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Cultural Heritage and Knowledge Structures

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to use North Norwegian legends and show how these oral stories have been used in the education at the *Institute for Teacher Education and Pedagogic, University of Tromsø – Norway’s arctic university* since the time I started this project at the end of the 1990s period. Here, there will be given a definition and expansion for the types of legends that exists, what was stated about it in the lecture plan (L-97) at the time, and what created the basis for this research. An important part of this work was to collect legends in order to document this traditional material for later, as a contribution to North Norwegian cultural history and, thereby, as a gateway to establish knowledge structures.

The word “legend” in Norway refers to religious texts. The Norwegian term for the text about to receive treatment is called *sagn*. However, I will use the English language uniform, by choosing the term “legend” instead.

Keywords:

legend, *sagn*, cultural heritage, education, legend collecting, lecture plan, cultural history

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article utilizes North Norwegian legends² by directing to use of genre, cultural heritage, lecture plan and teaching methods.

Legends belong to the genres of folktales and poetry. It is important to collect the legends before the older generation dies out and thereby the stories along with them. Since 1998 I have lead a research – and development-work (FOU-work) – at the University of Tromsø, Norway’s arctic university, at Institute for Teacher Education and Pedagogic; here there have been gathered many folk tales with main focus on the mystical, mainly from the north of Norway. In addition to my own collection, teacher students and external contributors have also participated. The purpose of this FOU-work has been, in addition to collect these tales, to write them down and thereafter make an assessment out of one of the selected texts.

The project was actually to collect oral stories, based on personal exchange and traditions. It is important to preserve the oral folktale traditions of legends in order to maintain our cultural heritage. Poetry and tales in oral form become “traditionalized” – meaning, it will be passed on to new individuals, and thus forming new oral folktale traditions. Ronald Grambo³ uses the term *tradition* in reference to the actual product of *traditioning*.

Through the times, in Norway there have been created tales of different arts. A big chunk of the oral tales are not written down, but only exist in the mouth of the people, and in that way, they are in danger of being lost when the older generation dies out.

2. LEGEND

Legend⁴ is a folk-like presentation of memorable happenings, a short tale that has existed in the minds of people from relative to relative. We say that the legend is time-decided, because we know when it happened, and that it is place-decided, because we know where it is happening. In the legend, we often find name-given people who live or have lived. Legend presents itself as truth, as the person who

² The word “legend” in Norway refers to religious texts. The Norwegian term for the text about to receive treatment is called *sagn*. However, I will use the English language uniform, by using the term “legend” instead.

³ Grambo, R. (1984). *Folkloric handbook*. Oslo: University Publisher, p. 179.

⁴ Larsen, R., & Levit, L. (2008). *Norwegian folklore. A teaching aid for Russian speakers*. Arctic Publisher.

experienced the happening means it to be. We are talking here about a subjective truth because the one that the legend tells of evades itself from objective truth-criteria in the scientific sense – because the event cannot be accurately re-created. However, there are still many legends who speak of fantastic personal experiences which several people, independent of one-another, can speak of⁵.

The legend occurs in many different varieties and can be shared within many sub-genres dependent of content-criteria. Olav Solberg⁶ splits up the legends into four sub-categories: *nature mystical legends*, *historical legends*, *origin legends*, and *urban legends*.

Nature mystical legend concerns the supernatural occurrences and phenomena. The mystical dimension in the legends that contain the supernatural as theme has big appeal for youths. This is why it is regrettable that the material is often neglected in school, because this material contains a big potential for learning. It is particularly the nature mystical legends students like to work with because it excites much of their curiosity. This type of legend opens up for many possibilities. It sets thinking into motion, as well as awakening feelings and appealing to the creative imagination, by either discussing a legend or writing a text around it.

Historical legend tells of historical events and historical people and has this as a main subject. This does not mean that the legends are historically true or that it tells of actual real events. It is however the historical person, the historical base or the historical connection that catches the interest and makes the legend come to life. Historical legends are separated into two: national historical legends and local historic legends. Examples of national historical legends are the legends of Saint Olav, the Black Death (svartedauden), or the war against the Swedish. The local historic legends gladly tie themselves to particular events or known people. These legends are easier to trace down to their roots. Here we can find, for example, legends of local heroes or wise wives. This type of legend can often wake more interest within students than a more traditional history book can, because the historical legend often gives us an inside look and story as to how people within the timeline and area, related to the special events taking place, both locally and centrally speaking.

Origin legends are tales that explain the origin of a distinctive and conspicuous phenomenon or formations in nature. In Norway we often find tales of troll who

⁵ Bjerkem, J.E. (2004). *The narrative pedagogy. Folk poetry before and now*. Gyldendaal Norwegian Publisher.

⁶ Solberg, O. (1999). *Norwegian folk poetry: literary-historical lines and thematic perspective*. LNu. Cappelen Academic Publisher.

becomes stone when the sun comes out, and thus create special formations in mountains and rocks. These legends suit the early classes in primary school as they sound a lot like fairy tales. At the same time, the tales focus on the nature in the local society, and that is something the children can recognize. The origin legends can also serve as an “appetizer” to make oneself acquainted to the local environment, and also to think and to fabricate on by yourself, to make up own explanations to special phenomenon within the landscape. The origin legends give us geographical knowledge in another way: it is easier to remember the name of, for example, a mountain, when you receive a story along with the name to associate with. At the same time, the legend also reveals much about popular beliefs, and in these stories we can find many traces of pre-Christian beliefs. In addition, the legend stimulates the imagination and wonder over the current conditions’ mysteries, and has therefore a strong aesthetic dimension.

3. ORAL STORYTELLER TRADITIONS AND THE LECTURE PLAN

The society has been a subject for a pervasive transformation in the span of the last century; from the radio that made its debut, to the television and the information technology such as the Internet, as its latest invention. The traditional folk entertainment, the oral tale, in Norway as in many other countries, had to depart somewhat to make way for the new media. A big folk tradition, a communication method was in the process of becoming lost if it was not collected. In 1998, I wished to communicate with the part of the population who still remembered the folk tales, the ones who grew up before the television became everyman’s property.

I understood when the project first started up that it would have a big relevance for primary school⁷, because it was part of fulfilling the intentions of the lecture plan (at the time, in 1997) (L-97) and that which it directed to. However, this local material was hard to find; little was written down – and if it is just that, tales would only be sporadically found in year books and village books.

The background for this work was thus the strong focus on the oral story and folk poetry within the lecture plan. According to this lecture plan, folk poetry was to be introduced to each school grade with the exception of the 7th grade. Children were to be told tales as well as tell them to others from first grade in

⁷ My students at that time would become future teachers on this level within the school network. It was therefore important that the teacher plan at the teacher education corresponded with equivalent plan in primary school.

primary school, and it was emphasized that local traditional material was going into the education. Since this material was often hard to find, the project started to meet a big demand in schools in terms of local tradition material. Up to 6th grade, the children were to become familiar with the material, and afterwards, go out to collect their own traditional material. On high school grade the field got expanded: folk poetry should be the basis for song, dance and drama, and 10th-graders should research the role the oral tales have in our culture and other cultures. My wish in this connection was that the book should stimulate teachers to let their high school students gather in local material and study it. I know that the local legend has often been neglected in school⁸.

4. TALE AND IDENTITY

The tale is important for the identity. You have no identity before you know the tale about yourself: who you are dependent on, and what history you are a part of. This was also a truth L-97 brought up. The lecture plan placed a special emphasis on the oral tales in comparison to previous lecture plans, and the plan had a stronger tradition-bearing element. The students were to both listen to, talk about and be able to perform tales. The tale is important because it works structurally: it arranges placing things one after another and in relation to each other. Tales are, in addition, an important culture-bearing element, and of big significance when it comes to relay, for example, a region's distinctiveness and features to the students. Identity and tale are interweaved. This project wished to accommodate a huge longing and need from the school's standpoint about relevant and adapted teaching material on the field in region tradition material. At the same time, in L-97 it was underlined how important this was, also in relation to forming bonds between the generations: "The bonds between the generations become tighter when they share experiences and insight – or events, songs, or legends"⁹.

⁸ This I have learned through conversations with teachers. In addition, I have also attended as teacher for 6 years in primary school.

⁹ The teacher plan of 1997.

5. THE LEGEND DURING EDUCATION

The work with legend in my class lessons had the clear goal of schooling the teacher students so that they can practice some of the same material when they one day meet their students in primary school. Legend education is a good basis for interdisciplinary work. Legends houses so many things: the literary expression, good entertainment, local history writing, the public perception of strange happenings, moral and values. The origin legend furthermore gives geographical knowledge in a different manner: it is easier to remember the name of a mountain or a water or marsh if you get a story to connect the name to. At the same time, the legend tells us much about folk belief. In these tales, we can expect to find traces of pre-Christian belief. In addition, the legend stimulates to the imaginative and wonder over the story's mysteries, and has therefore a strong aesthetic dimension.

The first humble beginning for this work was during the 1990s period, when at the teacher education class I started to write about legends under the subject "Oral tales". I experienced a strong engagement from the students' side when I treated this material in the lectures – and seminar hours. Most of them had something to contribute to when it came to tales in the span between the rational and the mysterious.

6. PROCESS ORIENTED WRITING

In the work with the theme *legend* I start by teaching about the process orientated writing (POW)¹⁰. Process oriented writing bases itself in the fact that writing is not a linear process, but an expansion of good texts growing forth through your own rewrites and improvements. The process in the writing work is the most important element. This method of writing is a creative process that moves forth through five parts or stages: prescribing, drafting, revising, scriptwriting, and evaluating. I give a brief introduction to the theoretical part in order to underline a little about what thoughts lie underneath. It is the actual practical performance which gets the most focus. This work method demonstrates exactly what is the main intent with POW.

¹⁰ Dysthe, O. (1999). *Words on new tracks. Introduction to process-oriented writing pedagogy*. The Norwegian Samlaget.

Hekneby, G. (2003). *Disc read write – the beginner education in Norway*. University Publisher. Skjelbred, D. (1999). *The student's text – a basis for writing education*. Cappelen Academical Publisher.

I start by writing the keyword “legend” on the blackboard and ask each of the students to write down on a piece of paper five key words that they associate with “legend”. They write down the words that come to their minds without putting too much thought into it. This part of the process within POW is called *brainstorming* or *idemyldring* (in Norwegian). The reason that I use this type of method is that I want students to contribute with the class’ collective knowledge about legends before I start teaching. They receive a sense of ownership to this obtained knowledge, and come well prepared to my lectures. When the students have written down the keywords, some of them will be asked to step up to the blackboard and write down the keywords they have chosen. When the board is full of keywords, two of the students will be assigned a secretary role where they, in dialogue with the student group, will receive the responsibility to categorize the individual words into different groups with the most belonging. This must be regarded as a form of dispositioning. The students are supposed to write a short individual non-fiction text with *legend* as a basis point within the keywords. Which keywords or word group they choose, they decide. Under the editing process on the blackboard the student secretary takes a hold of the word at the top left, and places an A in front of it. Then they look at the word below and try to decide if that word also should have an A in front of it, or perhaps it will be a B because the meaning in this word separates itself too much from the first one. Here there is always a loud debate, a choir of many different voices, discussing which groups the individual word belongs to. It is, of course, a given that the keywords have kinship, given that they derive from one overarching word (legend), but here there is talk of placing close “relatives” of words into the different groups to achieve a certain order. As a teacher, I help the students in the beginning with the division of words, but the principle is caught on quickly, and they take over the whole process eagerly. The dialogue with the rest of the students, concerning where different words need sorting, leads to a good chunk of discussions and a lot of laughing, and that is how it must be when the work process is good.

After the students have made themselves acquainted with what typically classifies as legend and learned about the different legend types through the definitions, I give them examples of legends belonging to the different categories. Many students have naturally an acceptable familiarity with legends, but now they receive repetition and deepened understanding within the genre in a different manner than before and become, to a higher degree, more conscious about the different types of legends that exist, but with a different twist than they know from before. Through the meeting with the legend texts, they can become more acquainted with different cultures of faith and receive an exciting insight to this part of our cultural history.

Students gain knowledge about how legends occur, and what can be defined as a legend. This has later led to students searching – having only examples of legends – from where they hail from. In such a perspective, it has worked positively that local legends are emphasized. These orally traditionalized tales are anchored to local places and have name-given people. The legends have a force and ground structure in themselves which often makes it possible to outlive the teller.

I then often tell students a legend I myself have made. It is important that I, as a teacher, have written a legend myself because it will motivate the students to write their own. A “carrot” for some of the less passionate students, the ones who do not have a particular relationship to legends, can be telling them they can save the legend they are about to write and use it on a later occasion, when they receive a class of their own in primary school and have to teach about legends. Because students are obligated to write their own legend, then they are also required to really research what a legend is, what type of folk poetry this is, what kind of build-up applies to this type of storytelling, and what kind of tools serve a purpose for the tale.

Before I start to lecture about a legend, I draw on the blackboard a map over the area for the current event, sometimes I show cards or photography with pictures from the place. Names of the main characters and important years and dates are also written on the blackboard.

Quite a few students think it is challenging working with legends. It may, in the beginning, seem like a huge barrier to write your very own legend. However, once they have received more knowledge on how to make their own tale, one can see the eagerness and joy light up their faces as they gradually start to feel mastery. When the students go to make their own legend, they will approach the matter in different ways depending on their “point of view” in relation to the legend they are going to write. When a student writes down the first draft, they will receive response¹¹ from fellow students, who question the text. The questions can be written under the text as a grade, or the comments can be written in the paper margin and can point towards specific sections or sentences that are deemed illogical or have deficient formulations. How many rounds of response are given, it depends on the quality of the text. There are, however, also many students who flesh out the final product in one take. They feel it is natural to do it this way, and have little respect for following the principles that exist in process oriented pedagogical writing. These students can work for a long time with their product, but they think in details and wholeness at the same time while they snail their way

¹¹ To give and receive response of own and other’s text is one of the points within POW.

towards their goal. My experience in connection to this type of work over many years is that it is particularly the male students who work this way. They are often more product-oriented, while the conversations, the response along the way play a more important role with the female students on their way towards the goal. This is something the students themselves, of both genders, confirm in their answers to questions I have made concerning the process of creating legends. Regardless what writing method or writing process the students choose, I, as a teacher, will still deliver the last response, with the last comments to the processed final text when it comes to content and shape. Language errors on word level is something I consider as elementary errors that exist within the surface structure. These are corrected at the end and thus belong to the fine polish of the final document that is to be read by others, and yes, it might even be published. Language faults within the syntax may be far more of a serious blow, for example, if the utterances are of the imprecise and of the illogical kind. Here it is not easy to determine initially whether there is a lack of knowledge about a topic or if there is a lack of a way to express oneself that makes the formulation unclear. These types of utterances is something respondents at an early stage, in any case, will come to comment on. This is why one should converse with students about the upcoming problems before they start giving response. Generally, it is thus, according to Dysthe, that language errors to the least possible extent should be pointed out in the first write-through, as it can remove the concentration away from the primary, namely that the main focus should lie on precisely as possible express one's intent with the story.

Through the work with legends, the student becomes aware of one's own or other culture, receiving an improvement of one's own writing ability whether it is through the process oriented writing or not. The work piece from start to finish emits a priceless learning experience of one's own creative work. The sense of dissemination becomes honed through one's own writing and the response one receives. Experience and knowledge of how cohesion and group processes are part of the same deal.

7. GATHERING

I have, for many years, travelled around and interviewed informants when I was collecting legends. In interview with informants, I used an audio recorder or I wrote down that which had been said. In meeting with unknown informants, I have sometimes waited until the people have talked themselves warm, and then the stories would usually come up.

The students have been important contributors in this work; they have interviewed older relatives and friends, and thus they have gathered in many stories. I have done linguistic and literary adaptation work on the texts that students have written. For a good amount of the students, this is the first literary text they have ever written down, so it is understandable that many of them require some help getting started. One of my intentions in connection to this legend project has been how I want to make way so that students can contribute to this type of FOU-work, that is to say, how to improve the students' effort.

8. TRADITIONS OF LEGENDS

Northern Norway is a region where the tradition of legends is alive and well. Here one can still find many good storytellers even though the number for the last 40 years have for several reasons dwindled. Many students have listened to legends from when they were young and think therefore it is exciting to work with this type of story, but as the old legends are not passed onto the newer generations, some students have experienced that there is no one who knows of the legends they heard themselves when they were kids. The students sit with only fragments of their "childhood legends" and must often choose to drop improving on the story any further, because there are no resources to work with. Once the realization strikes them that the tale they once heard in its macro structure is gone forever, it might give them a sour feeling because fragments of the tale could in one way or another have hooked itself into their minds and become a part of their upbringing, a piece of identity.

To work with legends can be both exciting, but also challenging. To ask a student to find a newer legend from one's home region can sometimes present itself as a difficult task. There were quite a few students who sighed long and deep when they received as an assignment to get a hold of a legend. These students did not come from a home where a living tradition of telling legends was strong. They never had grandparents who told mysterious and strange stories. Neither was there a tradition in the local environment to tell such stories. In these cases, the students received help from fellow students who knew of multiple legends, and in that way, they could also act as informants. When I start working with legends along with a new class of students, I often have to keep in mind I am working with a different group of students. All students do not share an open relationship with legends. This relationship also has something to do with which parts of Norway the students come from.

When the students receive an assignment to write a legend, there is always more of them who right away say that they themselves have never experienced anything supernatural or strange, and have never heard of anything like it. This however usually turns out to be untrue. It turns out, when I speak more closely with the student and list some examples of motives of supernatural, such as ghosts (dead people who could not find rest in their own graves)¹² and fortune-telling, that the student suddenly remembers having heard one or more stories while growing up after all. I can then ask the student to reach out to the informant (relatives, friends and others) who told this story. It can however turn out that when the student contacts the informant, that even this person has forgotten a part of his or her own story because there has not been a gathering for this kind of stories in a long time. A good part of the old and natural storytelling culture has become lost, and many of the old who still live have not held this ability alive. So what does a student do in such case? It is clear that an inadequate tale will lead to the first draft of the legend lacking in, for example, the huge descriptions of mood or tone that was once conveyed and can no longer be recalled. What do I do as teacher in this case? Usually, I can ask questions that can open up for reflection around the content components that are missing or should be altered, but with a direction that leads the student “to walk most of the path by him or herself”. Then the student can dare to go on and re-write the text with a bigger sense of artistic freedom, conveying the place and the mood as remembered when hearing the story as a young person. It is, however, important that the red-thread in the mystical content, such as the informant conveyed it, remains intact with concern to the legend’s “truth”. The legend is not pure fiction, but describes how one person has experienced a supposed event and how he has interpreted it.

9. LEGEND GIVES KNOWLEDGE

To work with a legend can give a student a better understanding of the storytelling tradition that exists within the region it hails from. The collecting of folklore, thus, also becomes a search for its own roots¹³. Legends can make one look outside and around oneself, but also to look back in time. The geographical knowledge

¹² Gaarder, I.M. (1992). *Spells and draug-tongue. About spirits in Norwegian folklore and fairy tales*. J.W. Cappelen Publisher.

¹³ Arntzen, R., Danielsen, R., & Lyhmann, K. (2001). *Suddenly, there was a tale. About stories and storytellers*. College of Østfold.

concerning the area may partly become greater. Through working with a text, one gains a greater awareness of what kind of elements are important to a tale. A student will understand that just because he or she has a good plot, it will still not be sufficient to make a good story. A lush environment setting and a necessary character description is required. Based on a communication model¹⁴ (sender – medium – receiver) will this insight as “the author experience” contribute to (the sender function), which will lead to the student also expanding his competence when analysing a legend (the receiving function). This “inside knowledge” that the student has acquired in connection with writing his own legend has helped him gain more knowledge such as, for example, analysing a legend, because the roles of “author” and “critical reader” present a better text and genre understanding (competence).

10. WHAT HAS IT BEEN LIKE TO WORK WITH LEGENDS?

Legends must have a human source. A human might have a hidden experience within himself that hooked itself into the corner of the mind. Through the years this story may have matured and developed itself due to interaction with different realities. There are many ways one can approach collecting legends. One can memorize one’s own “supernatural” experience and write it down. If one is to interview informants, one can use a Dictaphone and record the conversation onto tape. Afterwards, one can work by writing down the whole event on paper. Here it becomes important to include keywords and key phrases and make a writable text in its own language uniform. It can be linguistically demanding to rework an oral conversation to writable text without losing the immediate, spontaneous utterances that exist in an oral expression. If one has interviewed somebody, then the writing process consists of converting oral material to written text and at the same time trying to keep the oral flow.

A student¹⁵ describes with empathy how a legend can come into a written form:

*My legend I wrote down a Saturday night this fall. Late in the evening,
I received company from my cousin and her nephew. They hail from a place*

¹⁴ 2000–2014, Kunnskapssenteret.com. The linear communication model views all form of communication as a process.

¹⁵ The student’s name has been removed and the tale has changed – name and location are removed.

nearby, where the legend was collected from, they are accustomed that tales go from word of mouth and they gladly tell what they know or have heard. After several tales, the one crazier than the other, they started to speak of huldra and what people in the area had experienced of her. I was forced to stop them once they were done with the first tale of huldra, so I could find myself a piece of paper and pencil. Afterwards, I got them to tell with detailed depictions of the legend I wanted to write down, for example, what did the location look like where the legend took place? Other questions related to the depiction were: How did things happen and what had happened? We went through the legend chronologically from beginning to end, then I was forced to make some big changes from the oral to the written text. My challenge was then to write down the legend as detailed as possible. Late at night my cousin and her nephew left. After countless stories, and thereto countless cups of coffee, was my head filled up, and the caffeine held me awake for the rest of that night. Thus did I manage to write this legend down with the tale still fresh in mind.

11. INTERVIEW FORMS

If one interviews somebody over the telephone without using a Dictaphone, one can jot down keywords during the phone conversation and then write out the story based on what one remembers. If one knows the informant from before or has good dialogue with the person, one can suggest to the storyteller to write down some important information about the legend that can supply the interview material. One can, if possible, call the informant again to get new information or check if all of the old information still rings true, that is to say, it was written just how it happened. If the informant does not have sufficient information, one can interview others who live closer to the legend's location. Even if they know little about the legend or have not heard of it, they are still from the place and are familiar with the natural landscape and the societal conditions, and thus will be helpful for the setting.

When it comes to so-called "family legends", that is stories experienced only by a family and told inside of it, the legend writer who belongs within the family can interview several of the family members. After having heard different varieties of the same event, the collector writes down a legend where he has made a selection of moments. A mysterious or dramatic event can thus be the origin to more variables of a legend.

If one is to interview an informant from one's home region, and the one interviewing has heard one variant of the tale beforehand, it can be an advantage. Even though the informant tells the version of the factual events, it is reasonable to believe that the questions and dialogue will be good because both of them are familiar to the actual experience. Even though the interviewer has heard a similar tale before, it is still important not to leave anything to coincidences when the parts meet. During the interview, one should check and confirm that, for instance, year and name of locations are completely accurate. If the informant has a lively way to convey stories in, the writing process and the actual design of the text will become a fast and efficient process. This will undoubtedly improve the text's quality if the interviewer incorporates parts of the informant's tale in his own.

So whenever possible, I will advise my individual student that he or she writes down one legend from his/her home place. The work will then be extra rewarding because one feels that one also goes back in time in one's own life and investigates their own footprints. In this perspective, legends become a sort of investigation into one's own and others' lives. Legends brought forth today often present moral dilemma: What, for example, did people living in one specific place during the 1980s think about a particular situation or event. In this way it would be revealed what was the custom and tradition and "play rules" that mattered in the region between people in a given historical moment. The student who grew up and was young during this period might still receive a bigger understanding of how his or her thoughts were developed and what is still applicable in adulthood.

If one interviews an informant and does not know or have not been to the location where the event happened, one should often do particularly good ground work (read up on the place or preferably seek it out) before the interview takes place in order to ask relevant questions. Since one does not even know the setting and the plot, one should make sure to include as much as possible. One becomes more dependent on the linguistic articulation of the factual conditions from the informant. A good result in such cases depends on how knowledgeable and how good of a conveyer the storyteller is.

When one later is to write the oral tale, one stands, amongst other things, in front of this dilemma: Should one write down the legend exactly as it was told, or should one take liberties? If one chooses the first alternative, it presupposes that one deals with a good and experienced storyteller who knows his material well. Interviewing a seasoned storyteller often gives us double winnings. This informant will help a young student get a thorough insight into the local conditions. In addition, the legend becomes conveyed in a lively way. Here the student will face a choice as to how much of the dialect, the local expressions, he wants to include

into the written text so it does not compromise the reading comprehension for people in other geographical areas.

12. DOCUMENTATION OF TRADITIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE POSTERITY

The main wish with this project has been to preserve some of this traditional material and to make it available for audience and documenting tradition for posterity, as a contribution to the North Norwegian cultural history. The questions one can ask concerning this material, are many. What inspired you in the past and present? Are there “red threads”? How and why was the creativity urge so big that tales were created? One can also ask more specific questions, like: Is there a common denominator in the North Norwegian tales? Are there, for example, similarities between tales from Norway and nearby countries? Such questions have partly been confirmed in form of answers in some of my earlier articles¹⁶. I mention this here because I wish to underline the legends’ importance as culture-bearing tales¹⁷.

13. FINDINGS

This project has contributed to new knowledge. I have – with legend material as basis – made some interesting findings, amongst other things I have found quite a number of newer huldra legends from urban environments, something that is not too common. In addition, I can conclude that certain parts of Northern Norway have a mystical legend tradition (Inner Finnmark, Northern Troms, and Senja, to name a few), while there is not so much of this in other areas (for example, in Inner Troms).

In the collected material, one can find many legends from the North of Norway, naturally enough since the UiT, the arctic university, “lives and breathes” here. However, in other parts of Norway legends are still told as part of tradition to this day. Students who hail from these places prove this to be correct, based on the legends they have written down after interviews conducted in home area. In this way, I have gained an overview and become capable of comparing the legends from different regions with one another. The other thing is that, in my collection

¹⁶ E.g., Drannikova, N., & Larsen, R. (2008). Representations of the Chudes in Norwegian and Russian Folklore. *Acta Borealia: A Nordic Journal of Circumpolar Societies*, 25 (1), 58–72.

¹⁷ Danielsen, R. (2003). *Culture bearing tales, children and schools*. Cappelen Damm.

work, I am only interested in gathering legends that are told from word of mouth to this day. If some of these legends are only variants of earlier legends, it does not matter, as long as they are still told today. I only want the oral sources, not the written ones, as basis for the write-down. The collection of this large amount of legends that has been gathered shows that legends still live. Some legends with mystical content were conveyed almost the same way a 100 years ago as they are today, for example the legend of “The man in Ausa”¹⁸, an older legend from Mid-Troms that many students have written down in different variants. Some legends that are collected only exist in one place, and we call these “place legends”, while other legends have wandered and are possible to find in many places. They are thus known as “wandering legends”¹⁹.

Even though the legends disappear more and more into the modern society, the collection work has proven that the oral storytelling is still alive. The old legends still exist in many different varieties, and in addition, there are still newer stories still appearing. I was surprised to find so many newer tales in the material. The newer legends are, according to Olav Solberg²⁰, about things in the modern society, and the most important symbols in this society show up in the tales. One of these symbols is the car, and a typical legend of newer date is the different variants of the legend of “the Hitchhiker”, the ghost who hikes and who suddenly in an unexplained way sits in your car. Solberg says that this wandering legend originates from America. I have found quite a few variants of this material myself.

Many of the newer legends have their outgrowth from World War II. In the legend material, there are legends that tell of rooms or places haunted by ghosts of German soldiers. In Tromsø we find a variant of this in the tale named “The German at Tromstun”.

The “Memorats” are personal tales of unexplained experiences, and look a lot like newer legends. “Memorat”, in folklore science²¹, is an oral tale that builds on personal memories and have a legend-like character. In the legend material, there are many newer legends and memorats, and the motives from the old legends still wander into these new tales to a very great extent. After lunar trips and the

¹⁸ «Mannen i Ausa»: A ghastly legend where two brothers used human flesh as fish-bait.

¹⁹ Drannikova, N., & Larsen, R.. (2007). *In the footprints of Chuds. Chuds in historical sources, predanies and legends of Northern Norway and Arkhangelsk Oblast*. Arctic Publisher. The example of a wandering legend is the one about Chuds, who has its roots in the Middle Ages and concerns bandits who travel all the way to the North of Norway. This legend has later wandered, and we find the same plot again, but in different contexts, all over Scandinavia and in Northwest Russia.

²⁰ Solberg, O., 1999, p. 40.

²¹ *The Big Norwegian Encyclopedia* (2009). Consultant for this article: Olav Bø.

Internet, there are still young people in Norway who firmly believe that they have seen huldra or someone from “the underground”.

In my legend material, there are quite a few motives that reappear. Here are some examples:

(1) The poor Sami who use sorcery against the rich, but unmerciful Norwegian, (2) “The Pathfinder motive”: a pathfinder, often a Sami, tricks intruders or bandits from the East (Russians or Kveeni) by leading them to their deaths, (3) child cry from a dead child (outcarry)²² who was not buried in blessed earth, and (4) bothersome ghosts who, for different reasons, cannot rest in their graves.

The legend texts constitutes clearly that the largest part of the traditional oral genres are still alive in the mouths of people. Even so, legends have been neglected in education, unlike fairy tales, myths, and fables. Maybe this is because legend traditionally is seen as more historical than literature. The historical legend ties itself to a historical event, and this led to the fact that first legend gatherers perceived all legends as historical sources. The standards that are demanded today of historical sources dismiss the legend as historical resources²³. But it is perhaps the legend which is the most exciting of the oral genres. And not least, it is the legend that is alive, which still is produced in newer variants. The legend that makes us wonder over the mysteries of life, which makes us shudder and wonder if there is something on the side of the sensible reality.

Legends are oral tales that have been transferred over from generation to generation. The tradition is kept alive because, amongst other things, it gives people some space to breathe from their own everyday life. By either reading or listening to a tale, one goes, figuratively speaking, into another room, a cubicle, where the “game rules” are different. This change of space gives perspective, pastime, and peace of mind. Our modern world does not give us enough space to listen. In a legend, we can let the fantasy and the wonder live, and maybe there exists more between heaven and earth than what we like to admit to ourselves? Many of the legends that take the supernatural as a theme, have a strong pull on our minds despite that the strange events cannot be explained purely scientifically, or perhaps that is exactly why? Maybe it is as the Tromsø author Brynjulf Bjørklid

²² Storjord, T. (1991). *Folk tales and legends*. College of Bodø. Outcarry = actually “the one who is carried out”. In the folklore across the country, both among Nordic people and the Sami, children who died at birth and were buried in unblessed soil are dubbed “outcarries”. The child was maybe killed after birth. After an outcarry received a name, it could rest in peace.

²³ Hauan, M.A., & Bolstad Skjelbred, A.H. (1995). *Between legend and reality in the North Norwegian tradition*. Wit & Knowledge.

writes in the novel *Puma*²⁴: “Science and methodical planning does not answer everything, and one can even receive too much space. There is always something one cannot predict or control”.

14. CONCLUSION

What can legends tell the modern people today?

Legends are an important part of the cultural heritage that children and adults should be acquainted with. The modern human today receives benefits from working with legends because it creates a wonder within the busy weekday, safeguarding traditions and builds bridges between generations. Legends fascinate us because they remind us that we cannot explain everything rationally.

Legends’ contribution to our lives is the feeling of a sense of belonging to different places. We receive more knowledge about our ancestors, and at the same time local history. Legends have survived through generations by being told orally from person to person. Legend has been used, for example, for entertainment purposes and upbringing. The tales tell us that humans always have been fascinated by the unexplained, and events that cannot be explained, and have thus become good tales with a great entertainment value. Legends from earlier times give us insight to the people’s faith, and how people viewed different phenomena back then. Legend does not necessarily have to concern itself with older times, but to the highest degree, it can have its origin in the newer times. In the article, I have shown how one can better present legends to children. They understand the culture’s tales because they are oral in their thought structure.

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