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LOKE IN YOUNGER TRADITION

BY
AXEL OLRİK

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Translated by Anker Eli

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In a previous account (Danske Studier 1908 p. 193 ff.), I have pointed out the comprehensive tradition about Loke in the western countries: Iceland, Faroe Islands, Shetland and England - countries originally not inhabited by our tribe, but colonized during the Viking Age.

Even stranger was the fact, that so much in these traditions supported the picture of Loke among the Aesir, as we know him from the ancient Eddic poetry: He is called upon together with Odin – plays tricks on the giant - accompanies Thor - changes into all sorts of animalistic shapes - and causes the death of Balder by manipulation.

There is however one more aspect: the common beliefs - or rather proverbs – where Loke's name appears. These often allude to the nature of Loke as it appears in the Eddas, and might be vague reflections of this figure. But we do not have more tangible proofs at hand, and we shall later get back to these minor notions.

In the Old Norse countries (Scandinavia), the matters are quite different. Loke only appears in his original mythical environment in a folksong about Thor, who gets his hammer back – a medieval reproduction of the lay about Trym, probably composed in Norway, and then spread to Sweden and Denmark. But this ballad does probably not belong in the younger tradition:

we know it from much older sources, and it is uncertain, whether the written examples from the heaths of Jutland, date from the original tradition.

Besides from that, we have a huge amount of common beliefs and proverbs from different Nordic regions, taken down through the last century. These do not have any roots in the ancient Norse pantheon, and their mythical presentation is very vague. On the other hand, they describe certain natural phenomena, different in the various countries.

1. Lokke as an Air Phenomenon (Denmark) (1)

In Denmark, the notions about “Lokke” refer to shimmering air or flickering light. From Jutland we know the expression: “Lokke slår sin havre” (Lokke is reaping his oats), and “Lokkemand driver sine geder” (Lokkemand drives his goats), or just “Lokke”. From Zealand we know the name “Lokke lejemand” (Lokke the Playing Man).

The last example only exists in one - so far not published - note, made by Jens Kamp about 1880 by account of an old skipper's widow from Copenhagen, but the statement is so obvious, that there is no doubt about the nature of the

phenomenon:

”If the sun glimmer in water, so that the playing light glints on – for example - a wall, then people could say: “Det er Loke Lejemand” (There is Loke the Playing Man) – “Nu skal du sidde stille der på (køkken)bordet og se på Loke Lejemand oppe på væggen” (Now you shall sit still on the (kitchen)table and watch Loke the Playing Man on the wall). These were the exact words of an old skipper’s widow from Copenhagen to a little child. This was during a stay on Bogø.” (2)

The fact that the statement derives from Zealand, is not only emphasized by the informant, but also from the expression “lejemand”. If it came from Jutland, it would have said “legemand”.

I can’t say, whether the next statement also derives from Zealand. It was made by headmaster Skule Thorlacius from Copenhagen in a prospectus from 1801:

”I have in Denmark heard the peasants refer to the phenomenon, where the sunbeams reach the land or sea between blocking clouds, as: “Locke dricker vand” (Loke drinks water).” (3)

In the 17th century, the notions about “Lokke” must have been even more common than later. The scholar Peter Syv, headmaster and later parish vicar from Zealand, brings a number of them in his dictionary recordings:

””Lokke haver sine geder ude at vokte nu” (Now Lokke watches his goat-herd), (in sunshine, when the geothermal heat flutter from the ground like capræ saltantes [like leaping goats]).”

””Lokke faaer noget at bøde sine buxer med” (There is something for Lokke to patch his trousers with) (when the yarn (or the like) becomes so entangled, that it is unfit for use).”

””At føre Lokkes breve” (To carry Lokke’s letters) or “- her Lokkes breve” ((To carry) here Lokke’s letters).”

””At høre Lokkes eventyr” (To listen to (or: hear) Loke’s fairytales).”

Only the latest proverb was brought in his published Danske Ordsprog (Danish Proverbs) (II 76); the rest of them are in the unpublished appendix to the collection. (4)

It is a fair assumption, that Syv knew these proverbs from Zealandish tradition. Younger tradition does not mention the two latest, while the one about Loke's trousers has reappeared on Lolland - and the one about the goats has parallels in several regions of the country, most frequent in West-Jutland.

Before I speak about the different appellations, I shall quote some of the informants, in order to illustrate the phenomenon itself as clearly as possible:

"This quivering or shimmering movement in the air, which the Jutlandian peasants call "Lokes havresæd" (Loke's oat-seed), deceives and deludes the eye" (Blicher, Noveller, 2. udg. II 90).

"The expressions: "Lokke (Lokki) sår havre i dag" (Lokke (Lokki) sows oats today), or: "Lokke driver i dag med sine geder" (Lokke herds his goats today), are used in several regions of Jutland, for example in Medelsom shire, the diocese of Viborg etc. . . and stand for the sight in the springtime, when the sunshine generates vapour from the ground, which can be seen as fluttering or shimmering air in the horizon of the flat landscape, similar to the hot steam over a kettle or a burning fire" (Molbech, Dansk dialektleksikon [1841] p. 330)

"... when you look at the horizon in clear weather and sunshine, and the air seems to move in shimmering waves, or like a sheet of water which seems to rise and sink in waves" (From Thy, same source as the previous).

"A rotating flow or oscillation (swinging movement) of tiny bright spots, which sometimes appear over a pond in the evening after a warm day." (Hanherred, same source as the previous).

"People from the Horsens region say: "Lokke slår sin havre" (Lokke mows his oats) or: bjærgmanden driver med sine får" (the hill-man herds his sheep", when the air shimmers on a warm summer's day (DgF IV 758).

"On warm summer days, when vapours of hot air swirl around near the ground". (E. T. Kristensen, Jyske folkeminder VII 273; probably from the Herning and Viborg region).

"The swirl in the air in the springtime and early summer is called: "bjærgmanden sår havre" (The hill-man sows oats).

(Western Jutland, Sevel parish; by teacher P. Kristensen 1908).

"The wavy fata morgana, which appeared on warm days in the horizon over the flat heaths, was still in those days [about 1860] always called "Lokes havresæd" (Loke's oat-seed) by the peasants." (Varde region, Grindsted; Ida Stockholm 1908).

"The next morning we continued our walk over the heath [from Ulborg]. The weather was clear and fine, and granted us even a glimpse of the magic, by which the light elves have fun during the summer. Hot air danced over the heath against the horizon, where it faded out as churches and forests. "Det er Lokemand der driver sin hjord" (It is the Loke-man who herds his flock) or "sår sin havresæd" (- sows his oat-seed), the peasants say." (F. Hammerich 1839 in Brage and Idun II 299).

"When you on a warm summer's day see the airy waves out in the horizon, it may look like living things that move, and that is called "Kullebondens svin" (The Hill-peasant's pigs), - and this bodes fine weather" (Bornholm; Martin Nielsen in Skattegraveren VII, 1887, p. 143, st. 713).

”När Lukas vallar sina får, blir det långvarig värme” (When Lukas [St. Luke – Loke. a.e] herds his sheep, the weather is going to be warm for a while) – a strange quiver in the air in the springtime, which makes it look like small objects bounce over the ploughed fields.” (Scandia, Antiqu. tidskrift för Sverige VII 2 P. 25).

I can add to this information, that I myself have seen similar phenomena, for instance on Easter Day in 1906 on the fields near Copenhagen, after a longer period of sunshine and drought. The movements in the air close to the ground, at first looked like something sprinkling, and soon after like something was bouncing or jumping in a certain direction.

The shimmering air is still regarded as a result of activity from a living creature. Lokke, Lokkemand, bjærgmanden (The Hillman) etc. – but the act itself is understood in two different ways: either “he sows his oats” or “he herds his goats (sheep or pigs).”

”Lokke sår sin havre” (Lokke sows his oats) is dominating in the Limfjord-regions (Vendsyssel, Hanherred, Thy, Mors, Salling and Himmerland), but is also sparsely represented southwards through East- or rather Mid-Jutland (The Viborg region, Horsens and Grindsted). (5)

”Lokkemand driver sine geder (får)” (Loke [The Loke-Man] herds his goats (sheep)), is on the other hand absolute in the West-Jutlandian heat-regions, from the mouth of the Limfjord to the regions of Varde and Ribe, as well as the western part of Southern Jutland.

But this notion is spread even wider: In Scandia “Lucas vallar sina får” (Lukas herds his sheep), on Bornholm as “kullebondens svin” (The Hill-peasant’s pigs), - besides the already mentioned proverb from P. Syv: “Lokke har sine geder ude at vogte” (Loke herds his goats).

Each of the two expressions stands for a certain way to explain the shimmering *fata morgana* - either as sprinkling or as bouncing. The folklore does not provide any notion about the nature- or sphere of activity of Lokke – it creates the expressions directly from the visible environment. If we want a specific confirmation about the expressions, we can notice, that our related neighbours have similar phrases, which describe the shimmering air as bouncing animals: From Frisian: “do summerkatte lope”, and from English: “summer-colt”.

But as soon as the folklore creates a figure and activity like this, it constantly moulds it. If the livestock is no longer visible because of the shimmering air, people say: “æ Lokkemand ha

nok tawen em” (Lokkemand has probably taken them). The restless and shimmering creature of the air then becomes thievish and teasing.

Another thought: “Lokkes havresæd” (The oat-seed of Loke) becomes more specific, as we know about a couple of plants, which are called “Lokkes havre” (The oat of Loke):

1. A certain reddish moss, which appears in the early springtime on the sandy soil “hairy moss” (*polytrichum commune*), is in Vendsyssel known as “Lokkens havre” (The oats of Loke) (6). Another (folkish) name of this plant is: “pukhavre, päukhagre” (i. e. troll oat) on Gulland. (7)

2. “Lokes eller Lokkes havre” (The oats of Lokke or Loke) is mentioned in “Videnskabernes selskabs ordbog” (The Dictionary of the Scientific Society) as the name of the plant “*avena fatua*”, which in the Norse region is known as flyvehavre (flughavre, vildhavre or the like [In English: Wild oat. a.e.]. Other mythical names for the plant are: “trollhavre” (troll oat) (Eastern Norway), “Liot-agär” (Evil oat or The Evil ones’ oat) (Dalarne/Sweden). (8)

Unlike the cultivated oat, the barren wild oat was assumed to have been sown by teasing supernatural creatures, or rather by the teasing “Lokke”. This includes not only the wild oat, but also the hairy moss:

”The name “pukhavre” (troll oat) expresses the annoyance over the uselessness of the swollen seeds”. (9)

The reason for the name is of course also, that it appears at the same time of the year as “Lokke sows his oat”.

The name “Lokke” seems to be the base and the curious thing about these notions. Only in the remote regions of Sweden and Norway, where the Danish “Lokke” is unknown, he is replaced by more vague expressions like: puke, troll and liot.

Furthermore we can find his name in several other plant-names from Jutland:

3. In Thy, a type of bent grass (*agrostis spica venti*) is called “Lokes græs” (10) (Loke’s grass), and meadow grass (*poa*) is called Loke’s or Lokkels grass. Again we have a barren and useless type of grass, which is a result of Lokes sowing.

4. On the west coast of Jutland, in Lem near Ringkøbing, the dandelion is called “Låkkilæjer” (11). “-læjer” and “-leger” is used in the compound of several blooming plants. The dandelion must have been connected with “Låkki” because of its vigorous growth in the early and warm part of the summer, maybe also because of its transient fruit-down and the poisonous sap.

These names illustrate how widespread the notions about “the sowing of Lokke” - or at least his airy activities in the warm days

of the spring - have been. A name like “Låkkilæjer” probably does not make sense with the peasants any more – it has to originate from a time span, before –s was used for personal name as genitive – which means several centuries.

From recent times, there is a rhyme from Western Jutland that says: “æ Låkkemand mæ hans skek låkker æ ban ud te æ vek” (The Låkke man with his beard, gets the child away from the wall). The real rhyme goes like this: “Tor med hans lange skæg, lokker barnet ud fra væg” (Thor with his long beard, gets the child away from the wall) (Thor = the month of March) (12). It is an individual’s idea to replace Thor with “Låkkemand”, to mark the spring time.

This is how the common notions about “Lokke” increase, while we still sense the flickering spring light as their origin. All living tradition does have a tendency to change from place to place – to increase or to fade out.

We also find these changes in the many variants of the name. When he sows oat, he is usually called “Lokke” (Låki, Løk , sometimes “Lokken” or æ Låki) from Vendsyssel south over Himmerland, Salling, the Viborg region, and down to Horsens and Grindsted. Some of the informants try to show their academic skills by calling him “Loke”; but this form is never used

by anybody who expressly tries to show how the name is pronounced. Now and then the variants “Lokmand”, “Lokkemand” or “Blokmand” appear in Eastern Vendsyssel, and “Blokken” in Kær-shire and Himmerland – an attempt to make sense from this name, which meaning has been forgotten for a long time.

In the western Limfjord regions (Thy and western Hanherred, Mors and partly Salling), another variant of the name appears. Here most informants just write “Lukas” without further ado – one of them tells that in western Hanherred, the older people said “Sankt Lukas” (St. Luke) – but those who give literal accounts of the pronunciation, only mention “Lukas” once (Salling), Luk (Mors), otherwise Lok s, Lok’ s. In Hjerm shire the name is changed to: “Markus” (St. Mark) herds his goats – St. Mark’s day (April 25th) also fits better than St. Luke, who does not have any connection with the springtime. The name “Lukas” never really made sense; it is an attempt to make the vague old name say something meaningful. The path to the new name was already there, as people said “Lok s haw r, and the s-sound became a part of the name.

In the other group, we only find the more simple form “Lokke” in Peter Syv’s records. In Scandia people say “Lukas

vallar sina får”, the same modern change, as the one from the Limfjord regions, has appeared here, even though the regions and nature are quite different.

All over Western Jutland, we do however find: “æ Lokkemand”. In the southern regions (Arnst- and Malt-shires) it has been changed to “Per Lokkemand”, “Lokke-Per”, and in the western part of South Jutland, to “Jakob Løj”. Both “Per Lokkemand” and “Jakob Løj” are the regional names for sleep or laziness; and the usage of them reveals them as later creations – “Lokkemand” is probably the stem form.

But the term: “Lokkemand” must be an extension of “Lokke”. Supernatural creatures with names that end with “-mand” are relative modern creations (they do not even appear in our folksongs) – and the plant name “Låkkilæjer” also indicates, that the simple name “Låkki” was used in these regions at an earlier stage.

”Lokkemand” is also the transitional form for the rather indefinite names, which are preferred in the heath regions: “æ bjærremand” (the hill-man), and sometimes “æ mand” (the man), “æ gammel mand” (the old man) and “æ hawmand” (merman), which refer to the westerly wind. (13)

On Bornholm, we also found a similar indefinite name: “kullebondens svin” (the hill-peasant’s pigs). The notions about a supernatural creature, which drives his cattle in the shimmering air, has apparently been adopted in the common beliefs about the hill-living people, who move about in the vicinity of the humans.

All in all, the name “Lokke” is so widespread in the different regions of the ancient Danish areas, that there hardly can be any doubt, that it from the beginning has been the appellation for the hot waving air.

We can confirm this from another angle. Other appellations for the shimmering phenomenon are restricted to a few certain areas, and there are no indications that they are especially old. In the western shires of Vendsyssel, we find the expression: “det iler”, “der er stærk iling” (the weather is sultry). In Hammerum shire we find: “”æ warm drywer” (the weather is warm and sultry), on Zealand: “våren trækker” (the spring is draughty) (Skælskør region), “det er våren” (it is the spring) (Sejrø), “vårvinden trækker” (the spring wind is draughting), “vårvinden blafrer” (the spring wind flutters) (Hornsherred). There is something new about all these expressions (“ile” means by the

way: sultry heat or windy), - and in a way they confirm that “Lokke” was the only original name.

In addition to this comes, that “Lokke” also has indicated related expressions like the sunbeams that “drink water”, and the gleaming water which reflections glimmer on the wall (Lokke Lejemand).

We do also have an external source, which proves that this “Lokke Lejemand” is rooted centuries back. In the folksong about “Tor af Havsgård”, the messenger Lokke appears, who in one of the Danish manuscripts from the 16th century is called “liden Locke” (the tiny Locke), and in another “Lochy leymandt” (corresponding to “Lokie Lagenson”, “Locke Loye” in the Norwegian and Swedish versions of the ballad) (14). The name in the song is apparently adapted to the domestic (Zealandish) notions about the playing creature of the light.

So: Lokke is – all over Denmark – the old name for the supernatural light glimmering creature.

Then what the connection between this creature from the Danish folklore and the Loke who appears in the ancient mythological poetry?

Earlier it was always assumed from cases like this, that such a small supernatural creature was an ancient deity, which after the introduction of Christianity was reduced into such a small scale. But gradually people became aware, that this was a relatively difficult way to explain the existence of the being.

This is also the case with our “Lokke”. The only thing he has in common with Asa Loki, is the teasing nature, but not the malice and schemes, nor any kind of relationship to the Norse pantheon. He is neither related to the Aesir or the Giants (jafnir), but seems to be a creature like the hill-people or elves. When he hides the cattle in the heat vapour, it corresponds exactly to what an old cattleman I once knew, believed about the “elle-girls” (Danish version of the elves), that they stole his besoms and hid them from him. **So, Lokke is a creature with the nature of the elves or hill-people, and his entire existence is based on one single factor: the flickering air.**

We do however still have a couple of factors, which can't be explained by the flickering air. Peter Syv mentions the expression: “Lokke faaer noget at bøde sine bukser med” (Here is something for Lokke to repair his trousers with) – when the yarn becomes so entangled, that it is useless – and quite similar expressions are still known from Lolland. (15)

The funny thing is that we probably can figure the origin of this expression out. On Iceland, when the yarn becomes entangled, people say that there is a “loki” (a knot, loop, rumple) on the thread (*opt er loki á nálþræðinu*), but in modern Icelandic there is a tendency to believe, that Loki goes into the thread and entangles it. In Danish there have been a similar expression for the entangled thread, and this “loki” can still be traced in the Jutlandian expression: “dæ lyk’er å æ trå’s” (there is a loop on this thread). But from there, there is only a small jump to the notion, that it is the thievish Loke or Lokke, who has caused the disorder, in order to make it useless for the humans, and receive it for himself.

It is doubtful though, if it is the “Lokke” of the shimmering air, who tangles up the threads, or a real “Loke”. We have to leave that question, until we have examined the material a little better.

Peder Syv also knows the proverbs: “at føre Lokkes breve” (to carry Lokke’s letters) and: “at høre paa Lockens eventyr” (to listen to Locken’s fairy tales), which probably mean: “to tell a lie”, and “to listen to a lie” (Ordsprog II 72). The expression reminds of the Icelandic: “Lokalýgi” (a great lie), and presupposes a personal and speaking “Lokke”, quite different to the inconstant

air creature. There must once have been a more definite shaped notion about Lokke on the Danish isles.

Finally, Molbechs Dialekteleksikon has preserved the expression: “at gå i Lokkis arri” (to walk in Lokki’s footsteps [?]), from Sønderjyng shire in Randers county, about the moulting birds. Maybe people have imagined “Lokki” as a teasing supernatural creature, who (with his harrow?) tears the feathers of the birds in the moulting season – a notion that anyhow might have sprouted from the teasing and thievish “Lokke” with the cattle.

2. Lokke (Lokje) as the home fire (Sweden and Telemarken, Norway).

A quite different perception of Lokke can be found in Sweden and Southern Norway i. e. Telemarken.

From Telemarken we know an expression about strong sparkling in the home fire, which says: “Lokje dengjer bon’e sine” (Lokje beats his children).

In the southern neighbouring landscape, Sætersdalen, on the other hand, people said: “No dengjer vetti bonni si” (Now the (supernatural) creature beats his children, when the firewood in the home fire squeaked, or the fried apples trickled. When the fire sparkled they said: “no syng’e vetti” (now the creature sings). Here in Sætersdalen, “vetti” was the common name for the helping supernatural creature, whether it lived in trees, mounds or the home fire. (16)

When people boiled milk in Telemarken, they threw the skin into the fire as a sacrifice to “Lokje”.

Further south (in Lister and Mandal counties), the same tradition is known, but without mentioning Lokje. (17)

In several regions of Sweden, children who are loosing their teeth, throw their old tooth into the fire, saying:

“*Locke, ge mig en bentand för en guldtand*” (Locke, give me a bone-tooth for a gold-tooth) or the like.

The form of the name is rather inconsistent though:

"locke, locke ran" or "locke, locke", Småland (Cavallius, Wärend I 235).

"låkka ram", Småland (Rietz 418).

"låkke, låkke", Kalmar-region (Sv. landsth. IX, 1 p. 365).

"loke" (so!?), Nerike (Hofberg, Nerikes gamla minnen, 215).

"lokk, lokk" or "nokk, nokk" Swedish Finland (Nyland IV 65, with the addition: "of whom one asks, is not known")

"Noke, noke", Scandia, or *"Berta, Berta"*, Glumslöf in Scandia (Eva Wigström, Folkdigtning II 278; "but she meant the fire when she said Berta").

It seems to be beyond any doubt, that the original form is "Lokke", and that it is the fire, which is addressed with this word. When people in Småland add ran or ramm to the name, they probably refer to the adjective "ramur" (strong), which just in Småland is used in this connection: it is the "strong fire" you ask to give growth to the new tooth.

The sacrifice of the tooth is even more widespread than the "Lokke" name, it seems to belong to the entire Gothic tribe. There are two principal forms: the first one is to sacrifice the tooth to the fire, while the other is to sacrifice it to the soil (in a

mouse hole, on a graveyard or the like). In Germany, both forms are known, though the one with the fire is the rarer (to throw the tooth over the head, behind the stove).

In the Norse region, the fire sacrifice has probably been absolute; it is widespread in Sweden (including Scandia) and Norway. In Denmark there are only vague traces of the custom: (in Vendsyssel: op in the chimney or on the stove. Skattegrav. IX 49; [At Sorø?]: over the head, Skgr. VIII 49); usually it is just thrown under the bed. The invocation in Denmark (and exceptionally in the other countries) is:

”Mus, mus, gif mig en bentand for en guld tand” (Mouse, mouse, give me a bone tooth for a gold tooth), maybe an influence from the German custom to throw the tooth into a mouse hole. (18)

On the south end of Norway, there is a unique invocation: “Gulmari, Gulmari, gje meg ei bentån, så ska du få ei guldtån” (Guldmari, Guldmari, give me a bone tooth, then you shall have a gold tooth (19). The orange flame is described with this name of honour, as a creature in golden robes.

There is no doubt, that Lokke in Sweden and Lokje in Telemarken, are the names for the home fire - seen as a

supernatural creature - which takes care of the well-being of the entire home.

In this case, he is something quite different from Asa-Loke of the Eddic poetry, and the teasing and shimmering air creature from the Danish folklore.

The scholars have had very different theories about the actual origin of the name Loke. Here we shall leave his diverse nature out of consideration, and only concentrate on how Lokke's name is connected to the home fire.

There must be a connection between this "lokki", home fire, and the Old Norse word "logi" (flame) - already the meaning indicates this. It is possible, that the word "logi" and the deity "Loki" is the same word, but skilled linguists are strongly hesitant to such a transition. On the other hand – as professor Vilh. Thomsen makes me aware of – "logi" and "lokki" can be quite natural parallel forms, as a word in the primeval language split up in two. "Logi" then arose from the infinitive form (lukë), "lokki" from (luknós). The first one preserved the original meaning: "lue" (flame), while the second got the special meaning: "home fire".

Now it also makes sense, that Lokki in Denmark is the name of the shimmering light creature. In his environment in the

nature, and by his mythical nature, he differs from the home fire, but seen from a linguistic point of view, the word is the same. The original form “luk” did not only mean “flame”, but “light” as such. Our “Lokki” can, from the origin of the word, be translated into “the light man” – “the light man sows”, “the light man herds his goats”, “the light man drinks water” (when the sunbeams reach the earth) “the light man plays on (over) the wall”. It is linguistic formation and myth formation of the same simple sort, which still happens today, every time a mother shows her child all the “light men”, which are lit outside.

Because the word “Lokki” (and Loki?) by itself doesn’t tell us much, the strangest notions might have arisen from it.

3. Lokje as a supernatural, teasing creature of the night (Telemarken, Norway).

The two major versions of the “Lokke”-figure, the Danish light creature and the Swedish/Norwegian home fire creature, are now clear to us.

But within the area of the friendly home fire creature from Telemarken, certain other features are hidden, which show a quite different character (or creature).

The oldest testimony about this is probably from Wille, in his original, complete manuscript to his “Beskrivelse af Sillejord”:

”That same evening [Maundy Thursday] three whips had to be twisted, in order to repair the sled of Loke, who at that point would come driving with a load of fleas, and had broken the sled, as the load was very heavy. If this wasn’t performed, there would be an incredible amount of fleas the next year.” (20)

His printed version of the manuscript only says:

”Lokje is faintly known, and is called a ghost of the night.”

His unpublished list of words from Sillejord and several places in Telemarken, tells us likewise:

”Laakje, a ghost of the night, who abducts little children” (21)

On top of that, there is a younger tradition from the same region:

”In Telemarken there are stories about an evil creature, Lokje, who sometimes is mistaken for the devil himself. Once upon a

time he is said to have seized a child over the hip bone, placed it on the ground and said: "Now you can sit there until you are one year old." That is why babies have a hole on each side of the hip, and are unable to walk until they are one year old." (22)

But – according to Ross – we shall not confuse “Lokje” from Telemarken with the common Norwegian “Låkjen” (the evil one, the devil (from “låk”: evil, wicked, bad)).

A teasing or tormenting creature of the night, like this one, seems incompatible with the home fire creature, which cares about the well being of the family. The connection should rather be found in Loke from the Eddas, or the teasing nature of the Danish air creature. Still the special connection with the night would be unaccounted for.

But there is no getting away from the fact, that this “Lokje” thrives in the exact same region where the notions about the home fire “Lokje” are kept alive. In addition to that, there is the likeness between them, that also the teasing Loke is connected to the indoor life of the house. There might, after all, be some kind of connection in their origin.

The notions about a small domestic creature, which mostly appears during the night – at the same time watching out for the well being of humans and livestock, but still teasing – are quite

common in the Norse area, as well as other places. It is called: “nisse”, “nissepuk”, “puge”, “gårdbo”, “tomte”, “vord” (i. e. “guardian”), etc. It seems fair to assume, that this domestic creature – like the Lithuanian “puke” – originally was the domestic fire, which continuously was sacrificed to, and later became a more poetic-mythical creature, partly teasing and jesting.

As an example, I can mention the West-Norwegian belief, that if people wake up in the morning with light scratches on the face, it is the “vord” that has scratched them. (23)

Just like the “vætte” (supernatural creature) covers the entire development from being the helping power, which resides in the home fire or the mound, the more personal name “Lokje” covers the same area. Even “Lokje” has then gone through the same development as a supernatural creature.

4. Lokke as a Supernatural Creature and Loke among the Aesir

We shall now return to some remnants and minor features, which we couldn't put in the right place earlier, at least not with certainty.

Iceland had a lot of scattered Loke notions. Some of them belonged in the higher mythology, while others fit better with the “supernatural creature” beliefs, which we now have examined. They had, or have, a “*kaupaloki*”, a small figure (something similar to the thing we otherwise call a “dragedukke” (24) (mandrake amulet)), which could attract profits in trade to the bearer. Here we meet Loki again as the helping spirit.

“*Lokadaun*” or “*lokalykt*” was used about the sulphurous odour, “as if a spirit walked through the room.” Indoor movements at night and sulphurous odour are the characteristics of the pixies.

Plant names appear in connection with Loke’s name:

On Iceland “*lokasjóðr*” (the plant “honesty”, in Danish called “Judas penge” (blood money), with the false imitations of silver coins).

On the Shetland Islands “*lokis läins*” (Loke’s lines (the unreliable lines)), the seaweed, which so easily breaks. From Shetland we also know the plant name “*lokis ull*” (cotton grass), the wool that can’t be yarned. All this seems to be ramifications from the motif in the expression “Lokke’s oat”, and the other Jutlandian plant names.

If “*lokabrenna*” actually means “the summer heat” (and not the star Sirius), it may have connection to our “Lokke” and his summer heat.

Thus the younger settlements contain sparse notions about this and that, while the old countries, populated since prehistoric times, each have their great groups of related motifs: the supernatural light creature and the supernatural domestic- or home fire creature.

Already this difference between ancient settlements and younger settlements (settlements that are only one thousand years old!), gives us a hint about the age of the Lokke-notions. Besides from that, it is quite possible that also the two old groups may have affected each other, although not in an especially considerable degree. It is possible, that Lokje from Telemarken, who arrives at Maundy Thursday and brings fleas to the house (at the same time as the spring warmth), is related to the Jutlandian notions about him as a creature of the spring. It is more certain that “Lokke’s oat” as a plant name, has spread [from Denmark] to Norway and Sweden, although the Lokke-name has been abandoned and the plants are called “trollhavre” (troll oat) and “pukhagre”.

On the other hand, when Lokke, on the Danish isles occurs as a disturbing creature in the home, by tangling up the yarn, he is not the flickering light-creature, but rather the domestic, pixie-like creature.

There is one thing that might surprise people who bear Loke from the ancient myths in mind: That people actually have been named Loke or Lokke:

Among the Norsemen in Northumberland in the 12th century, there was a man called *Locchi*.

In Scandia, *Lokkethorp* (now Lockarp) was named after a man with a similar name.

In Småland, *Locke* has been preserved as a hereditary surname.

On a rune stone in Uppland, the name “*Luki*” (Loki?, Lokki?) appears. The name can also be traced in place names (*Lockbol*, 1341 *Lukabol*; *Lockesta*, 1328 *Locastum*). From Norway we know a settler called Þórbjörn loki, and a birkjebein called Þórðr loki (?). (25)

The fact of the matter is, that these persons and places were probably not named after Loke the deity, as one may be inclined to assume, but after the supernatural creature or tiny troll Loki (Lokki). This then refers to several other ancient Norse surnames (and personal names), like dverg, puke, skratte, troll, thurs, jotun.

Originally, this type of appellations have been given as surnames or nicknames to people because of their unusual low or high stature and their strange appearance - and in the course of time, it has been transmitted to a personal name. The name Lokki, used for humans, most likely connoted a short and pixy-like man.

In favour of the regard of the personal name as naming after the god Loke, we can mention, that contemporary with the birkjebein Þórðr loki, there lived a man called Auðunn býleistr (named after Loke's brother). But if there is any connection between the two names (the form Loki isn't quite certain here), it could be due to the fact that the nickname býleistr (he who is similar to or worse than Loke) was given to an opponent, just because the birkjebeins didn't know the origin of the name.

Naming people after the actual pantheon, does not seem to have been used by the Norsemen in general. On the other hand, there seems to have been a certain inclination in the early days of the Icelandic settlement, to give the surnames of the gods to people: vingnir, gefn (as strong as Thor?, as beautiful as Freya?); or to name after the subordinate characters (høðr, maybe about a strong hero); or naming after certain giants (hrungnir, surtr). But neither by nature nor region, do these give any warrant to consider lok(k)i as a name for Asa-Loke.

We can now make our conclusion from the entire investigation. In the Norse countries, there have been notions about Loke as a small supernatural creature from ancient times. The basic meaning of the name is “lue” (flame) – “lysmand” (light man). In Denmark he is regarded as the shivering or quivering air, while he in Sweden and Norway is regarded as the home fire. In this last shape, he has received small sacrifices in the home, as its guardian and helping spirit. From these points of origin, certain elfish- or pixy-like features grow from his nature, especially teasing and thievish.

He does not derive from Loke in the mythological poetry, which contains so much other features in connection with the main gods, and a devilish behaviour. But certain traits in his nature (the smallness, the teasing and the thievishness), as well as the likeness between the names, indicates, that there is a connection. Traits from the supernatural creature in the folklore, must have been adapted by Loke the deity, and contributed to his strange and complex character. (26)

One thing should be sure though. We can, by simply - and without preconceived ideas - looking at our younger Norse folklore, see beyond the mythical Loke from the Eddas, and find a simpler type of mythical creatures, connected to certain natural

phenomena, and still not separated from the common notions about creatures of that kind. The circumstances about Loke is, like they were about Odin (see my article: “Odinsjægeren i Jylland” (The Odin-hunter from Jutland)[or: Odin as a hunter...] Dania VIII 139). The knowledge about the folklore in its versions from the different districts, revealed here a hunting, troll-chasing, stormy creature of the night, whose existence has been an important precondition for the notions about Odin the war-god and ruler of Valhall.

Notes:

1. Most important sources: H. F. Heilberg, *Jysk ordbog*: "Lokkemand" and "Jakob Løj". *Dansk folkemindesamling* 1906, 29b: "Lokke".

2. DFS 1904, 42, 286.

3. Thorlacius, *Antiqu. boreales* VII 43: in Danis a rusticis audivi, phænomenon. quo solis radii per nubium interstitia tuborum instar in terram vel mare descendunt, vocari Locke dricker vand.

Thorlacius was principal in Kolding 1769 – 77, and in Copenhagen 1777 – 1803.

4. P. Syv, "Paralipomena ex proverbiiis" (page 2 and 4) in his collections of proverbs, now on the University Library. (Rostgård 48 8). A couple of these are inaccurately printed at R. Nyerup, "P. Syvs kærnefulde ordsprog, p. lxxviii.

5. In Sevel parish of Ginding shire: "æ bjærremand sår havre" (the hill-man sows oat). In Törring near Holsterbro transferred to the croaking of the frogs: "æ frøer sår havre" (the frogs sow oat).

6. Jensen- Tusch, *Nordiske plantenavne* (Vends., referring to Lyngbye). Also in Molbech, *Diallex*. 331 (without location, and without any special pronunciation). Finn Magnussen, *Mytologiæ lexicon* (1828) 232 (Northern Jutland), referring to H. C. Lyngbye, who grew up in Hellum shire near Ålborg. Also Lovise Hansen knows "Lokkemanshavre" from Vendsyssel,

as an art of moss with tiny and fine flowers.

7. Rietz, Diallex. 512. Lundgren, Språkliga intyg om hednisk gudetrol 80.

Is already mentioned by Linné.

8. Jensen-Tusch 32. 288. DgF IV 578. Rietz, Diallex. 408 (comp.

Lundgren, Språkl. intyg). Dybeck, Runa 1847, 30

9. Dybeck, Runa 1847, 30

10. Jensen-Tusch 10, 175. "Loengæs" (Samsø) is probably a popular etymological conversion with connection to "lodde" (the fish capelin) if anything.

11. E. T. Kristensen, Jyske folkeminder, IX 76.

12. Feilb. II 445. – Let me by the way stamp out the continual misconception, that Tor-month (and this verse) has anything to do with the deity Thor. It has to, despite the displacement in time, be identical to the Old Norse word "Þorri". The verse is most certainly referring to this verse, as the sister month "Gói" is placed next to it ("Torre med sit skjeg lokke bådna onne veg, Goi med sit skinn jage bodna inn") (Torre with his beard, entice the children outside, Goi with his skin, chases the children (back) inside). Like this, it has been reported to me from Helleland in Stavanger County by Professor Magnus Olsen.

13. These can, in the border-regions between "oat-seed" and "goats", sometimes be transferred to the "oat-seed".

14. From the manuscript (Danmarks gamle folkeviser, no 1 Ab) it has

later been adopted to Vendel's edition (Locke Leiemand) and from there to the younger Jutlandian tradition (Lokki Læjermænd, Lok å Liremand, DgF IV 581). It is probably also from this tradition that "lejodrengen" in the Swedish version of the ballad derives.

15. DgF IV 578

16. Lokje: Aasen, Norsk ordbog (from Rauland). Also Faye, Norske folkesagn 2:6. - Vetti: Skard, Gamalt fraa Sætedal, II (1908) 27

17. Eiler Sundt, Folkevennen, XI (1861) 393.

18. See reference in Feilb., Ordbog: mus.

19. Folkevennen XI (1861) 393 (Storaker, Overtro og sagn i Lister og Mandals amt).

20. Wille, Optegnelser om Telemarken (særtr. af n. Hist. Tidsskr. 2 R. III) p. 43.

21. Ross, Norsk ordbog 486; with this marginal note: "as (because) Wille does not hear the great difference between o and aa, it can be Lokje."

22. Faye, Norske folkesagn, 2. udg. 1844, p. 5

23. The glossary of Thottske samling 1506 vol.: 4: voorkloor. By courtesy assistant professor Hannaas, who also has provided me with several other facts for this research.

24. [Translator's note]: "Dragedukke" is described like this in Salmonsens konversationsleksikon, Anden Udgave VI:

Dragedukke (Dragon doll)

In folklore: A human like figure (amulet), which was considered to be the home of a demon, and to be able to draw wealth to its owner's household. It was made out of the root of the mandrake plant (which had a certain resemblance to the human body). Common people seem only to have regarded it as "a tiny devil" (P. Syv) or a house-pixy, which the master of the household presented to the work, he attempted to carry out the next year. Belief in the Dragon doll seems to have been quite widespread in Denmark about 1650....

25. Locchi in Durham's *Liber Vitæ* (Danm. helded. I 140). O. Nielsen, *Olddanske personnavne* 62 (Lochtorp, Lovtrup in Southern Jutland are questionable. Iuriæn Loyson SRD V540 is false). Lundgren, *Språkliga intyg af hednisk gudatro* 80. Hylten-Cavallius, *Wärend* I 98. 136. Årb. 1907, 260. 197. – Different from this is the surname lokkr (Årb. 1907, 197. Cav., *Wärend* I 98, from Småland, 1619 and 1624. Hvitfeld, *Danm. hist.* 2 I 368 from Jutland 1313).

26. Also F. v. d. Leyen (*Die götter und göttersagen der Germanen*, München 1906, p. 222ff) has, independent from me, and from the myths themselves, portrayed Loke as an elf-like supernatural creature, which has been lifted up into the pantheon. Without committing myself to the details of his thesis (which still are not proved), I have to express my support to him, at least regarding an essential part of Loke's mythical nature.

