

The *Historia Norwegiae* as a Shamanic Source

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The earliest account of Sámi (Lappish) – and indeed any – shamanism was recorded by a Norwegian historian in the twelfth century in the *Historia Norwegiae* (*HN*). It is, ostensibly at least, of value to students of shamanism both for its age and its apparent reliability as what we might term an ethnographic document. This reliability stems in part from its particularity: unlike most of the later accounts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which are generalised descriptions of the shaman's activities, the *HN* merely presents what was seen by certain Norwegians on one particular occasion (if we trust the narrative).

The text is as follows (Storm 1880: 85–6); the translation is my own:

Horum itaque intollerabilis perfidia vix cuiquam credibilis videbitur, quantumve diabolicae superstitionis in magica arte exercent. Sunt namque quidam ex ipsis, qui quasi prophetae a stolido vulgo venerantur, quoniam per immundum spiritum, quem gandum vocitant, multis multa praesagia ut eveniunt quandoque percunctati praedicunt; et de longinquis provinciis res concupiscibiles miro modo sibi alliciunt nec non absconditos thesauros longe remoti mirafice produunt. Quadam vero vice dum christiani causa commercii apud Finnos ad mensam sedissent, illorum hospita subito inclinata expiravit; unde christianis multum dolentibus non mortuam sed a gaudis aemulorum esse depraedatam, sese illam cito adepturos ipsi Finni nihil contristati respondent. Tunc quidam magus extenso panno, sub [Storm emends to super] quo se ad profanas veneficas incantationes praeparat, quoddam vasculum ad modum taratantarorum sursum erectis manibus extulit, cetinis atque cervinis formulis cum loris et ondriolis navicula etiam cum remis occupatum, quibus vehiculis per alta nivium et devexa montium vel profunda stagnorum ille diabolicus gaudus uteretur. Cumque diutissime incantando tali apparatu ibi saltasset, humo tandem prostratus totusque niger ut Aethiops, spumans ora ut puta freneticus, praeruptus ventrem vix aliquando cum maximo fremore emisit spiritum. Tum alterum in magica arte peritissimum consuluerunt, quid de utrisque actum sit. Qui simili modo sed non eodem eventu suum implevit officium, namque hospita sana surrexit et defunctum magum tali eventu interisse eis intimavit: gandum videlicet ejus in cetinam effigiem inmaginatum ostico gando in praecutas sudes transformato, dum per quoddam stagnum velocissime prosiliret, malo omine obviasset, quia in stagni ejusdem profundo sudes latitantes exacti ventrem perforabant; quod et in mago domi mortuo apparuit.

Moreover their intolerable paganism, and the amount of devilish superstition they practise in their magic, will seem credible to almost no one. For there are some of them who are venerated as prophets by the ignorant populace, since by means of an unclean spirit that they call a *gandus* they predict many things to many people, both as they are happening, and when delayed; and they draw desirable things to themselves from far off regions in a wondrous way, and amazingly, though themselves far away, they produce hidden treasures. By some chance while some Christians were sitting at the table amongst the Sámi for the sake of trade their hostess suddenly bowed over and died; hence the Christians mourned greatly, but were told by the Sámi, who were not at all distressed, that she was not dead but stolen away by the *gandi* of rivals, and they would soon get her back. Then a magician stretched out a cloth, under which he prepared himself for impious magic incantations, and with arms stretched up lifted a vessel like a tambourine, covered in diagrams of whales and deer with bridles and snow-shoes and even a ship with oars, vehicles which that devilish *gandus* uses to go across the depths of snow and slopes of mountains or the deep waters. He

chanted a long time and jumped about with this piece of equipment, but then was laid flat on the ground, black all over like an Ethiopian, and foaming from the mouth as if wearing a bit. His stomach was ripped open and with the loudest roaring ever he gave up the ghost. Then they consulted the other one who was versed in magic about what had happened to them both. He performed his job in a similar way but not with the same outcome – for the hostess rose up hale – and indicated that the deceased sorcerer had perished by the following sort of accident: his *gandus*, transformed into the shape of a water beast, had by ill luck struck against an enemy's *gandus* changed into sharpened stakes as it was rushing across a lake, for the stakes lying set up in the depths of that same lake had pierced his stomach, as appeared on the dead magician at home.

Despite the vividness of this description, it is only right and natural to question the reliability, or at least the bias, of the account. My starting point here is a comment made by John McKinnell (2003: 115) from the perspective of Norse (rather than shamanic) scholarship: 'This passage probably represents Norse beliefs about Saami magic rather than the reality of it, for the word *gandr* does not exist in the Saami language.' This, of course, poses a question for consideration: how far do the Norse perceptions and the description of the event represent something consistent with what we know of Sámi shamanism from elsewhere, on the basis of which a picture, albeit only a partial one, has been built up of how the Sámi themselves perceived their shamanic activities?

The Social function of the shaman

The shaman is an intermediary between this world and the spirit world (Siikala 1978: 321); he communicates between the two worlds in order to resolve a critical situation, and he manifests the presence of the spirits by means of role-play during trance. Clearly, this is a role fulfilled by the shamans of *HN*.

The shaman exercised various functions (B&H: 15–17), some of which do not appear in *HN*, namely **psychopomp**, **hunting magician** and **sacrificial priest**, since the particular purpose of the séance here did not match these. The account mentions two other roles of the shaman without exemplifying them in the events described. **Foretelling** is recognised as a shamanic role in many societies, but amongst the Sámi seems to play a minor role. The emphasis on foretelling in *HN* is perhaps influenced by the role of witches in the author's own society; foretelling is recorded as playing a major part in the magic practice known as *seiðr* (dealt with at length in Strömbäck 1935). **Recovering distant objects** is ascribed to Sámi shamans, for example in the popular tale of how a Sámi who, during trance, brought a ring from a person's distant home (B&H: 46). Olaus Magnus (1555: 121) also tells of this skill; it has clearly been a well-known folk-tale motif in Nordic regions since antiquity. Neither of these two roles, whilst they are consistent with the activities of shamans of later times, can be regarded as specifically Sámi as opposed to general Scandinavian characteristics.

The main part of the *HN* account exemplifies the shaman's role as **doctor**. Sickness has two main causes: soul-loss, involving for the shaman a trance journey to the otherworld to retrieve the lost soul, as well as bargaining with the dead who are holding the soul, for example by promising sacrifices; and intrusion of an object or spirit, involving for the shaman the summoning, usually without trance, of the

shaman's helping spirits, who help to remove the intrusion. Whilst the death of the first shaman in the *HN* account results from a very literal intrusion of an object, in the form of a sharpened stake, this takes place while he is in trance: the activities of both shamans in the account may be classified as dealing with cases of soul-loss.

In addition, the shamanic role of *contender* is illustrated by the *HN* account, as it involves contention in the spiritual realm between rival shamans – the hostess, or her soul, is stolen away by enemy shaman spirits, and an enemy shaman spirit transforms itself into stakes (clearly with the aim of injuring whale spirits).

The purposes of the events described by the Norwegian historian are, then, in themselves consistent with Sámi shamanism as recorded later. There are, however, some strange aspects to the event, which I will come to presently. First, however, I present a point-by-point comparison between the Sámi *séance* as known from later sources and what the *HN* relates.

The *séance*

The sequence of the Sámi *séance* is analysed by B&H (1978: 97–101); I give a summary here. This is a composite analysis, and not all the elements were present in all places and on all occasions. Differences between accounts indicate that *séances* themselves differed, but the following represents a framework within which these variations occurred.

1. The shaman prepared himself for a day beforehand by fasting.
2. The drum was brought in through the sacred door of the hut opposite the ordinary entrance.
3. The shaman took an intoxicant (lye or brandy).
4. He undressed himself and sat naked.
5. He beat the drum and started singing.
6. He was accompanied by the men and women present, the men in a high and the women in a low voice; the singing (*juoigos*) was mostly inarticulate, but included words referring to the places to be visited by the shaman in trance, or to details of the journey.
7. The shaman ran around like a madman, holding glowing embers and cutting himself.
8. After the shaman had drummed for at most quarter of an hour, he turned black, walked on his knees with his hands on his hips, sang a *juoigos* in a high voice, and fell down exhausted as if dead.
9. The shaman stopped breathing; during the trance, his free-soul wandered from his body. The return of his breathing indicated he was leaving trance. The depth of the trance corresponded to the extent of his freedom in the spirit realms. The trance lasted a half to one hour.
10. Destinations of the shaman's soul included:
 - a. The land of the dead, to retrieve the souls of the sick, or bring back a spirit to guard the reindeer herds.
 - b. Other supernatural places (*Saiva*), to gather information.
 - c. Distant places in this world.
 - d. Possibly also heaven.
11. When sending out helping spirits to fight, the shaman seems to have entered trance.
12. The journey of the shaman's free-soul took place in the company of his helping spirits. The *Saiva leddie* bird guided the shaman's spirit down to the underworld, and sped him back afterwards. The shaman rode on the back of the *Saiva guelie* fish to the underworld; it helped

the shaman fight the dead when wresting the sick person's soul from them, and in one account the fish was responsible for the actual stealing of the soul, as well as for guarding the shaman throughout the trance (S. Kildal 1807: 456).

13. Watchmen guarded the shaman's body whilst he was in trance; these probably consisted of a special choir. At the beginning of the séance all those present seem to have taken part in the singing, but a special choir was appointed for continuing operations, consisting of one or more women. Singing continued throughout the séance, the purpose being to remind the shaman of his mission, but some sources indicate that the singing was concentrated or confined to the final stages of the trance, with the aim of waking the shaman, a task for which one girl took responsibility. As this involved searching for the shaman's soul, she must herself have gone into trance. Another shaman was also able to wake a shaman from trance.

14. As the shaman came round, the choir started to sing again, and he rose, put the drum to his ear and beat it slowly; he then stopped and sat thinking, before recounting his journey, and what sacrifice he had had to promise to secure the soul of the sick person.

15. He also praised the girl who woke him and sang to her, alluding to his genitals and her sexual qualities.

The *HN* account appears to follow, in outline, the above sequence, and there is, allowing for local and temporal variation, arguably nothing in it which contradicts it.

1. The *HN* shaman prepares himself under a cloak, though not for a day, as the situation was one of urgency.
2. We are not told of a drum being brought from anywhere; it was probably already present with the shamans.
3. We are not told of any intoxicant being taken, but the participants began by sitting at table. It is uncertain, in any case, how ancient the tradition of inebriation was.
4. The shaman does not appear to sit naked, but rather to use a cloth in some fashion to begin the séance. This is not met with in later accounts of male shamans; however, Leem (1767: 476) notes that the women helpers of the shaman wore a 'linen hat' on their head, and modern traditions of the shamaness Rijkuo-Maja mention her spreading a veil over her head when shamanising (Lundmark 1987: 160). The nearest shamanic neighbours to the Sámi, the Samoyeds, used a handkerchief to cover their eyes while shamanising, since this was believed to increase spiritual sight (Mikhailovskii 1895: 81).
5. The shaman beats a drum and sings for some time. These incantations correspond to the *juoigos* singing of later accounts (B&H: 101).
6. There is no indication of any accompanying choir or participation by others present (this may simply be unnoted), unless this was the intended role of the 'hostess'.
7. The shaman jumps about, as is well evidenced in later accounts (B&H: 97).
8. The shaman turns black and collapses, the first shaman indeed dying, not just seeming to be dead. The description of the shaman's trance given by Graan (1899: 59–60, written 1672) is particularly close to the *HN*, for he tells us that the shaman turned black before falling into trance – a natural occurrence, given the restricted breathing involved.
9. The trance has to be inferred: the collapse of the first shaman was clearly part of the ritual, which however then went wrong, and the events described by the second shaman took place in the spirit realm, which must have been visited in trance. The collapse of the hostess also indicates trance, though caused by soul-theft rather than controlled soul-emission. The lifting up of the arms before going into trance is mentioned by Leem (1767: 477).
10. The main destination is somewhat difficult to determine, and this may reflect Norwegian ignorance of these details. However, a soul is normally stolen down to the world of the dead, and the shaman would customarily be accompanied by a fish helping spirit on his journey

thither. The fatal encounter in the water therefore probably took place on the way to the underworld.

11. As noted, trance has to be inferred, but appears to have taken place at the main junctures in the account.

12. The question of the shamanic helping spirits in the *HN* is a complex one, which I consider below.

13. It appears the Norwegians did not appreciate the specific roles of those present, and these cannot be reconstructed, beyond suggesting that one of the shamans, and perhaps the hostess, may have functioned as supporters of the main shaman. It is rather odd to find a group of merchants entertained by a woman; given the important role of the girl who wakes the shaman from trance in Sámi shamanism, it may plausibly be suggested that the 'hostess' was such a functionary, and furthermore, given that this function could also be performed by a second shaman, her presence as well as that of the second shaman may be explained by assuming that the whole event was intended as a *séance* from the beginning (whether or not the Norwegians were aware of the arrangement), and that something went wrong, necessitating the course of events described, or else that the whole scenario was stage-managed as suggested above.

14. The second shaman recounts what happened on the spirit journey once it is completed (cf. B&H: 102).

15. The girl, or hostess, is mentioned, but rather as a recovered patient than as a helper.

The points of comparison are enough to show that the Norwegian account must represent reasonably accurately an actual course of events. However, some problematic issues arise, partly from the complexity of the particular *séance* described, and partly from the bias of perception.

1. The set-up of the meeting is odd:

a. The meeting, devoted to trade, is hosted by a woman, who is unlikely to have had a trading role, but might have had an essential assistant role in a shamanic *séance*.

b. There are two shamans present – spiritual practitioners, not tradesmen.

c. While soul-loss was a recognised phenomenon among the Sámi, it is fortuitous that it occurred precisely when the Norwegians were visiting.

d. The soul-loss of the hostess occurred in an unusually sudden manner, and that of the shaman in an even more dramatic fashion; the latter in particular is almost too good to be true: it is known that the Sámi believed that injuries, even death, would be seen on a shaman in trance whose spirit combatant suffered whilst fighting, but the *HN* appears to be the only documentary evidence for this actually happening, suggesting that it was rather an act of trickery to fulfil ritual expectations – though the possibility that the shaman actually died, under the firm expectation that this might happen to him, cannot be completely dismissed.

Several possibilities suggest themselves:

a. The events took place precisely as described, and the fortuity of the four points above was just that – chance.

b. The Norwegians deliberately attended a shamanic *séance* out of interest, then misinformed the writer of the history about their intentions.

c. The Sámi deliberately, but perhaps surreptitiously, arranged the *séance* for their Norwegian visitors; the aim would be a demonstration of their superiority in the field of magic, the only area in which they were recognised as excelling their otherwise more powerful overlords, with a view to securing a better trading deal.

The last option seems the most likely; this does not, however, exclude the possibility that the séance did not go entirely to plan for the Sámi, and some of the actions may indeed have been emergency measures.

However, these reservations about the honesty of the performance, far from calling into question the authenticity of the account, in fact suggest all the more strongly that the Norwegians reported exactly what they saw, or rather, under the Sámi prestidigitation, were supposed to see, even if we concede that their interpretations may sometimes reflect Norse beliefs.

2. Two shamanic events, as evidenced in later accounts, are intertwined in the sequence of the twelfth-century séance, which the later, perhaps simplified, accounts keep apart:
 - a. Shamanic journeys aimed at retrieving souls taken to the otherworld, which always involve the shaman's own soul, and usually involve a helping spirit in fish form;
 - b. Shamanic contests: here, it seems, the shaman went into trance, during which he sent out the helping spirit (usually a reindeer) to fight that of the enemy shaman (his own soul not being involved).

Presumably in the *HN* séance the first shaman did send his soul out; the attack on his helping spirit occurred by accident, not design, and really forms a distinct category not otherwise recorded in Sámi shamanism, rather than the normal ritualised contest. In any case, the differences from later Sámi tradition are not necessarily a sign of Norwegian confusion: the distinction between soul and helping spirit (a sort of alter ego) is fluid, and many of the later accounts confuse their roles to some extent.

3. The manner of the stealing of the hostess's soul – for so we must interpret, from a Sámi point of view, her keeling over as if dead – is unusual in its suddenness, and in the involvement of rival shaman spirits – *gandi æmulorum*; it is usually the dead or evil spirits that were believed to steal people's souls in later Sámi belief (B&H, 15); however, such activities on the part of rival shamans are met elsewhere, for example among the Evenks (Anisimov 1963: 107), and there is no reason to doubt the general authenticity of this information. Nonetheless, soul-loss normally manifests itself in the form of chronic illness; the hostess's sudden demise looks more like the loss of consciousness characteristic of trance, which may again suggest that the hostess had some role to play in a shamanic drama, the precise nature of which eluded the Norwegian onlookers.

4. The obstacle of the stakes is unusual; no parallel appears to exist in the extant records of Sámi shamanism. However, in the Finnish story of Lemminkäinen's shamanic visit to the feast at Päävölä ('Sunland') three obstacles are set in his way, the last of which is an iron fence (Kuusi *et al.* 1977, no. 34); this fence is to be compared to the spiritual *marylya* fence set up by the Evenk shaman to protect the cian lands against incursions by spirits sent by enemy shamans (Anisimov 1963: 107) – the posts of the fence were in fact mobile spirit guardians; if an enemy spirit penetrated it, it would bring disease and death. Clearly a similar idea lies behind the *HN* account, and hints at the complexity of shamanic belief among the Sámi which has left no record in later accounts.

5. The only area where we clearly see Norse conceptions muddying what from a Sámi point of view was actually going on is in the area highlighted by McKinnell: the *gandus*. According to Sámi belief the events described in *HN* must have involved the loss or sending out of three souls (the hostess's, and the two shamans'), yet the writer shows no awareness of the sending out of the free-soul during trance at all. Rather, he sees the séance as a magic ritual for the sending of the *gandus* on its mission. The events may be elucidated by considering Sámi beliefs about the soul and spirits, and how the Norwegian writer has recast the events into something more comprehensible to him.

The soul and shamanic spirits

In common with most peoples of northern Eurasia, the Sámi believed in one or several 'body-souls', responsible for the maintenance of life functions, and a 'free-soul', which could wander free from the body, for example in sleep (Paulson 1958: 38). Everyone was accompanied through life by various spirits (B&H: 41–3); the shaman was distinguished from others by his ability to contact and make use of these spirits, which were of three sorts (Bäckman 1975: 41–3, 160):

1. Anthropomorphic spirits. These gave the shaman his vocation, and at other times information, and a female spirit succoured the shaman, in particular during his initiation.
2. Theriomorphic spirits, or animal helping spirits. They carried out the shaman's bidding on his trance journeys, and might act as escorts or steeds. The shaman sometimes imitated, and sometimes described, these spirits' activities. They were of three main sorts, each with a predominant function: birds (messengers to the anthropomorphic spirits, and guides on trance journeys), fish (guides on journeys to underworld), reindeer (combatants against enemy shaman spirits, with any injuries incurred being reflected on the shaman himself – though Jens Kildal (1943–5: 138–9) notes that any of the spirits could undertake this role).
3. The dead, dwelling underground in a realm ruled over by a powerful old woman. The shaman had to fetch the souls of the sick from this realm.

This categorisation masks a great deal of conceptual fluidity, however; in particular, the dead were often merged with anthropomorphic spirits, and the shaman's own soul with the theriomorphic spirits: for example, the shaman himself is often conceived as taking on the forms of beasts (I. Olsen 1910: 32, Itkonen 1946: 120). There is clearly a basic identity between the shaman and his spirit helpers (B&H: 100). Even from a Sámi perspective, let alone a Norwegian one, the precise nature of the spirits involved in the *HIV* séance would be hard to pin down. Behind the *gandus* we may see something vacillating between the shaman's free-soul wandering during trance and his accompanying helping spirit. The Christian author, however, clearly regards the *gandus* as an evil spirit quite independent of the shaman (or his soul):

1. It is an unclean spirit;
2. It functions as a helping spirit to the shaman, telling him future and present happenings, and enabling him to retrieve distant treasures;
3. Harm to it results in harm to its owner;
4. It can steal people (i.e. their souls, since the body clearly remains stationary);
5. It would travel by means of animals, ships, snow-shoes;
6. It can assume the shape of whales/water beasts and other objects.

In points 1–3 it corresponds to the Sámi animal helping spirits, though it was anthropomorphic spirits that were consulted for information (B&H: 43). In point 4 it corresponds to Sámi helping spirits or the dead. In point 5 it may represent the Sámi shaman's own soul, which could travel on the animal spirits as steeds; ships and snow-shoes are not recorded as spiritual vehicles, and these depictions may have served a different purpose from that assigned by the Norwegian writer. Point 6 either represents a distortion of the animal spirit, which had animal form, but not as a result of transformation, and did not assume other forms, or it may represent the shaman

himself, who in later tradition could transform himself, and take on the form of various beasts (not just those of the helping spirits), though not, as recorded, stakes. A more sophisticated concept may have underlain this feature, in which the (spiritual) stakes are guarded by shamanic spirits, as in the case of the Evenks.

It thus appears that the Norwegian writer has recast and amalgamated various Sámi spirits, both anthropomorphic and theriomorphic, as well as the shaman's free-soul and the dead. This spirit he calls a *gandus*. This is not a Sámi word, but the Old Norse *gandr*.

Just a few observations on the complex concept of the *gandr* can be made here. The *HN* talks of the *gandus* assuming various forms, just as the *gandr* could, whereas the Sámi animal spirits did not do so: *gandr* is used in the sense 'wolf' in a number of kennings (Meissner 1984: 100, 102); the connection between 'wolf' and 'sorcerer spirit' lies in the fact that wolves were witches' steeds. The world serpent is called *Jörmungandr*, 'Mighty *gandr*', in *Völuspá* 47 and in *Ragnarsdrápa* (*Skjaldedigtning* B:I:4), which indicates that the wolf was not the only animal that a *gandr* could appear as.

Some of the earliest occurrences of *gandr* are in *Völuspá*: the *seiðkona* in st. 22 *vitti ganda*, 'summoned *gandir* with a *vétt*' (the *vétt* being some instrument, like a drum, that could be struck: cf. *Lokasenna* 24, where Óðinn struck a *vétt* while practising *seiðr*); in st. 29 Óðinn receives *spáganda* from the *völva*: here the word is used in the sense '[news from] *gandir* of prophecy'. Thus one of the main functions of the *gandr* spirit was to gather information and impart it to the seer(ess) who has summoned it. The emphasis in the concept of the *gandr* on gathering information I believe furnishes a reason for placing this role at the beginning of the description of the skills the Sámi *gandus* conferred in *HN*, whereas in later tradition this is not foremost among the shaman's roles, and is in any case often performed by the shaman's own soul wandering rather than by the helping spirits.

The Norwegian writer was led astray by his knowledge of *seiðr*, the nearest native practice to shamanism, into presenting the *séance* as one in which the shaman performed certain rites to induce the *gandus* into effecting particular things, rather than one in which trance took place, during which the shaman sent his free-soul out of his body. The evidence for sending out the free-soul during trance in *seiðr* is weak: it seems rather to have involved the summoning of spirits to provide information or carry out tasks (*seiðr* as a source of information is found in later sources frequently; for example, in *Fóstbræðra saga* (p. 243) it is said *viða hefi ek göndum rennt í nótt, ok em ek nú vis orðinn þeirra hluta, er ek vissa ekki áðr*, 'I have caused *gandir* to run far in the night, and I have now become wise about those things that I did not know before.' *Eiríks saga rauða* gives the fullest account we have of a *seiðr* *séance* (pp. 206–9), which involves the summoning of spirits who reveal men's fortunes to the fortune-teller. Indeed, the points where the Norwegian fails to understand the Sámi concepts of souls and spirit helpers may be useful indicators of areas in which native Norse magical practices differed from the shamanism of their neighbours – though of course the earlier, pagan understanding of such practices may well have been attenuated or lost with the coming of Christianity.

The drum

The drum of *HN* is said to depict four things: water-beasts, reindeer, snow-shoes and a ship, all of them said to be vehicles of the *gandus*. This interpretation must be approached cautiously. The concept of animal helping spirits travelling on vehicles does not exist among the Sámi; moreover, while the *cetus* is said to be a *vehicle* of the *gandus* when the diagrams are described, the *gandus* later appears *transformed* into a *cetus*. The information seems to represent a vacillation between the animal helping spirits seen as steeds for the shaman's free-soul, and the free-soul transformed into, or more likely accompanied by, the fish helping spirit.

Later drums depicted a plethora of objects and beings, both spiritual and mundane, with varying purposes, some relating to everyday activities such as fishing, others to the spirit journey of the shaman. Precise interpretation of drum images is a source of much contention (Manker's *magnum opus* on the Sámi drum (1938, 1950) remains the standard authority, but his inclination to read pagan spiritual significances into the depictions wherever possible has come under fire in more recent years). The Norwegian writer's interpretation of the images as vehicles of the *gandus* at least indicates the probability that some of the images were related to the shamanic journey, but it is likely that he has lumped them all together under this one roof, and not understood their precise functions with clarity. Thus the interpretation of snow-shoes and ship may have been influenced by Norse traditions, where the magical ship *Skíðblaðnir* was the vehicle of Óðinn or Freyr, and Ullr was the 'snow-shoe god' (*önduráss*).

Conclusion

The Norwegian writer (and probably his informants) did not understand all that occurred in the Sámi séance, the most fundamental matter being the Sámi concepts of the soul and spirits, which have been partially understood and partially recast under the influence of the Norse *gandr* spirit. Nonetheless, a close examination largely vindicates the details of the description, and often enables us to reconstruct the Sámi conceptions when they have been distorted. The *HN* account not only confirms much that occurs in later accounts, but adds to them. These accounts were produced when shamanism was moribund, whereas the *HN* represents a more vital tradition, and hints at features that were later lost or not recorded. It provides a valuable snap-shot (even if one seen through a glass darkly) of an actual séance, as opposed to the usually generalised accounts of later centuries. The misunderstandings shown by the Norwegians are important hints about the differences between the Norse and Sámi magical traditions, whereas the closeness of observation hints at the possibility, in earlier, pagan periods, of Sámi influences on Norse religion.

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