PECUS | EUROPEAN LANDSCAPES OF TRANSHUMANCE

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CASE STUDY SHEET

CS code	*IS-01*	**CS Title**	Eyjafjörður
GENERAL INFORMATION			
Type of case study	☐ National or regional level policy/plan/strategy ☐ Local level policy/plan/strategy x Study/research ☐ Project ☐ Other		
Responsible body/Promoter	Háskóli Íslands		
Location (region, locality)	Eyjafjörður, North Iceland		
Geographical area covered	4000 km^2, the coast plain, valleys and mountains of central Eyjafjörður.		
Year	2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2016, 2018, 2019		
Summary description	The valleys of Svarfaðardalur and Hörgárdalur in Eyjafjörður county in Iceland contain a wealth of archaeological remains. The valleys are located in mountains that rise up to 1400 meters above sea level. They differ in that the more northerly valley (Svarfaðardalur) has more vegetation in the mountain slopes, the slopes also being less steep and much more covered in snow during winter. Each valley has about fifty to hundred 20th century farms, but in the middle ages there probably were about 400 farms in the whole area. Ruins of a large number of medieval farms dot the landscape. Remains of huge earth wall systems are visible above ground, with more than 75 km. visible, especially in the northern part of the area. Also remains of a large number of shielings have been registered, but none excavated. The number and location of shielings might largely fit with the number and location of full farms in this area. A study of this medieval agricultural system would mobilize agricultural registration, evidence from environmental history, satellite information on vegetation, map making and written sources, especially the so-called Búalög (Farmer´s Law, medieval regulation of farming), to analyse the system. Mapping of the system on this basis would lead to a hypothesis about the extent and organisation of transhumance in these northern valleys of Svarfaðardalur and Hörgárdalur and the role of shielings in the system as a whole.		
Link with laws/regulations and with other policies/ plans/strategies *(if any)*	This case study is research based. The results of the research would have important ramifications for the interpretation and understanding of the medieval Icelandic agricultural system, for example regarding its origins in the Norwegian agricultural system. The ubiquity of shielings in the middle ages in this area is very different from their relative paucity in the early modern period. A better understanding of the development of land use and the role of shielings in this area during the whole period 870–1800, possibly with contrasting examples from the 14th century and the early 18th century, would give an invaluable insight into the development of land use. This would deepen the understanding of the logic of land use in Iceland in this period which has ramifications for policy aims and regulation of land use and the understanding of the interaction of nature and society before modernity.		
PROBLEMS AND NEEDS TARGETED			
Problems	The problems encountered and targeted here include a lack of knowledge about shieling management and its place in the production system. The University of Oslo published in 1979 a		

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	study of the Icelandic shieling system which is only available in German, but it is still the best study of the Icelandic system available. There has been considerable research and survey of shielings which in the last 20 years or so has completely transformed our view of the role of shielings in the Icelandic system, even from the findings of the above mentioned study. So a re-evaluation and reexamination of the problem as a whole is very necessary. A shieling system based on the old shieling system in Norway which was the parent of the Icelandic system still exists. It is very carefully described and researched and that research is probably pertinent in this connection.
Needs	The needs identified especially pertain to the research on transhumance in Iceland. There is a need of a research project aimed at clarifying the problems brought forward in the archaeological surveys and research already available.
Quantitative data	The area in question probably had around 350 operating farms in 1200–1400. Of these, about 200 where „main farms" (obliged to pay tithe to the church). Their number was registered in the *máldagar*, a kind of charters for the parish churches. There were also smaller farms, not obliged to pay tithe directly, but only as part of the main farm. The farms were spread across the landscape, sometimes with clusters of smaller farms around them. The number of shielings in Svarfaðardalur was around 50. There was one shieling per main farm in most of the valley. The number of shielings in Hörgárdalur was around 40, also with most farms having a shieling. The number of animals at each farm was around 5-10 cows and 20-40 sheep. The access to vegetation area for each farm was on average about 50 hectares in the period 1200–1400. The volume of grass harvest from each hectare was about 1-6 tons, depending on kind of grassland. It was 3 tons from fertilized hayfield per hectare, up to 6 tons from wetlands, and around 1-2 tons from unfertilized outfield.

FOCUS, OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS

Themes	**Does the case study address this theme? (YES/NO)**	**If yes, how?** ***(max 750 characters for each theme)***
Spatial planning	yes	The value of the existing remains of the medieval agricultural systems as a part of the cultural heritage of the area should be taken into consideration during spatial planning of the area.
Protection of landscape/environment (e.g. biodiversity, water, geomorphology, soil, scenic views, historic landscapes, etc.)	yes	The medieval agricultural system should be carefully protected, as it is potentially a very valuable resource for reconstruction of past land use and society.
Protection/enhancement of tangible cultural heritage (e.g. archaeological sites, historical routes, architecture…)		The earth walls and ruins of the old farm buildings and shielings should be protected. They are, formally, but in practice this is overlooked, even by official institutions and there are examples of destruction of such remains.
Protection/enhancement of intangible cultural heritage (e.g. folklore, food, music…)		There are possibilities involved in restoring and reinventing the old culture of transhumance in relation to food culture. For example, the Icelandic skyr has gained foothold in most countries in the Atlantic world and beyond in the last two decades. Skyr was originally produced at the shielings.
Slow mobility (cycling routes, trekking paths, etc.)		Cycling routes and trekking paths could be organised around the visible remains of the system.
Economic development of mountain & rural areas (e.g. tourism, agro-food production, agriculture, livestock breeding…)		Especially if the course of present-day agriculture is diverted from the ecologically destructive monoculture and agrobusiness focus, shieling practice and transhumance might become an option for the development of agriculture.

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INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS	
Actors involved	1.The National Museum of Iceland is a centre for the preservation of and research on artifacts and culture regarding Icelandic society. 2. The Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland is the guardian of all cultural heritage in Iceland, issuing permits for and supporting research on this heritage. 3. The Institute of Archaeology, Iceland is a private research company that has surveyed and done research on archaeology and the cultural heritage in the region. 4. RANNÍS – The Icelandic Centre for Research. Provides funding for research in all areas of science and scholarship. 5. The University of Iceland. Organises research and education on archaeology, the history of Iceland and the biology and nature of Iceland. 6. The Agricultural University of Iceland. Research and education on agricultural history. 7. The Municipal Museum of Dalvík. Representing the local authorities on 8. The Historical Society of Svarfaðardalur. 9. Akureyri Museum.
Involvement procedures	Research on the shieling system has been carried out in two steps, and a third step is needed. 1. Surveying and documenting the extent of shieling remains in the Icelandic cultural landscape. This step was carried out in 2000 to 2008 by the The Institute of Archaeology, working on behalf of the municipal authorities and on the basis of national legislation. 2. Research on this system of transhumance and its place in the medieval agricultural economy was carried out at the National Museum of Iceland during 2015–1017. Further research has been carried out with archaeological research in Eyjafjörður during 2018–2019 by the Institute of Archaeology and the University of Iceland, Faculty of Humanities. 3. A third step is necessary, archaeological research on shieling remains, determing the dates of shieling remains and the longetivity or duration of the medieval transhumance operation in the area. At present, work on this system is carried out with the support of a hypothesis supported by research presently available.
Problems and challenges	
EXPECTED OR ACHIEVED EFFECTS	
Type of effect	**Description** ***(max 750 characters for each type)***
Environmental/landscape (e.g. restoration of habitats, effective protection of historic landscapes…)	The project effected the discovery of a massive transhumance system, involving the whole community in the middle ages.
Cultural (e.g. restoration of historic artefacts, promotion of folkloric assets…)	The discovery of a system of transhumance chanced the interpretation of the agricultural system of Iceland vis-à-vis the origin system. It proved to be much closer in kind to the origin system than suspected, because of the ubiquity of the transhumance. This probably only changed after 1400, leading to divergence of the Icelandic system from the origin system in Scandinavia.
Social/economic (e.g. new jobs, new enterprises…)	
IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES	
Financial resources	1. The surveying of local archaeology was funded by the municipality according to national law which came into effect 1993 and revised in 2012. 2. Research into the survey was carried out at the Dr. Kristján Eldjárn fellowship at the University of Iceland 2015–2017. This fellowship is funded by the Icelandic ministry for culture. Also relevant archaeological research in the area has been funded by the Cultural Heritage Agency of Iceland, RANNÍS and NSF. 3. Funding has been sought from Icelandic and Norwegian authorities for further integrated archaeological, historical and palaeoecological work in the area. Transhumance is not specifically targeted in this proposed project, called Two Valleys, but transhumance research is on the agenda

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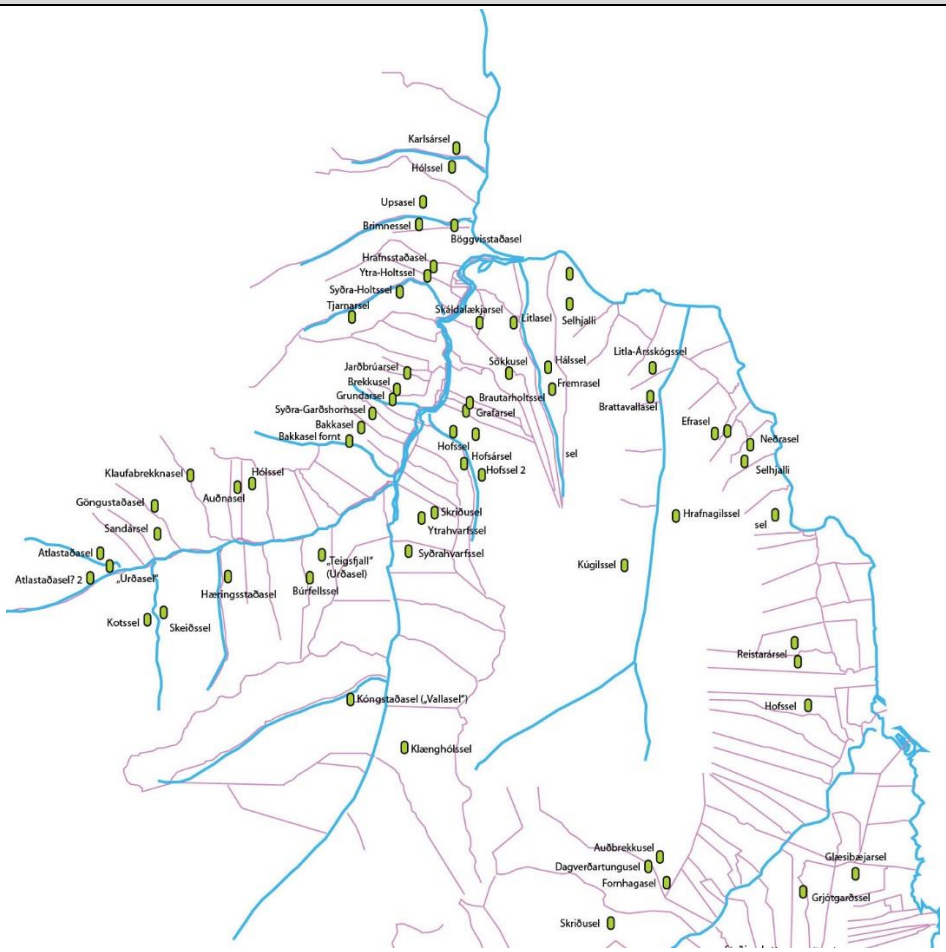
	in the planning of further research. The Two Valley project has hitherto been able to secure limited funding from research but more is needed.
Implementation procedures	
SUPPORTING INFORMATION	
Images (pictures, graphics, maps, charts, etc.)	 *Shieling ruins in the north part of the area (Svarfaðardalur)*

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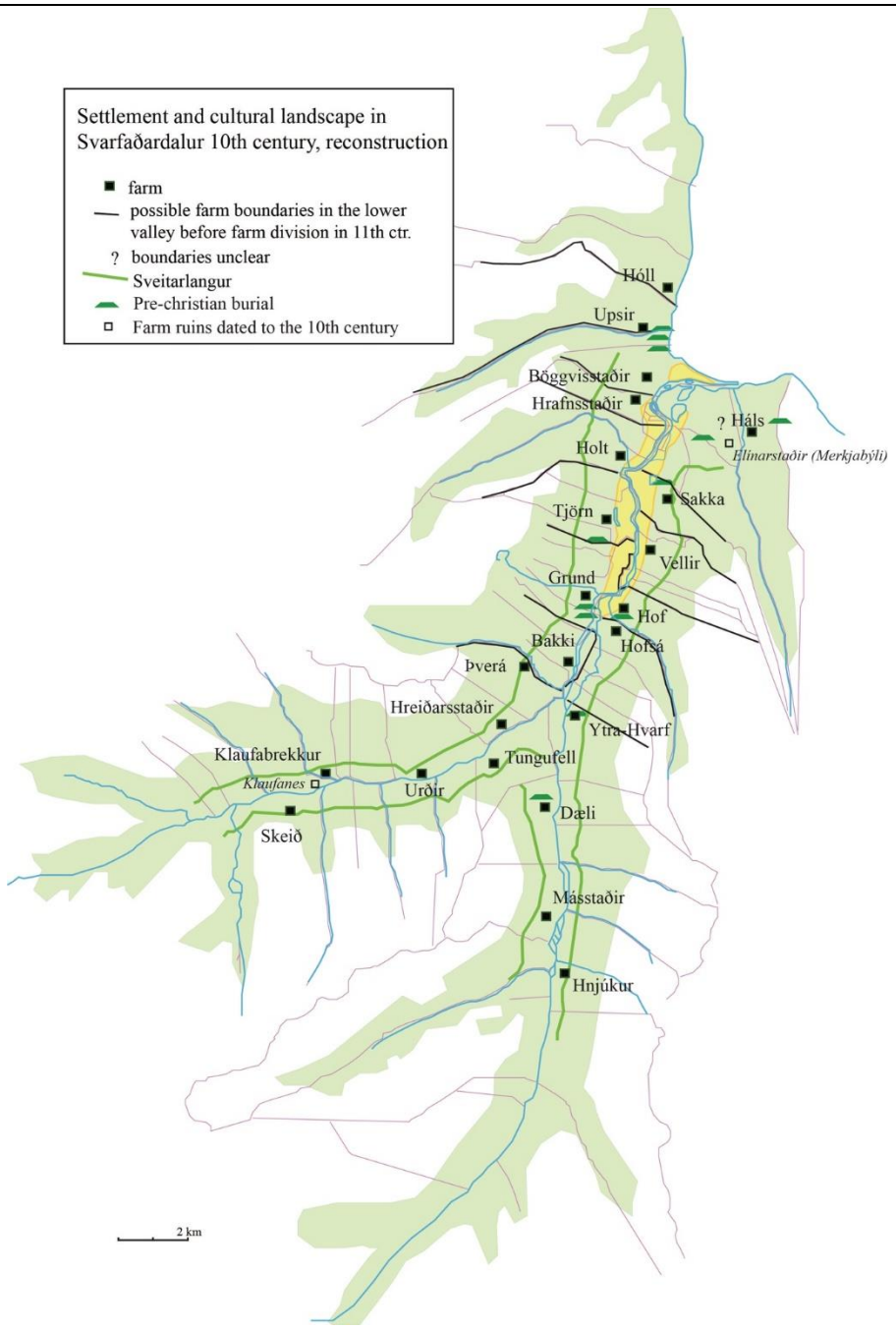

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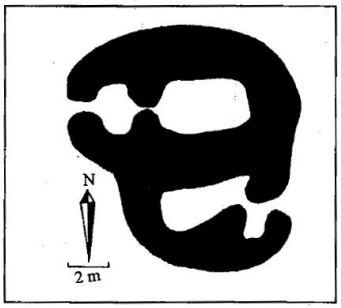
Shieling ruins in Svarfaðardalur Brekkusel 11 August 2015

Ey-121:015 *Sel* seltóft 65°55.347N
18°55.102V

"... ofar [en Stekkur 012, á nafnlausu halli] eru tóftarústir, sem heita Sel og stór steinn, sem heitir Selsteinn." segir í örnefnalýsingu. Selið er óvenjulega nærri bæ og ekki nema 30 m ofan við stekkinn 012. Við Selið er Selsteinninn sem tekur af allan vafa um að hér sé um réttan staða að ræða. Tóftin er á röku svæði neðst í fjallshlíðinni. Hún er mjög gróin og nokkuð fornleg. Hún er tvískipt og er 9 X 5 m að stærð. Við hlið tóftarinnar er dældótt svæði sem er 5 X 3 m að stærð og hægt er að greina 2 afgerandi dældir. Eru þetta líklega einnig leifar tófta.

Hættumat: engin hætta
Heimildir: Ö-Svarf, 335



Description of Brekkusel ruins in arch. Survey

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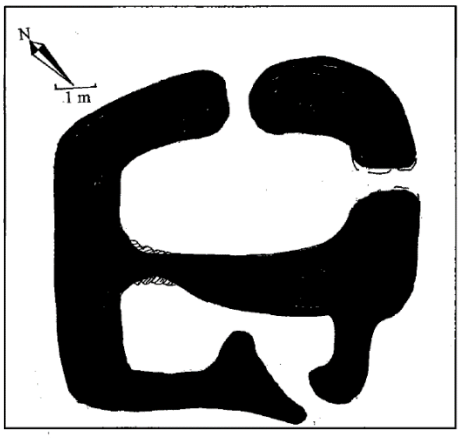
Shieling ruins in Svarfaðardalur Bakkasel 13 August 2015



"... spöl framan við Hólabrún er foss í ánni, Efrifoss, og þar í gilbarminum eru seltóftir fornar sem ég hef ekki heyrt nafn á." segir í örnefnalýsingu Gests Vilhjálmssonar. Tóftin er ofan við gilbarminn, um 30 m norðan við brúnina ofan við Efrifoss og um 20 m austan við gilbrún Bekkjalækjar. Lítill valllendisblettur á lyng- og flagmóasvæði. Sunnan við er djúpt árgil en norðan við er melhólaröð með lyngmóum á milli. Ofan við hólana meðfram og norðan við Bekkjalæk er graslendi. Tvískipt tóft, 1,5 m djúp með stæðilegum veggjum. Grjót sést í hleðslum.

Hættumat: engin hætta

Heimildir: Nokkrar leiðréttingar og viðbætur við örnefnaskrá Bakka og Bakkagerðis eftir Gest Vilhjálmsson 1.7.1967

Description of Bakkasel ruins in arch. survey

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Árni Daníel Júlíusson (2019) *A Tale of Two Valleys in Medieval Iceland. Settlement, land use and landownership.* Research Report. Reykjavík, The National Museum of Iceland.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340862874_A_Tale_of_Two_Valleys
Accessible map of vegetation types in Iceland
http://lbhi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=227b358de2ec4738b9d51c8e86457c0d
Accessible map of farm boundaries in Iceland
https://www.map.is/base/

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