

The Fictitious Figure of Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr in the Saga Tradition

Gunnhild Røthe

(Centre for Viking and Medieval Studies, University of Oslo)

The figure of Þorgerðr is mentioned in skaldic verses, in *Snorra Edda*, in *Flateyjarbók* as well as in the Icelandic sagas and the legendary sagas.¹ Although the picture of her is clearly coloured by the Christian demonisation of pre-Christian religion, there are reminiscences in the sources that indicate what role she played in pre-Christian times.

The aim of my paper is to discuss the figure of Þorgerðr and her possible cult. How is Þorgerðr to be classified and what do the sources indicate about a possible cult? Contrary to earlier research that views her as a goddess or a giantess I will propose that her status as a superhuman being originated in her position as the venerated foremother of the Háleygiar family, later to be raised to the position of the *fylgja* of the family. Further I will argue that her names containing the element *hǫrga-* indicate the development of her cult. I will propose that the veneration of her person developed from the veneration of her mound to that of a sheltered cult building and finally to a cult house as we meet it in the Medieval sources.

Earlier research:

Þorgerðr as a giantess

Lotte Motz classifies Þorgerðr as a giantess. She is grouped among the giants that own the elements of nature (Motz 1987: 221). Motz points to the fact that Þorgerðr is not mentioned in the poems and prose of Eddic myth. She is not a member of the family of gods as they are presented by Snorri in *Gylfaginning*. Motz finds that the elements which make up the persona of Þorgerðr possess a counterpart in the giantesses of the tales of the legendary sagas. These elements must have been modelled on the spirits of the landscape which were revered by the local population. When the communities were united to form a kingdom, governed by a single ruler, this one spirit rose to national stature (Motz 1997: 475). For the cult of Þorgerðr this resulted in a shift of her cult from a mountain or a mountain cave to a temple. The situating of her temple in the forest is, according to Motz, a testimony to her origin in the wilderness. The persona of Þorgerðr received offerings of gold and treasure besides the lives of men. Motz views Þorgerðr as a Great Goddess who arouse out of the local spirits of the North, deeply embedded in the northern landscape (Motz 1997:475).

Þorgerðr and the *hieros gamos* motif

If we regard Þorgerðr as the bride of Hǫlgi, as Saxo does, or the bride of Jarl Hákon as is indicated in *Flateyjarbók*, she fits into the pattern of the *hieros gamos* motif that is

¹ For an overview of the different sources where Þorgerðr is mentioned, see McKinnell 2002.

to be found in skaldic poetry celebrating Jarl Hákon.² The jarl's conquering of the land is compared to the divine marriage between Óðinn and a female figure representing the landscape that he rules over (Ström 1983: 68). Folke Ström argues that the relationship between Þorgerðr and jarl Hákon is to be seen as a similar *hieros gamos* relationship where Þorgerðr represents the landscape that the jarl rules over. Þorgerðr's nature as a divine being is compared to that of the *dísir*. What characterizes Þorgerðr as a *dís* is her double character as both a warrior goddess and a fertility goddess (Ström 1983: 75). Ström mentions the probability that the relationship between Þorgerðr and the jarl was celebrated in a ritual marriage (Ström 1983: 79). He does not however comment on how and where these ritual marriages took place.

Gro Steinsland in opposition to Folke Ström stresses the giantess nature of Þorgerðr. The role of the woman in the *hieros gamos* as a giantess is of crucial meaning in Steinsland's thesis of the relationship between the *hieros gamos* motif and the ideology of kingship. The *hieros gamos* between a giantess and a god explains the birth of the prototypic ruler as well as his death (Steinsland 1991). According to Steinsland the relationship between Þorgerðr and Hǫlgi forms a forerunner to the Óðinn-Skaði-genealogy of the Háleygjar (Steinsland 1991: 225). The mythical relationship between Þorgerðr and Hǫlgi formed the foundation for the ritual relationship between Þorgerðr and Jarl Hákon as the descendant of Hǫlgi. If this holy marriage was celebrated in rituals, this leads us to the discussion of the cult of giants and giantesses (Steinsland 1991: 226). Steinsland does not give any suggestions of how and where this cult was performed.

The cult of Þorgerðr as a variant of the cult of Freyja

In his analysis of the figure of Þorgerðr John McKinnell argues that her cult shows a number of features which are reminiscent of the Vanir (McKinnell 2002, 2005). Even though he regards her figure as having originated as a local goddess, probably the family patroness of the Háleygjar, he argues that she might be classified as a Vanir goddess. He compares her relationship with Jarl Hákon with the relationship between Freyja and her devotees. The element *-brúðr* implies that her devotee was regarded as her sexual partner. McKinnell assumes that the name Hǫlgi was applied to her devotee as well as to his dead predecessors. The sexual relationship between Þorgerðr and the ruler also includes the dead ruler. As such it resembles the relationship between the dead Yngling king and Hel in *Ynglingatal*. McKinnell further argues that there is a correspondence between Þorgerðr's sister Irpa and the figure of Hel, the dark aspect of Freyja. The name Irpa seems to be related to *jarpr* 'swarthy', Old English *eorþ*.

² Saxo tells that Helgi, king of Hálogaland was wooing Thora, daughter of Gusi, prince of the Finns and Biarmians (*Saxo Grammaticus* I:72) (Gusi the king of the Finns is also mentioned in *Ketils saga hængs* ch. 3). Helgi's marriage proposal is turned down by the father of Thora, but with the help of Høther Helgi wins the bride. Several scholars have pointed to the fact that Saxo has identified Helgi with Hǫlgi, and from this it follows that Thora must be identical to Þorgerðr (Storm 1885:126-127, Chadwick 1950:408, Näsström 1995:159). The sexual relationship between Þorgerðr and Hákon is also indicated in the Old Norse sources. Jarl Hákon is described as the *bóndi* (husband) of Þorgerðr (*Flateyjarbók* I: 408) and he is said to have loved her (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* chapter 326, *Flateyjarbók* I:408).

Regarding the cult of Þorgerðr, McKinnell rejects the existence of purpose-built temples but assumes that there probably were idols and sacred sites. Even if he regards Hǫlgi as the dead human ruler resting in the mound, he rejects the possibility that Þorgerðr had a parallel role as the dead ruler's daughter or wife resting in a mound. There is however another scholar who has pointed to the relationship between Þorgerðr and the mound.

Þorgerðr and the mound

According to Nora Chadwick there is a close connection of both the male line and Þorgerðr herself with the mound (Chadwick 1950: 417). In the case of Þorgerðr and Jarl Hákon both lines of descendents are linked to the mound. The name of the great-grandfather of Hákon was Grjótgarðr which means 'stone enclosure'. He was the son of Herlaugr, the brother of Hrollaugr. These brothers are said by Snorri to have built a mound of *grjót* and earth in the time of Harold the Fair-haired. Snorri relates that King Herlaugr supplied the mound with food and drink and entered it alive together with eleven men (*Heimskringla, Haralds saga hárfagra* chapter 8). Chadwick suggests that some kind of ritual marriage is needed to explain the relationship between Þorgerðr and her lover. The story of the entering into the mound is in her opinion best explained as the reminiscence of some kind of suttee, perhaps also of a ritual character (Chadwick 1950: 417). As a further evidence of this ritual suttee and the ritual marriage performed at the mound she refers to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, where it is told that the valkyrie Sigrún spent one night in the mound with her dead lover Helgi Hundingsbani.

Þorgerðr as the foremother of the Háleygjar

If we combine the results of the research by Gustav Storm on the figure of Þorgerðr and that of Else Mundal on the origin of the *fylgja* figure, we might conclude that Þorgerðr and Hǫlgi are to be understood as the forefather and foremother of the Háleygjar. Gustav Storm argues that the name *Hǫlgabrúðr* is the original name of Þorgerðr (Storm 1885: 127). He further argues that Hǫlgi is identical to Háleygr. As an eponymous figure for Hálogaland, Hǫlgi is to be regarded as the forefather of the Háleygjar, the family that Jarl Hákon originated from.³ If we consider, as Saxo does, that Þorgerðr was the bride of Hǫlgi, she has to be defined as the foremother of the Háleygjar. As a foremother of the Háleygjar, Þorgerðr can be classified as the *fylgja* of the family.

Þorgerðr as the foremother and tutelary spirit of the Háleygjar

³ This genealogical origin is implied in the skaldic stanza composed by the skald Þorbjorn hornklofi about 900. The skald scorns the king for having left the daughters of Norwegian families. One of the families mentioned is '*Hǫlga ættar*' (the family of Hǫlgi) (*Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning B I:24*). In Gustav Storm's opinion '*Hǫlga ættar*' is identical to *Háleygja ætt*, the family of Jarl Hákon (Storm 1885: 129).

Else Mundal has made an analysis of the *fylgja* motif in the saga literature, both the animal and the female *fylgjur*. Else Mundal argues that the conception of the female *fylgja* originated in the cult of dead foremothers. The female *fylgjur* have their origin in the cult of *mater familias* that developed into the tutelary spirits of their family (Mundal 1974: 106). Mundal further assumes that the cult of the *dísir* developed along similar lines, that they were dead foremothers that people venerated after their death. Else Mundal comments upon the figure of Þorgerðr and argues that she is given the same function as the female *fylgja*.⁴

Before I go on to discuss the probable origin of the veneration of Þorgerðr I will take a look at what the sources actually describe about the veneration of Þorgerðr. How are the places where she is venerated described?

Þorgerðr in the saga tradition

In *Flateyjarbók*, the great compilation from about 1380, there are several descriptions of the cult of Þorgerðr. One description is given in *Jómsvíkinga þáttur*. We are told that Jarl Hákon enters the land at the island called Þrimsigð. He walks through the dark forest until he comes to a clearing in the forest. Here he kneels to the north and says prayers to his *fulltrúi* Þorgerde Hordabrude (*Olafs saga Tryggvasonar* chapter 154, *Flateyjarbók* I: 191). Þorgerðr doesn't want to hear his prayers and Jarl Hákon becomes afraid that she is angry with him. He offers her sacrifices but she refuses. Then he offers her human sacrifices. When she still refuses, he offers her to choose among his men except himself and his sons Eirik and Svein. The jarl has a seven-year-old son called Erlingr. He is chosen to be sacrificed. After the jarl has called on Þorgerðr and Irpa bad weather came from the north. The sky turns black and there come thunder and storms of hail. Þorgerðr is seen fighting with the jarl and it seems as if arrows are shot from each of the witch's fingers.⁵

In this story there is no mention of a cult house or any statue of Þorgerðr and her sister. The information that Jarl Hákon kneels to the north and that the bad weather comes from the north indicates that the figures of Þorgerðr and her sister were located in the north of the country. The story does not classify Þorgerðr and her sister as deities, rather as demonic beings. This demonisation is however due to the Christian perspective of the story.

In *Færeyinga þáttur* the cult house and the statue of Þorgerðr Hordabrúðr is described. The house placed in a clearing in the forest is said to have been decorated with gold and silver and had windows made of glass. It was surrounded by a wooden fence. Inside the house several gods were to be found. The statue of Þorgerðr is described as a woman well clothed. Jarl Hákon threw himself down before her feet and lay like this for a long time. Then he stood up and told Sigmundur Brestisson that they

⁴ 'Vi kan også jmføre kvinnefylgja med Torgerd Hordabrud som skulle vere stammor til ladejarlane. Ho vart dyrka som ein guddom av ættingane sine, og føremålet med denne dyrkinga var at ho skulle hjelpe dei.' (Mundal 1974: 102).

⁵ This detail of the fight is also reported in skaldic verses telling of the Jómsvíkingar battle. Bjarni Kolbeinsson who died in 1222 tells in *Jómsvíkingadrápa* that the *illa æða Holgabrúði* ('the terribly furious bride of Hólgi') caused furious bad weather and a severe storm of hail came from the north (*Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning* B II: 7).

should bring her offerings. Silver was then put on a chair in front of her. As a token of her gratitude for the offerings, Þorgerðr was to release the ring she had on her arm. Jarl Hákon gave the ring to Sigmundur (*Færeyinga þáttur*, *Flateyjarbók* I: 144–145).⁶

The description of the house with glass windows seems to be anachronistic. The description of the fenced house with several gods could be modelled after a medieval church with several statues of saints inside. The ring as her attribute is more difficult to define as a Christian aspect of the statue. The ring as a token of loyalty and an important element in the practice of swearing oaths seems to be of pre-Christian origin (*Bø* 1958: 517).

The statue of Þorgerðr in a separate cult house is also told of in *Njáls saga* (*Njáls saga* chapter 88). The saga tells that Jarl Hákon went to a feast that was held by Guðbrandr. Víga-Hrappr went to the house of the gods during the night. There he saw Þorgerðr holdabruðr sitting. She was as big as a fully-grown man. She had a golden ring on her arm and a veil on her head. Víga-Hrappr took away from her the golden ring and the veil. Then he saw Þórr's cart and took his ring from him. He took the third ring from Irpa. He then took the gods out of the house and took their clothes off. After this he set the house on fire.

The description of her as a veiled woman could be modelled after the descriptions of the veiled statues of mother Mary that medieval authors were acquainted with. On the other hand there is some evidence in the source material concerning the veil. The *faldr* (veil) indicates that she is a married woman.⁷

The *hof* of Þorgerðr is also mentioned in *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* (*Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* chapter 19). When the *goði* Grímkell is turned down by his patroness Þorgerðr he takes revenge on her by burning down the *hof* where all the gods are placed. In the evening, Grímkell suddenly dies. His death is apparently due to the anger of Þorgerðr.

A cult house called *hof* is also mentioned in *Þáttur Þorleifs jarlaskálds* in *Flateyjarbók* (*Þáttur Þorleifs jarlaskálds*, *Flateyjarbók* I: 207–215). After Jarl Hákon had made a man called Þorgarðr out of a piece of wood and strengthened him with sorcery, he gave him the sword that he had taken from the *hof* of Þorgerðr, Irpa and Hørgi (*Þáttur Þorleifs jarlaskálds*, *Flateyjarbók* I: 214).

In chapter 326 of the saga of Óláfr Tryggvason in *Flateyjarbók* the statue of Þorgerðr and her cult house is described. The beautiful cult house of Þorgerðr is said to have been situated in a clearing in the forest. Inside there was a well-clothed woman sitting on a seat. The king took off her clothes and stripped her of her gold and silver. After this he took the statue of Þorgerðr out and bound it to the horse's tail and rode along with it to his men. The king then asked them to put the clothes on the statue.

⁶ Gro Steinsland sees the transferring of the ring from Þorgerðr to Sigmundur as a ritual symbolising the sacred marriage between them (Steinsland 2005: 83).

⁷ Nora Chadwick compares the lifting of the veil with the story of the *Faldafeykir* played at the wedding feast in *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs konungs* (Chadwick 1950: 405). This tune is so powerful that it makes the veils drop off the women's heads. The *Faldafeykir* is played when the people at the wedding are drinking the toasts (*minni*) that were drunk to honour all the Æsir and Þórr, Óðinn and Freyja. The *minni* drunk to honour Freyja is mentioned particularly in connection with the *Faldafeykir* (*Saga Herrauðs ok Bosa* ch. 12).

This was done and she was seated at a high altar with caskets full of the gold and silver that Jarl Hákon had given her. The king then let her clothes be taken off and he hit her with his club so she broke into pieces. He made a fire where he burned the statues of Þorgerðr and Freyr because he did not wish that Christian men would praise any of the statues and thus bring about evilness and wrong faith (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* chapter 326, *Flateyjarbók* I: 409).

How are we to evaluate these different descriptions of the statue of Þorgerðr placed in a cult house in a forest-clearing? Are they to be read as anachronistic descriptions of the pre-Christian cult? One way of judging these descriptions is to interpret them as literary conventions where the cult of the pre-Christian divinities is compared to the cult of Christian saints. On the other hand there is sufficient archaeological evidence to allow us to presume that the cult of wooden idols was part of the pre-Christian religion (Olsen 1966: 121). The Christian relics and images that were believed to have the power of working miracles seem to have been substituted for the religious functions of pagan idols and *ex votos* (Horn Fuglesang 2004).

There is still uncertainty regarding the existence of the *hof* as a separate cult building. Since the critical investigation of Olaf Olsen there has been a tendency to regard the sagas' descriptions of the *hof* as a separate cult building as purely literary products (Olsen 1966). The *hof* seems to be the name attributed to the hall of the farm when it was used for sacral purposes (Olsen 1966). Is this also the case with the cult of Þorgerðr? Judging from the descriptions of her cult this was not the case. None of the sources explicitly states that her cult house was situated on a farm. On the contrary, it is said that it was in a clearing in the forest. Does this mean that the cult of Þorgerðr differed from the cult performed at the farm? As argued by Lotte Motz, this was probably the case. She sees the location of the cult house of Þorgerðr in the wilderness as a reminiscence of the origin of her cult in the wilderness in the north of Norway. Motz asks whether her cult originated as a cult in a mountain or a mountain cave (Motz 1997: 475). There are however no indications in the sources that link the cult of Þorgerðr to these places.

In my view there is another aspect of the sources that indicates something about the place where the veneration of Þorgerðr was performed. This is the element *hǫrga-* in some of her surnames. In *Ketils saga hængs* she is called *Hǫrgatroll* (*Saga Ketils hængs* chapter 5). In *Harðar saga ok Holmverja* her surname is *hǫrgabruðr* (*Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* chapter 19), the same as in *Þáttur Þorleifs jarlaskálds* (*Þáttur Þorleifs jarlaskálds*, *Flateyjarbók* I: 213). The surname *hǫrgabruðr* is also used to describe Þorgerðr in one of the manuscripts of *Njáls saga* (*Njáls saga* chapter 88, note 2). A parallel to the *hǫrga-* name for Þorgerðr is the nickname *Hǫrgi* for Hǫlgi in *Þáttur Þorleifs jarlaskálds* (*Þáttur Þorleifs jarlaskálds*, *Flateyjarbók* I: 214). What is the meaning of these names? A plausible interpretation is to assume that they indicate that her cult was performed at the *hǫgr*. What then is the characteristic of the *hǫgr* as a cult place?

The literal and archaeological evidence for the *hǫgr* as a cult site is investigated by Olaf Olsen (Olsen 1966). The term *hǫgr* can describe both a natural and an artificially-built pile of stones. The term *hǫgr* for a description of a sacred site is older than the term *hof*. In most cases, the term refers to sacred sites in the open, but in the mythological sources it is used to describe dwellings of the gods, especially the

goddesses.⁸ It is evident from some archaeological finds of the Early Iron Age that an image was sometimes raised on a pile of stones. According to Olaf Olsen's thesis about the development of the *hǫrgr* these early forms developed into sheltered buildings consisting of a four-post construction supporting a small roof. Later this construction was integrated into a larger building (Olsen 1966: 281, 282).

We have some evidence that show that the *hǫrgr* can also mean a mound. In three manuscripts of *The Older Gulating Law* the prohibition against offerings made to a heathen god, mounds or *hǫrgar* has a further explanation. In one of the manuscripts it says '*at han læðr hauga eða gerer / hus oc kallar hǫrgh.*' (that he builds mounds or houses and calls it a *hǫrgr*.) (*Den eldre Gulatingslova* ed. Bjørn Eithun, Magnus Rindal and Tor Ulset: 52). To make offerings at this place was forbidden. This prohibition indicates that a mound could be called a *hǫrgr*.

At two archaeological sites in Norway (Tysnes and Haneberg), the *hǫrgr* seems to have been combined with a grave. Within the context of pre-Christian burials remains of buildings were found that Olaf Olsen defines as *hǫrgar* (Olsen 1966: 225–228).

If we understand the *hǫrgr* as a mound, then Þórgerðr's surnames containing the element *hǫrgr*- should indicate a connection between the cult of Þórgerðr and her grave mound. There are several circumstances in our sources that connect Þórgerðr with the mound.

The connection between the cult of Þórgerðr and the mound lies implicitly in the description of Hǫlgi and Þórgerðr in *Skáldskaparmál*: *Svá er sagt, at konungr sá, er Hǫlgi er nefndr, er Hálogaland er við kent, var faðir Þórgerðar Hǫlgabrúðar; þau vǫru bæði blótuð, ok var haugr Hǫlga kastaðr, onnur fló af gulli eða silfri, þat var blótféit, en onnur fló af moldu ok grjóti* ('It is told that the king who is called Hǫlgi, the one that Hálogaland is called after, was the father of Þórgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr; they were both venerated and a mound was built for Hǫlgi, one layer of gold or silver, that was the offerings, and one layer of earth and stone) (*Skáldskaparmál* chapter 42).

This story is told by Snorri in order to explain the kenning *Hǫlga haugþak* ('the thatch of the mound of Hǫlgi') for gold.⁹ Snorri does not present Hǫlgi and Þórgerðr as deities but as historical persons who were venerated by *blót* after their deaths. Snorri does not explain the details of the cult of Hǫlgi and Þórgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr. From the information he gives it is however logical to assume that the cult activities took place at the mounds of the two. It seems probable that a mound was constructed for Þórgerðr as well as for Hǫlgi.

⁸ In the mythological sources, the worship at the *hǫrgr* is especially connected with female divinities. In *Gylfaginning* Snorri tells us that the hall where the goddesses were worshipped was called a *hǫrgr* (*Gylfaginning* chapter 13). In *Hyndluljóð* the *hǫrgr* is described as a heap of stones built by Óttarr in order to venerate Freyja and the goddesses (*Hyndluljóð* stanza 10). From the mythological sources it can be deduced that *hǫrgr* is a term that can describe both a house and a stone altar.

⁹ The metal layers in a mound are also mentioned in the legendary saga of *Orvar-Oddr*. When someone died they should bring one handful of silver and one of earth to the mound (*Orvar-Odds saga* chapter 4).

That the mound could be regarded as a sacred place is attested in a runic inscription from Virring in Denmark. In this inscription the god Þórr is called upon in order to *vigja*, that is to consecrate this *kuml*. The word *kuml* can describe a grave site, either as a heap of stones over a grave or a grave mound. The inscription belongs to the group 'Thor-påkaldelser', inscriptions where Þórr is called upon to consecrate runes or gravesites. These inscriptions belong to the pre-Christian as well as the Christian period, the one from Virring being dated to the period before 965, when the pre-Christian religion was forbidden in Denmark (Jacobsen, Lis and Erik Moltke 1942: 147, 148, 1011).

The cult of a dead king in his mound is told of in *Óláfs þátr Geirstaðaálfs* (*Óláfs þátr Geirstaðaálfs*, *Flateyjarbók* II: 3–9). Óláfr is said to have been a king of the Yngling-dynasty who was venerated as an *álfr* after his death. While he was living, he was so *ársæll* that there were no bad years or famine during his reign. In order to keep good years and prevent famine he was venerated with *blót* after his death and his name was changed to Geirstaðaálfr, the elf at Geirstaðir. The story of Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr is incorporated in the different sagas of St. Óláfr. In the context of the saga of St. Óláfr the heathen king at Geirstaðir is interpreted as the Christian king's heathen predecessor. This fact however does not rule out the possibility that the story might be a source for the apotheosis and cult of dead persons at their burial places, in Óláfr's case the mound at Geirstad (Røthe 2004: 41–54).

A mythological counterpart to the story of Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr is the euhemeristic explanation for the cult of Freyr given in *Ynglinga saga*. Freyr is said to have been a king in Sweden who had the ability to bring the people *ár ok friðr* (peace and prosperity). When he died they built him a mound and placed him inside it in order to make people believe that he was still alive and able to bring peace and prosperity. There were three openings in the mound where the people brought offerings of gold, silver and copper in order to secure a good year (*Ynglinga saga* chapter 10). A similar story of Freyr is told in *Flateyjarbók* (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* chapter 323, *Flateyjarbók* I: 403). The story also explains the origin of the statue of Freyr. Because no living person wanted to accompany Freyr into the mound they made two wooden statues of Freyr and placed one in the mound. The other they sent to Trondheim and this statue made the starting point of the cult of Freyr there (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* chapter 323, *Flateyjarbók* I: 403). This statue was the statue of Freyr that was burnt together with the statue of Þorgerðr (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* chapter 326, *Flateyjarbók* I: 409).

A link between Þorgerðr and the mound is also found in *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*. In this saga Þorgerðr has the surname *hǫrgabríuðr* and she is said to be the sister of the *haugbúi* Sóti. The Viking Sóti is said to have been a huge troll in his lifetime and even a bigger one after his death. The story of the robbery of his mound is situated in the east of Gautland and is a classical story of a *haugbrót*. A man clothed in a blue cloak calling himself Björn helps Hróarr and Hǫrðr in performing the *haugbrót*. This man is Óðinn in disguise. He gives Hǫrðr the sword Bjarnarnaut that makes it possible for him to perform the *haugbrót* (*Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* chapter 15). They break the mound and rob Sóti of his golden ring, sword and helmet. When Þorgerðr refuses to help Grímkell, she refers to the *haugbrót* of her brother's mound as the reason for this. She refuses to help him because he robbed her brother of his golden

ring (*Harðar saga ok Hólmverja* chapter 19). The relationship between Þorgerðr and Sóti as both dwellers in the mound can be compared to the relationship of Þorgerðr and Hølgí, who were both invoked at the mound.

In Else Mundal's investigation of the origin of the female *fylgja*, she discusses the possibility that the cult of foremothers took place at their mounds. She argues that even if there were no specific prohibitions against the cult of foremothers in the sources, it might be that the general prohibitions against the cult of heathen gods, of mounds and *hørgar* also included the cult of foremothers (Mundal 1974: 116). The many prohibitions in the laws against waking up the dead in the mounds imply that some sort of communication between the living and the dead was part of the pre-Christian religion. The dead are called *haugbúar* or *troll* due to the demonisation of pre-Christian cult practices (*Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387* I: 19, I: 182 and II: 327). The term *hørgatroll* for Þorgerðr in the *Ketils saga hængs* is literally to be understood as the troll of the *høgr*. If we understand the *høgr* as the mound, then she is called the *troll* of the mound.

If we suppose a special connection between Þorgerðr and the mound, how is this connection to be explained? If we define her as the foremother of the Háleygjjar, as her name Hølgabrúðr indicates, then we must ask whether it is possible that her cult originated as the cult of the female *fylgja* of the Háleygjjar family. If we take into consideration the possibility that the cult of foremothers as well as forefathers originated in the cult at their mounds, we might suppose that the cult of Þorgerðr started as the cult of a specific grave mound. This means that I see the fictitious figure of Þorgerðr in the sources not as a reflection of her role as a goddess or a giantess, but rather as that of a historical foremother of the Háleygjjar family. As the bride of Hølgí she was resting in her mound where she was venerated with *blóti*. A possible line of development of the cult of Þorgerðr is thus to view her cult as a development from a cult of a specific mound to that of the *goðahús* of the jarl. This line of development is in accordance with the line of development for the *høgr* as described by Olaf Olsen. From the open air place for worship, in some instances inside the construction of a pre-Christian grave, it developed into a sheltered building housing the image of the god. In the case of Þorgerðr her statue did not represent a deity of the Old Norse pantheon, but a historical woman that after her death was raised to the position of the *fylgja* of the Háleygjjar family. As such she was the *fulltrúi* of its descendant Jarl Hákon.

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