bonds between children and the sheep. This could also explain the practice of not allowing children to witness the slaughtering before they had reached the age of confirmation, mentioned in Chapter 8.3. However it is interesting that the old people also missed *mjólkurmaturinn* because the Icelanders also raised some cattle as livestock (mainly for milk) and therefore had access to other sources of dairy products. I would nonetheless argue that it was the sheep and *fráfærur*, rather than *mjólkurmaturinn* that was of most importance in this context. For the old people *fráfærur* was an important event in their lives and a means of identifying themselves as a social group.

That cattle were also important to the Icelanders is explicitly recognised by Jónas Jónasson:

Kýrnar eru þær skepnur, sem Íslendingar hafa lengst og bezt lifað á, enda hefir þeim verið ætlað fóður fremur öðrum skepnum frá alda öðli (Jónas Jónasson, 2010: 154).

The archive material from Iceland also underlines the special position that cattle had. Informants agree that cattle were well treated and were not only “[f]jósbásar [...] oft tyrfðir” (þþ 172) but also kept clean, and in the cowhouse was ‘hafður hrísvöndur til að sópa þær með’ (þþ 132). Once again one sees close connection between man and animal.

In comparison to the relatively limited data material from Denmark it thus seems that the Icelanders have had a slightly more intimate relationship with their livestock, something showcased in the fact that livestock in Denmark seems to have been generally ill-treated. As one informant divulges ‘et slag paa Grisen gav en rød stribe [...] en Blodsamling i Flæsket, og det var hverken kønt eller godt for Opbevaringen’ (NEU 7517), suggesting that refraining from beating the animal was mostly due to issues concerning the quality of the meat, but clearly carried out. If this distinction with regard to connection to animals is accepted, I would argue, using British historian Peter Burke’s distinction between farmers and herdsmen (Burke, 2009: 60-61), that the Danes could be categorised as having become farmers, agriculturalists and horticulturalists, while the Icelanders were still closer to herdsmen and pastoralists. This potential distinction should also be related to the different climatic possibilities for growing corn (see Chapter 6.2). However, before addressing such issues, it is worth discussing the role of horses in the two societies.

As with the Danish material, quite strong feelings against the human consumption of horses can be recognised in Iceland, although there is a special dynamic with regard to this norm and tradition, as was pointed out in Chapter 8.3. One Icelandic informant argued that ‘[þ]að var litið niður á þá menn, sem lögðu sér hrossakjöt til munns. Þetta voru fátæklingar og var almenningsálitið þeim andstætt’ (þþ 50), and that children were brought up believing horse-meat was poisonous (þþ 97) (cf. the Danish attitude to rancid lamb). One informant even connects not eating horses to being a good Christian, labeling people eating horses “helvítis hrossakjötsæta” (þþ 97).

These few examples clearly underline issues concerning shared group identity with regard to horse-meat consumption and are clearly in line with the norms found in the Danish material: In both places horse-meat consumption is connected to people that are considered outcasts in society. In the Icelandic material, however, a particularly regional approach can also be recognised, since one informant suggests that much horse-meat was consumed west of Þingeyjarsýsla, in Eyjafjörður, despite the '*hniss*' smell and '*hniss*' taste (ÞÞ 97). While this informant admits to never having heard the word *hniss* (ÞÞ 97), there is no doubt from the account that it is not seen as a good smell or taste. The Icelandic material thus points to a stigmatisation of horse-meat consumption which has both social and regional differentiation. Not all informants, however, are as bombastic, as the following quote below shows:

Hrossakjötsát fór ekki að verða almennt fyrr en úr aldamótunum síðustu. Þeir sem ríða á vaðið gengu ekki undir neinu sérstöku nafni. [...] Ekki var vart sérstakrar fordæmingar á þeim mönnum, er fyrstir urðu til að nota hrossakjöt til matar. [...] En það vissi ég að gestir neyttu matar með varúð á bæjum þar sem hrossakjöts eða sláturs gat verið von (ÞÞ 68).

Clearly different views with regard to reversed norms concerning the eating of horses can be found in the material. However, it is possible that the latter informant was among those "sem ríða á vaðið" and thus speaking of horse consumption in more lenient terms might be self-evident. Nevertheless it is evident that, as in Denmark, horse consumption was an issue used to stigmatise and marginalise groups of people. It was also used to create a form of self-identity in terms of belonging to a proper and decent group of people.

10.3 Corn and Vegetables

Despite Hallgerður Gísladóttir's argument regarding substitutes for corn noted in Chapter 2.3, it is noteworthy that a significant amount of statements in the material from Þingeyjarsýsla refer to bread and corn. Some even underline this fact by stating that 'það var mjög mikið um steikt brauð hér fyrr á árum' (ÞÞ 7429). As revealed in Chapter 6.2, the climate in Iceland was too cold for the growing of corn or other such crop, so it is surprising to see that the total amount of corn consumed in Iceland in

1882 (for example) was 94,4 kg/person/year (Neysla á kornmat á Íslandi 1870-1940). This might be viewed in the context of the total amount in 2012 being only 76,1 kg/person/year (Fæðuframboð 1956-2012). In the above, I have showcased specific references in which farmers identify themselves as being good Christians. I believe that the disposition to corn consumption (instead of moss and dulse as suggested by Hallgerður Gísladóttir, see Chapter 2.3) might be seen in the same context: A Papal decree from 1237 ordered the Archbishop of Nidarós to ensure that wafers were made from *sáðkorn* and not 'hverju því sem til fáist' (*Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* nr. 131: 513). Bearing this fact in mind and the fact that even during the sixteenth century 25-35% of the imports to Iceland were corn (Árni Daníel Júlíusson, 2005: 138), I would argue that deep within the collective memory and identity of Icelanders, lies the conception that corn consumption in the form of bread gave a seal of approval for being good Christians. People clearly went out of their way to get corn rather than looking for substitutes. In the Danish context however corn consumption was essentially a natural part of them being agriculturalists.

As regards the cultivation of vegetables, the questionnaires are too young to be regarded in a nineteenth-century foodways context. Clearly even the folklore collectors in the mid-twentieth century did not see vegetables as being part of true Icelandic food tradition, emphasising topics concerning sheep before anything else. It is noteworthy that only one of the informants mentions vegetables stating that 'þegar ég var að alast upp var lítið gjört að rækta matjurtir' (ÞÞ 692).

10.4 Wild Plants

On the question of whether it is possible to state that Iceland moss and dulse should be understood as substitutes to corn as has been suggested by Hallgerður Gísladóttir (Hallgerður Gísladóttir, 2000b: 149-154), I would argue that this depends on the approach taken. Taking a cultural approach this seems like a fair argument, but considering the natural environmental context, it might rather be said that corn was a substitute for the more available moss and the dulse. Certainly in Iceland plenty of wild plants were collected, as is recognised by Jónas Jónasson (Jónas Jónasson, 2010: 39-42). Many informants also made allusions to the usage of wild plants in their food, one informant writing: 'Fjallagrös voru [...] þvegin áður en þau voru sett í mjólkina. [...]

Grasamjólk var þessi matur kallaður' (ÞÞ 362). Another said that he had heard that 'lyfjagrös voru tínd til að bæta hleypi' (ÞÞ 364). In general, I find little evidence in the answers that reveals any discomfort in collecting wild plants or that, as in Denmark, they were additional. In Iceland, their collection seems to have been an annual necessary tradition: One informant states in connection to the gathering of Iceland moss that 'eru margar sagnir til um ævintýri, sem því urðu samferða' (ÞÞ 141), attitudes also reflected in Jónas Hallgrímsson's (1807-45) contemporary short story "Grasaferð" (Jónas Hallgrímsson, 1998: 14-31).

10.5 Wild Animals

Similar to the Danes, one northern Icelandic informant refers to a specific bird species as a pest, although in the Icelandic context it is a battle against the raven. The means of fighting the raven were similar to those in Denmark, focusing on destroying the nest, destroying the eggs and administering poisoned bait (ÞÞ 6303). As in the Danish context, ravens were accused of bloodcurdling acts such as '[að] setja kindur afvelta hér á Fljótsheiði og höggva úr því augu og draga út úr því garnir lifandi' (ÞÞ 6303). Additionally, the Icelanders fought the Arctic fox to protect the livestock in the highlands (ÞÞ 6303). As in the Danish context, some aspects of nature are clearly seen as an enemy, although in Iceland it was mainly to protect key livestock, while in Denmark it was essentially to protect leverets which had no role in feeding the peasant family. Icelanders however also hunted birds and collected eggs to eat (both the lower and the upper class). One informant states that 'rjúpnaveiðar hafi verið stundaðar nokkuð almennt hér' (ÞÞ 6292), another writing that 'nokkuð var um að menn tækju álftaeggin, en mjög lítið um það að þær væru skotnar' (ÞÞ 6303).

10.6 Conclusion

To summarise, as noted above, the main difference between western-Jutlandic nineteenth-century peasants and peasants from Þingeyjarsýsla lies in the concepts of being mainly a *farmer* or mainly a *herdsman*, and the way people are connected to and perceived the landscape, either as an additional substitute or as a necessity. In the final discussion of the thesis, I will clarify this idea, discussing how we should understand the foodways of the two specific climatic environments; how different choices of foodways supported the identity of the people; and how that identity

justified certain foodways, underlining that food was to some degree a matter of choice rather than need, based to a large extent on tradition and cultural preference.

11 Discussion

As mentioned in the introduction, many scholars have argued that food is indeed a powerful means of analysing culture, something I believe I have explicitly demonstrated in this thesis.

As the case study in this thesis shows peasant foodways in the nineteenth century were directly linked to both the natural and the cultural environment. While peasants in both locations bred livestock to make a living, clear differences in animal relationships can be recognised in the empirical material, as has been argued in Chapter 10.2. Two distinct perceptions of the natural environment and the landscape might thus be acknowledged in the two areas under discussion. Icelanders seem to have connected to their natural environment at a different level, an environment in which some of their most important livestock, the sheep, lived semi-wild during the summer. In contrast to this, the most important livestock in Denmark dwelt in pigsties all of their lives, only leaving it when they were taken to be slaughtered. As argued in Chapter 10.2, from the viewpoint of environment and connection to animals, there is good reason to see Icelanders as being closer to herdsman and the Danes more as farmers. This difference in interacting with the natural environment can also be observed in the utilisation of hunting possibilities as well as in the battle against bird pests (as was mentioned in Chapters 9.5 and 10.5) magpies, crows and ravens being culled for quite different reasons, to protect important livestock in the mountains (Iceland) or the eggs and the young wildlife (Jutland).

Even though the differences are marked, there are also significant and noteworthy similarities at a cultural food level, especially when the natural environment is added to the equation. Here the idea of group identity and tradition, in particular, seems to be at work in both cases. Despite the fact that the natural environment in Iceland was not suitable for growing corn, this crop apparently continued to play a very important role, not just on the basis of pure nourishment, but also because of its ethical and symbolic meaning. As Mary Douglas suggests, food taboos are often physical expressions of oneness with God in which meals can inspire meditation on completeness of God (Douglas, 2002:71). In the same way, I would suggest that each Icelandic meal containing corn could be taken as a physical expression of belonging to

the Christian world, especially considering the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer (mentioning "daglegt brauð") (see also Chapter 10.3 and 4.3).

I would argue that, as Boas has observed (see Chapter 6.1), resource exploitation is largely dependent on the climate and the natural environment (either as a limiting factor or one that provides possibilities, a fact which might explain the lack of pigs in Iceland). However, the cultural impact and effect of human agency within the natural environment often encourages human societies to reach beyond their limitations (or even below the possibilities of the natural environment), because climate and natural environment are not the only limiting factors. Cultural inputs also have a great influence. This can be seen for example in Mary Douglas's ideas of taboo as well as in Nils-Arvid Bringéus's ideas concerning ideological overtones (see Chapter 3.3). This fact is exemplified among others in this thesis by the evidence of how both Icelanders and Jutlanders desisting from consuming horse-meat. This was a practice that was solely culturally imposed since horses as potential food sources were present in both locations. The practice which naturally might have a religious origin connected to Christianity seems to have been used as a means of stigmatising other people and simultaneously creating group identity within one's own group, be it a social or regional group (see Chapters 9.2 and 10.2).

I have also shown how the sources reflect material dynamics of tradition. This is naturally explicit in the case of horse-meat consumption, which gradually became acceptable in both places. Nonetheless this change in attitude can also be understood in the light of identity, because it was schoolboys in Iceland that brought about this change in tradition (see Chapter 8.3). Here the change in attitude can be seen as being the result of the adoption of a new identity: Being a part of the new progressive Iceland and simultaneously breaking from being under Danish rule, as was discussed in Chapter 6.3 (see also Chapter 4.2). This thesis thus demonstrates how food tradition was sometimes used, if unconsciously, by nineteenth-century peasants as a means of creating group identity. This underlines how food can indeed be a highly applicable means of studying culture and especially if one investigates the origins of norms and attitudes toward specific foods.

I completely acknowledge that this thesis is built upon the evidence of comparatively few statements from informants. A more wide-ranging inquiry into the

impact of natural and cultural environments on nineteenth-century peasants' foodways, would of course need a broader area of inquiry using more materials and larger regional comparative studies within both Iceland and Denmark. This short study nonetheless demonstrates that food choices in nineteenth-century rural societies were not always as self-evident as one might expect in societies often viewed as being self-sufficient.

12 References

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12.2 Tables

Fæðuframboð á Íslandi 1956-2012 kg/íbúa/ár. Downloaded 22 March 2015: <http://www.landlaeknir.is/heilsa-og-lidan/naering/>

Neysla á kornmat á Íslandi 1870-1940. Data from Guðmundur Jónsson, Professor of History at the University of Iceland.

12.3 Webpages

Den gode pølse er smagt til med traditioner. Downloaded 24 April 2015: <http://www.danishcrown.dk/125-aar/125-aars-madshistorie/Den-gode-poelse-er-smagt-til-med-traditioner.aspx>

Íslendingar borða SS pylsur. Downloaded 24 April 2015:

<http://www.ss.is/vorur/ss-pylsan/>

12.4 Þjóðháttadeild Þjóðminjasafns Íslands:

Answers to questionnaire 1: *Slátrun búfjár og sláturverk:*

ÞÞ 37, ÞÞ 50, ÞÞ 68, ÞÞ 97.

Answers to questionnaire 2: *Nautpeningur:*

ÞÞ 132, ÞÞ 172.

Answers to questionnaire 3: *Haugburður, vallarvinna og hirðing eldiviðar:*

ÞÞ 141.

Answers to questionnaire 6: *Að koma mjólk í mat:*

ÞÞ 362, ÞÞ 364, ÞÞ 692.

Answers to questionnaire 8: *Fráfærur:*

ÞÞ 15253, ÞÞ 15255, ÞÞ 15256, ÞÞ 15260, ÞÞ 15266.

Answers to questionnaire 58: *Fuglaveiðar og eggjatekja:*

ÞÞ 6303, ÞÞ 6292.

Answers to questionnaire 62: *Brauðgerð og kornmölun á heimilum:*

ÞÞ 7429.

12.5 Nationalmuseets Etnologiske Undersøgelser:

Answer to questionnaire 2: *Bagning:*

NEU 2467.

Answers to questionnaire 5: *Slagtning:*

NEU 5190, NEU 10422.

Answer to questionnaire 20: *Indsamling af planter og bær:*

NEU 11500.

Answers to questionnaire 25: *Jagt, fangst og ægsamling:*

NEU 15251, NEU 34952.

Answer to questionnaire 27: *Fiskeri:*

NEU 28154.

Minder fra Barndomshjemmet:

NEU 8625.

No title:

NEU 7517.

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