

SEÁN D. VRIELAND

The Pronunciation of *hj-* in Modern Faroese

1 Introduction

Handbooks of Modern Faroese (ModFar) treat the pronunciation [j] of *hj-* in anlaut as an “[e]xception” (Adams & Petersen 2009: 282), occurring “sometimes” (Thráinsson et al. 2004: 51) “in a few words” (Lockwood 2002: 17) such as *hjarta* [ja.ɹ̥ta] ‘heart’, *hjálpa* [jɔ̥lpa] ‘to help’, without further explanation of the divergence from the usual pronunciation [tʃ] as in *bjá* [tʃhɔ̥a:] ‘with, by’, *bjól* [tʃhɔ̥u:l] ‘wheel’. As of yet no explanation has been given as to which rules govern these divergent pronunciations, or how these pronunciations developed from a single Old Norse (ON) *hj-*. The present paper aims to fill these two gaps in our knowledge of this Faroese development, providing both synchronic and diachronic explanations of [j] and [tʃ], and comparing this development with that of the closest relative of Faroese, the now-extinct Norn language of Shetland.

2 The Faroese Material

The usual pronunciation [tʃ] is found in words such as the following and their derivatives:

- (1) *bjadna* [tʃhatna] ‘to fade away’ (ON *bjaðna*)
- (2) *bjallur* [tʃhatlɔ̥ɹ] ‘outhouse for drying and storing’

I thank my anonymous reviewers for their corrections, Lars Brink for a fruitful discussion on phonology, Zakaris S. Hansen and Turið Sigurðardóttir for their commentary, and Birna Gudmundsen for enduring my questions.

Vrieland, S. D., PhD fellow, Nordisk forskningsinstitut, University of Copenhagen. “The Pronunciation of *hj-* in Modern Faroese”. *ANF* 129 (2014), pp. 233–244.

Abstract: Faroese dispalyts two different pronunciations of *hj-* in anlaut: [j] before the voiceless approximates [ɹ̥] and [ɹ̥] as in *bjálpa* ‘to help’, *hjarta* ‘heart’; [tʃ] elsewhere as in *bjá* ‘by, with’. This development from Old Norse [hj] comes via the intermediate stage [j̥], which later undergoes dissimilation of voice to [j] before voiceless approximates. A parallel development occurs in the Norn language of Orkney and Shetland, providing further evidence for a Faroese-Norn subgrouping of Insular Norse.

Keywords: Faroese, Norn, Insular Norse, language history, initial clusters, voiceless resonants, language subgrouping.

- (3) *hjalt* [tʃʰaɫ̥] or *hjölt* [tʃʰœɫ̥] ‘hilt (of a sword)’, also found in place-names
- (4) *Hjaltland* [tʃʰaɫ̥lant] (literary) ‘Shetland’
- (5) *hjaltakráka* [tʃʰaɫ̥takɾɑ:kɑ] ‘rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)’
- (6) *hjara* [tʃʰɛɑ:ɾɑ] ‘to reek, to utter a sound’
- (7) *Hjarnar* [tʃʰatnaɾ], personal name
- (8) *bjá* [tʃʰɑ:ɾ] ‘with, by’
- (9) *bjálmur* [tʃʰɔlmʊɾ] ‘helmet’
- (10) *Hjálprek* [tʃʰɔɫ̥prek], personal name
- (11) *bjána* [tʃʰɑ:na] ‘to waste away’
- (12) *bjó* [tʃʰɔ:ɾ] ‘hewed’ (literary past tense of *högga* found alongside weak preterite *högdi*)
- (13) *bjól* [tʃʰɔ:ɾ] ‘wheel’
- (14) *bjóm* [tʃʰɔ:m] ‘foam, white clouds’
- (15) *bjúkla* [tʃʰykla] ‘to look after someone’ (ModIcel *bjúkra*)
- (16) *bjún* [tʃʰu:n] ‘married couple’
- (17) *Hjördis* [tʃʰœɾɿs], personal name
- (18) *björra* [tʃʰœ:ɾɑ] ‘wooden hinge’

Meanwhile, words with the secondary pronunciation [j] consist of the following and their derivatives:

- (19) *Hjarðar*- [jɛɑ:ɾɑ] ‘herd’ (gen. sg. of †*hjörð*), found in place-names
- (20) *Hjalm*- [jal̥m] ‘helmet’, found in personal names
- (21) *hjalt* [jaɫ̥] or *hjölt* [jœɫ̥] ‘hilt (of a sword)’
- (22) *hjarta* [jaɾta] ‘heart’
- (23) *-hjálmur* [jɔlmʊɾ] ‘helmet’, found in personal name *Vilbjálmur*
- (24) *bjálpa* [jɔɫ̥pa] ‘to help’
- (25) *Hjör*- [jœɾ] ‘sword’, found in personal names
- (26) *björtur* [jœɾtʊɾ] ‘stag’

Analysis of the second list reveals that four of the words – *hjalt/hjölt* ‘hilt’, *hjarta* ‘heart’, *bjálpa* ‘to help’, and *björtur* ‘stag’ – contain a voiceless approximate [ɿ] or [ʃ] (specifically [ɿ̥]) in the first syllable, a feature found only in the pronunciations [tʃʰaɫ̥], [tʃʰœɫ̥] for *hjalt* and *hjölt*, respectively; place-names such as *Hjaltland* ‘Shetland’; the derived bird-name *hjaltakráka* ‘rook’; and the personal name *Hjálprek* among the forms pronounced with [tʃ]. Barring these and the proper names with *Hjarðar*- [jɛɑ:ɾɑ], *Hjalm*- [jal̥m], *-hjálmur* [jɔlmʊɾ], and *Hjör*- [jœɾ] as

exceptions, it becomes evident that the voiceless approximates [j̥] and [ɾ̥] play an integral role in the pronunciation of *hj-* in Faroese. Such a synchronic description, however, cannot fully account for the development of these divergent pronunciations.

3 Diachronic Development

In order to better understand how the voiceless approximates [j̥] and [ɾ̥] played a role in the development [hj] > [j], we must posit a three-stage chronology of sound changes from Old Norse to Modern Faroese.

The first stage involves the aspiration of resonants (including /j/) next to the aspirated phonemes /p t k h/, realized as the devoicing [R̥] > [R̥̥]. While in anlaut the devoicing of resonants after an aspirated stop is not uncommon (cf. English *planned* [p̥lænd] vs. *bland* [blænd]; Danish *plade* [p̥lɛ:ð] ‘board’ vs. *blade* [blɛ:ð] ‘leaves (pl.)’; Grønnum 1998: 264 and passim), in Faroese this devoicing also occurred word-internally before the fortis stops /p t k/ in e.g. *hørpa* [hœ̥ɾpa] ‘harp’, *svartur* [sf̥aɹ̥tuɹ] ‘black’, *fólk* [fœ̥lk] ‘people’. This development, connected with the development of preaspiration (cf. Pétur Helgason 2002: 17–21), is shared with Icelandic: *harpa* [har̥pa], *svartur* [sar̥tuɹ], *fólk* [fœ̥lk].

Icelandic preserves Old Norse [hR] in anlaut as the voiceless resonants [ŋ̥ ɿ̥ ɹ̥] in e.g. *hnakki* [n̥aʰkʲɿ] ‘nape (of the neck)’, *hlaupa* [l̥œ̥y:pa] ‘to run’, *brópa* [r̥œ̥u:pa] ‘to shout’; whereas in Faroese, which does not allow for word-initial voiceless resonants (Kristján Árnason 2011: 124), the voiced counterparts developed in e.g. *nakki* [naʰtʃ:ɿ] ‘nape (of the neck)’, *leypa* [lœ̥i:pa] ‘to run’, *rópa* [rœ̥u:pa] ‘to shout’.¹ At an intermediate stage voiceless [R̥] must have occurred in the development of Faroese, however, including [j̥] in anlaut, still preserved in Icelandic in e.g. *bjá* [j̥jau:ɿ] ‘with, by’, *bjarta* [j̥jarta] ‘heart’.²

Faroese shows a divergence from Icelandic in the second stage, which is also the origin of the two distinct pronunciations of *hj-*. During this

¹ Pace Kristján Árnason (2011: 124), Faroese does not seem to have developed an occasional pronunciation [kn] from ON *hn*: ModFar *kneppa* [kn̥eʰpa] ‘to button’ preserves the original ON *kn-*, whereas ModIcel *hneppa* [n̥eʰp:a] ‘id’ shows the development *kn-* > *hn-* also found in e.g. *hné* [n̥je:] ‘knee’ < ON *kné* (ModFar *kn̥e* [kn̥jea:]).

² Whether this resonant devoicing occurred in the combination *hv-* is unclear; in both Faroese and Icelandic this cluster merged with *kv-* [kf], although some dialects of Icelandic preserve a distinct pronunciation [xʷ] (cf. Kristján Árnason 2011: 6).

stage, syllables of the shape [jVRC], where [R] represents a voiceless approximate [ɸ] or [ɸ̥], underwent a dissimilation of aspiration (i.e. of voice), a process similar to e.g. Grassman's Law, which operated independently in Ancient Greek *τίθημι* 'I place, I put' and Sanskrit *dadhāmi* 'id', both from Proto-Indo-European **d^bé-d^beh₁-mi*. Voicing [j] > [j̥] would have been the only option for dissimilation at this stage, as clusters of the type R[+voice]C[-voice][+aspiration], i.e. a voiced resonant before a voiceless aspirated stop, were impossible. Whether this development would have occurred in syllables of the structure [jVN̥C], with a voiceless nasal, is unclear due to a lack of examples.

During the final stage the remaining voiceless approximate [j̥] hardened to [tʃ], likely via intermediate stages [j̥] > [ç] > [c] > [tʃ], the result of which shows a merger with (-)kj- and kV[+front] in e.g. *kjóli* [tʃ^hɔ̃u:lɪ] 'dress', *kirkja* [tʃ^hɪ.tʃa] 'church', and with (-)tj- in most dialects as in *tjaldur* [tʃ^haltuɹ] 'oystercatcher (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*)'. Kristján Árnason (2011: 116) notes a preservation of a distinct [t̥j̥] ([t^hj̥] in his transcription) on Suðuroy, where the national bird is pronounced [t̥j̥altuɹ].

That this hardening [j̥] > [ç] > [c] > [tʃ] must have occurred after the dissimilation [j̥] > [j] in stage 2 is evidenced by words with initial kj-, which affricate to [tʃ] even when followed by a voiceless resonant as in *kjálki* [tʃ^hɔ̃tʃɪ] 'jaw', *kirkja* [tʃ^hɪ.tʃa] 'church', showing syllables of the structure [tʃ^hVRC] are not phonologically impossible in Faroese.

Table 1 provides a summary of these three stages.

Such a diachronic explanation, which accounts for the majority of words with initial hj-, nevertheless leaves a few forms unexplained: the [tʃ] pronunciation in *hjalt/hjølt* 'hilt', *Hjaltland* 'Shetland', and *hjaltakráka* 'rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)', as well as a number of proper names.

Table 1. Diachronic development.

| | ON <i>hjalpa</i> 'to help' | ON <i>hjól</i> 'wheel' | ON <i>kjalki</i> 'jaw' |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Aspiration (devoicing) [R] > [R̥] | [ja]pa] | [jo:l] | [kja]ki] |
| 2. Dissimilation [j̥] > [j] | [ja]pa] | [jo:l] | [c ^h a]ci] |
| 3. Hardening > [tʃ] | [jɔ]pa] | [tʃ ^h ɔ̃u:l] | [tʃ ^h ɔ̃tʃɪ] |

4 Proper Names and Other Exceptions

In general, personal names with initial *Hj-* in Faroese show a tendency towards the pronunciation [j], although not exclusively. Table 2 below contains the personal names found on *Fólkenavnalistin*, the list of Faroese names approved by the *Løgting* in 1992 (cf. Andreasen & Dahl 1997: 233–55); names found in the ballads and listed by Hammershaimb in his *Færøsk anthologi* (1891: 432); and place-names found in the Faroe Islands and elsewhere.

The four names listed by Hammershaimb – *Hjálmar*, *Hjálprek*, *Hjarnar*, and *Hjördis* – are all exclusively cited with the pronunciation [tʃ] ([tʃ] in Hammershaimb’s rendering). While Hammershaimb’s pronunciation of *Hjálprek*, the only name not found on *Fólkenavnalistin*, violates the rule of [j] before [R̥], Svabo (cf. Matras 1939: 89) renders the name of the king found in the ballad *Dysjadólgur* (in *Sjúrdar Kvæði*) as *Jaltri*,³ indicating a pronunciation which follows the rule. J.H. Schrøter’s manuscript of *Sjúrdar Kvæði* renders the king’s name as *Hialtri*, distinguishing the pronunciations [j] and [tʃ] in the line “kjaa Hjalttri kongji sveav” (Matras 1951–53: 63) and elsewhere in the manuscript (c.f. Matras 1951–53: XL).

Although Hammershaimb’s rendering of *Hjördis* as [tʃördis] follows

Table 2. Faroese names with *hj-*.

| Old Norse Element | Names with [tʃ] | Names with [j] |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>hjørð</i> ‘herd’ | | <i>Hjarðardalur</i> , <i>Hjarðarvágur</i> |
| <i>hjalmr</i> ‘helmet’ | <i>Hjálmar</i> | <i>Hjalgrímur</i> , <i>Hjalmar</i> , <i>Hjalma</i> , <i>Vilhjálmur</i> |
| <i>hjalt</i> ‘hilt (of a sword)’ | <i>Hjaltaboðarnir</i> , <i>Hjaltastøð</i> , <i>Hjaltland</i> | |
| <i>hjølþ</i> ‘help’ | <i>Hjálprek</i> | |
| <i>hjarn</i> ‘brain’ | <i>Hjarnar</i> | |
| <i>hjør</i> ‘sword’ | <i>Hjördis</i> | <i>Hjördis</i> , <i>Hjørgrímur</i> , <i>Hjørleivur</i> , <i>Hjørmundur</i> |
| <i>hjørtr</i> ‘stag’ | | <i>Hjørtur</i> , <i>Hjartvar</i> , <i>Hjartvør</i> |

³ Cf. *Føroya Kvæði* (ed. Grundtvig & Block 1951–63) vol. I, ballad 10 (pages 311–25), which renders the line “næsta manni Hjálprek kongi” (A: 14), in Svabo’s orthography “Nasta Manni Jaltri Kongji” (Matras 1939: 89). Other versions of the ballad in *Føroya Kvæði* give “næsti maður Hjálprek kongi” (B: 21), “næstur manni Hjálpreki” (C: 21), “næstur maður Hjálprek kongi” (D: 23).

the expected developments outlined above, *Fólkenavnlistin* lists all of the names with the element *Hjør-* as pronounced [jør] (i.e. [jœɪ]). Significantly, the lexeme †*hjør* ‘sword’ (ON *hjorr*) is not found in Modern Faroese. Furthermore, *Hjørdis* is a common name in Danish, whose [j] pronunciation may likely be a contributing factor to this and other names beginning with *Hjør-*.

A clearer example of Danish influence on Faroese names can be found in *Hjalmar* [jalmaɪ], a variant which cannot be the result of internal Faroese development not only because of the rules outlined above, but also as it lacks the lengthening of *a > á* before *l* plus non-dental consonant, a development Faroese shares with Icelandic (cf. Thráinsson et al. 2004: 395–96). That *Hjalmar* specifically comes from Danish is especially evident in contrast to the native Faroese form of the name, *Hjálmar* [tʰɔlmaɪ].

Vilhjálmur ‘William’ does show the lengthening of *a > á*, which suggests the name derived internally and thus requires another explanation for the pronunciation [-jɔlmuɪ]. Sørli (1936: 105) notes word-internal *h* was lost in Faroese names with *-hild*, e.g. *Gunnild*, *Svanild*, and *Grimild*, in Sandoyarbók (nineteenth century). The loss of *h* in *Vilhjálmur* (occasionally spelled *Viljormur*, cf. Andreasen & Dahl 1997: 47) may therefore be attributed to its word-internal position.

Two elements found in place-names also seem to defy the rules established above, namely *Hjørð-* ‘herd’ and *Hjalt-* ‘hilt (of a sword)’. The former, which does not survive as an independent lexeme †*hjørð* (ON *hjørð*) in the spoken language, is preserved only in the gen. sg. *Hjarðar-* in the place-names *Hjarðardalur* and *Hjarðarvállur* (cf. Matras 1933: 148–49). A misspelling of *Hjarðardalur* as *Jarðardalur* gives insight to the possible confusion with *jørð* ‘earth’, gen. sg. *jarðar* [jɛ̃aɪ.ɪaɪ], an element found in the place-name *Jarðarkonuáir*,⁴ Sandavágar.

Hjalt- ‘hilt (of a sword)’ is found in two place-names in the Faroe Islands, *Hjaltastøð* (Froðba) and *Hjaltaboðarnir* (Saksun), as well as in the literary form *Hjaltland* ‘Shetland’. The independent lexeme, either *hjalt* (neut.) or *hjølt* (fem.), additionally survives in the ballads, though not in the spoken language. Hammershaimb (1891: 432) assigns the pronuncia-

⁴ This place-name derives from **Jarðarkonu-áir* ‘water rail (gen. sg.)-rivers (nom. sg.)’. The bird-name *jarðarkona* ‘water rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)’, lit. ‘earth-woman’ (occasionally *jaðrakona* with a supposed connection to *jaðar* ‘edge’), may be a folk etymology if connected to Icelandic *jaðrakan* ‘godwit (*Limosa*)’ (cf. Lockwood 1961: 22–23). Nevertheless, the Faroese interpretation of the first element in *Jarðarkonuáir* as the gen. sg. of *jørð* ‘earth’ is clear.

tion [tʃ] to these forms, while Jacobsen & Matras (1961) consider both [j] and [tʃ] as acceptable pronunciations in *Hjaltland* ‘Shetland’ and the derived bird-name *hjaltakráka* ‘rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)’ (lit. “Shetland crow”).⁵ Lockwood (1961: 21) gives only the pronunciation [tʃ] for *hjaltakráka*, and further notes the Northern Islands rendering *skjálvtakráka* [ʃɔ̃lta], lit. “shivering crow”. These two renderings of the ornithonym must have already diverged by the turn of the nineteenth century, as Svabo (1966) lists two separate entries for the bird: *Hjaltakraaka*, to which he gives no indication of a pronunciation [tʃ],⁶ and *Sjalta-Kraaka*, which he connects to Icelandic *skjálfti* ‘shivering, quake’ (ModFar *skjálvti*).

5 Norn: A Similar Development?

The connection between Faroese and its southerly neighbor goes further than the name *hjaltakráka*. Faroese shares many common features with the Norn language formerly spoken in Shetland and Orkney,⁷ including a separate development of *hj-* before voiceless approximates. Jacobsen (1921) defines the regular outcome of ON *hj-* as [ʃ] (orthographically *sj* and rendered as [ʃ] in his pronunciation guide), found in the following examples in his dictionary of Shetland Norn:

- (1) *sjalti* [ʃaˈlti] or [ʃoˈlti] ‘sandhopper (*Grammarus* or *Copepoda*)’, ‘small horse, Shetland pony’. While the meaning ‘small horse’ derives from ON *hjalti*, *hjaltr* ‘Shetlander’ (on which see below), Jacobsen notes the meaning ‘copepod’ may be connected with Sw dial. *skjalta* ‘to spring to and fro’, an explanation preferred by Marwick

⁵ Amusingly, this migratory bird is occasionally dubbed *Føreyjahrafñ* ‘Faroe raven’ in Icelandic (cf. Lockwood 1961: 21).

⁶ Svabo’s exceptionally phonetic orthography, which predates the etymological orthography of Hammershaimb (used as the basis of standard Faroese orthography today), provides invaluable clues to the pronunciation of Faroese in the late eighteenth century. Of the words with original *hj-* in ON, Svabo lists those pronounced [j] under *Hj-* and *J-* (e.g. *Hjaalp/Jaalp* ‘help’, *Hjarta/Jarta* ‘heart’), while those pronounced [tʃ] are listed under *Kj-* (e.g. *Kjēul* ‘wheel’, *Kjūn* ‘married couple’). Curiously, *Hjaltakraaka* ‘rook’ is only listed under *Hj-*, although the pronunciation [j] is nevertheless clear.

⁷ Barnes (1984: 362) notes three features shared only between Faroese and (Foula, Shetland) Norn: 1) *skerping* (Verschärfung) following ON *ó* or *ú* as in ModFar *sjógvur* ‘sea’, Norn *sheug* ‘id’ < ON *sjór*; 2) word-final /m/ > /n/ in unstressed position, e.g. ModFar *bonum* [ho:nun] ‘him (dat.)’, Norn *honon*; 3) word-initial /θ/ > /h/ sporadically, e.g. ModFar *betta* ‘this’, Norn *ita* (via **hitta*) ‘id’ < ON *þetta*.

(1929: 154). A possible connection with ON *skjálfti* ‘shivering, quake’ (ModFar *skjálvti*) must not be excluded, considering the Faroese dialectal form *skjálvtakráka* ‘rook’ seen above. Furthermore, the [o] in the second pronunciation [ʃoʔlti] can only be explained as the rounding of ON *a* > (*á* >) *o* before *l* plus non-dental consonant (cf. Shetland Norn *kjolk(a)* ‘jaw’ < ON *kjalkei*), making *skjálfti* the likeliest candidate (ModFar *skjálvti* [ʃoʔlti]).

- (2) *sjar* [ʃār] ‘to creak’; cf. ModFar *hjara* ‘to utter a weak sound’
- (3) *sjarl* [ʃarʲ], *sjarri* [ʃari] ‘wooden hinge’; cf. ModFar *hjørra*
- (4) *sjask* [ʃās̺k] ‘mist, fog’; cf. Dan dial. (Jutland) *hjaskevejr* ‘weather with enough precipitation to form puddles’, Dan *sjaskevejr* ‘id’
- (5) *sjask* [ʃask] ‘trouble, fatigue’; cf. Dan dial. (*h*)*jask* ‘poorly executed, sloppy’
- (6) *sjel* [ʃēʲl] ‘plank for hens to sit on’; cf. ModFar *hjallur* ‘storehouse, drying-house’, an outhouse made of vertical slats with space between to let wind through for drying fish or other meat
- (7) *sjolmet* [ʃālmət] ‘white-headed (of a cow)’; cf. ModFar *hjálmotur*, *hjolmutur* ‘id.’ < ON **hjálmótr* ‘helmeted’

Unlike in Faroese, *hj-* did not harden to [tʃ] in Norn, but rather developed into the sibilant [tʃ] < [ç]. This remained distinct from original *kj-* which was preserved in Shetland Norn *kjolk(a)* [kjāʲlk(a)] ‘jaw’ (Jakobsen 1921: 398) and palatalized in Orkney Norn *chocks* [tʃɔ:ks] ‘id’ (Marwick 1929: 27), both from ON *kjalkei* ‘id’. In Shetland *hj-* merged with original *tj-* as in *sjalder* ‘oystercatcher’ < ON *tjaldr*, while in Orkney these sounds remained distinct: *chalder* [tʃaldər] ‘oystercatcher’ but *shuimit* [ʃəmət] ‘white-headed (of a cow)’ (Shetland *sjolmet*) < ON **hjálmótr* (cf. Marwick 1929).

Significantly, Jakobsen lists one exception to the development *hj* > *sj* in Shetland Norn, namely *jarta* [jaʲrta] ‘heart’. That such a development should occur in such a common word (which still survives as *yarta* ‘dear’, a term of endearment in the Shetland dialect of insular Scots, cf. *DSL*) provides a strong indication that a similar development [hʲ] > [j] > [j] before voiceless approximates [ʀ] occurred in Norn as it did in Faroese.

6 *Sjalti* and *Shetland*

Of the examples in Jakobsen’s dictionary, only *sjalti* ‘small horse, Shetland pony’ displays the sibilant [ʃ] before a voiceless approximate [j̥]. The form clearly derives from ON *hjalti* ‘Shetlander (person)’, although

Jakobsen gives no indication of this meaning in the Shetland Norn form *sjalti*. That a population would reduce their own ethnonym to the name of a horse is improbable at best, whereas examples of foreign populations reassigning ethnonyms to animal designations are widespread, cf. *Arabian* (horse), *Great Dane* (dog), *Manx* (cat).

The native Norn descendent of ON *hjalti* is recorded by the eighteenth-century natural historian Sir Robert Sibbald in his *Description of the Islands of Orkney and Shetland* (reprinted 1845):

[...] from this Isle [Yell, Shetland] all the Inhabitants of these Isles in their Countrey Language [i.e. Norn] call themselves *Yalts*, which in our Language also signifies a *Shetlander*, and their Language by themselves is called *Yaltmol* [...] (pg. 68)

Sibbald (1845: 11) further tells us that “in the old Language of the Natives, they [Shetland] are name *Yealtaland*”. Barnes (2010: 29) considers these forms to be incorrectly attributed to the Shetlanders, noting that “in both Orkney and Shetland Norn initial *hj-* seems mostly to develop to [ʃ]”, and instead considers these to be Scandinavian designations also described by Sibbald (1845: 11): “the *Norwegians* call them *Yealteland*; and the people are called by them and the *Danes*, *Yealtines*, and their speech *Yealta mole*”.

However, at least the forms *Yalt-* < ON *hjalti* ‘Shetlander’ and *Yaltmol* < ON **hjaltamál* ‘language of the Shetlanders’ must be native Norn forms, as they parallel the development of Norn *jarta* < ON *hjarta*. *Yealtaland* ‘Shetland’ also seems to follow this pattern, although the spelling *Yea-* may reflect a Norwegian progressive umlaut found in *Hjeltland*, *Hjetland*, both later variations of ON *Hjaltland* ‘Shetland’.⁸ The form *sjalti*, however, defies this development; both the initial [ʃ] and the meaning ‘small horse, Shetland pony’ must therefore be of foreign origin.

Scots *schaltie* is recorded once in 1516 with the meaning ‘Shetlander (person)’, and within a century the meaning ‘small horse, Shetland pony’

⁸ Significantly troublesome is the medial *-a-* in Sibbalds rendering *Yealtaland*. Jakobsen (1901: 175–176) notes an ON form †*Hjaltaland* is never found, and that the archipelago is rather named *Hjaltland*. He rejects the etymology being ON *Hjalti* (personal name) in favor of ON *hjalt* ‘hilt (of a sword)’. Such an etymology is further strengthened by the variant form *Hetland*, the form still in use in Faroese, which displays a lack of breaking as a member of a compound, a phenomenon found elsewhere in ON as in *bjarg* ~ *berg* ‘rock’, *fjall* ~ *fell* ‘mountain’, *björn* ~ *ber* (as in *berserkr*) ‘bear’. Though considered by some to be a later form of *Hjaltland* (cf. C-V), *Hetland* is found as early as 1190 in a Latin diploma (see Johnston & Johnston 1907–13: 19).

arises in *scheltie hors* (1612), *shaltie mear* (1685) (*DSL*). The pronunciation [ʃ] for original [hʃ] is not unknown in Scots, and can be found in such variants as *shool* ‘husk (of corn)’ (variant of *huil* ‘id’), *Shewey* ‘Hughie (nickname)’, *shuge* ‘huge’. Britton (1991) considers a phonological development [hʃ] > [ç] > [ʃ] to be native to both Scots and Northern English, evident as early as the thirteenth century in place-names in Yorkshire and Cumbria: *Shap* (Cumbria), *Shaps* (East Riding), *Shipton* (East Riding and North Riding). In the case of *schaltie*, the first stage [hʃ] > [j] may have already occurred within Norn, as this development also occurred in the native form *Yalt-* before the dissimilation [j] > [ʃ], and initial [j] or [ç] borrowed into Scots could have no other outcome than [ʃ].

The development [hʃ] > [ʃ] in the name *Shetland*⁹ is first attested in a Latin diploma from 1289, which mentions *Thorwaldus de Shetland*. While Britton (1991: 14) considers this the earliest evidence of a West Norse [hʃ] > [ʃ], Munch (1852: 47) attributes the form to a Scottish scribe. Lars Brink (personal communication, 2014) suggests a Latin spelling <sh> may also represent [j], as such a sound is difficult to render in the Latin alphabet.

In any case, by the fifteenth century Scots manuscripts show two main variants, *Shetland* and *Zetland* (*Zetland* in print), whereas Norse manuscripts consistently show *Hietland* or *Hieltland*. Initial [ʃ] in *Shetland* may therefore be attributed to a Scots development, while the grapheme <ʒ> in *Zetland* represents the pronunciation [ç] as seen in e.g. *ʒaik* ‘shake’ (variant of *schake*), *ʒho* ‘she’ (variant of *scho*).

7 Conclusion

Despite being labelled as exceptions, Faroese *hjarta* ‘heart’ and Norn *jarta* ‘id’ follow an identical pattern, namely the voicing of [j̥] to [j] before a voiceless approximate [l̥] or [r̥]. Although historical documentation is scant, it is possible to reconstruct the process by which the divergent pronunciations of Faroese [tʃ], [j] and Norn [ʃ], [j] developed from

⁹ Not included in this discussion is *Shapinsay* and the suggested etymology *Hjalpandisey* found as early as Munch (1852: 98) and still common among discussions of Norn [hʃ] > [ʃ]. A number of problems surround this etymology, not least of which being the earliest attestation of the name in Johannes de Fordun’s 1735 work *Chronica Gentis Scottorum*, there spelled *Scalpandisay*.

a uniform ON *hj-*. First, [hj] simplified into the voiceless approximate [j̥] in all of the insular Nordic languages (Faroese, Norn, and Icelandic), while resonants were devoiced before the fortis stops *p t k*. Second, forms with [j̥VR̥C] voiced the initial approximate to [j̥VR̥C] in Faroese and Norn, while such forms remained voiceless [j̥VR̥C] in Icelandic. Third, remaining [j̥] affricated to [tʃ] in Faroese and assibilated to [ʃ] in Norn, both likely via an intermediated stage [ç]. This development of two divergent pronunciations provides further evidence pointing to a Faroese-Norn subgrouping of Insular Norse.

Bibliography

- Adams, J. and H.P. Petersen (2009): *Faroese: A Language Course for Beginners*, Stúðin, Tórshavn.
- Andreasen, P. and Á. Dahl (1997): *Mállæra*, Føroya Skúlabókagrunnur, Tórshavn.
- Barnes, M. (1984): 'Orkney and Shetland Norn'. *Language in the British Isles*, ed. Peter Trudgill, University Press, Cambridge, pp. 352–66.
- Barnes, M. (2010): 'The Study of Norn'. R. McColl Miller (ed.), *Northern Lights, Northern Words: Selected Papers from the FRLSU Conference, Kirkwall 2009*, Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ireland, Aberdeen, pp. 26–47.
- Britton, D. (1991): 'On Middle English *she, sho*: A Scots Solution to an English Problem'. *NOWELE* vol 17, University Press, Odense, pp. 3–51.
- C-V = Cleasby, R. and G. Vigfusson (1874): *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, Clarendon, Oxford.
- DSL = Rennie, S., ed. (2004): *Dictionary of the Scots Language (Dictionar o the Scots Leid)*, University of Dundee. <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/dsl/>
- Grundtvig, S. and J. Bloch, eds. (1951–63): *Føroya Kvæði: Corpus Carminum Færoensium*, republished eds. N. Djurhuus and C. Matras, Ejnar Munksgaard, Copenhagen.
- Grønnum, N. (1998): *Fonetik og fonologi: Almen og dansk*, Akademisk Forlag, Copenhagen.
- Hammershaimb, V.U. (1891): *Færøsk anthologi* vol. II: Ordsamling og Register, S.L. Møllers, Copenhagen.
- Jacobsen, M.A. and C. Matras (1961): *Føroysk-donsk orðabók*, 2 útgáva, Føroya Fróðskaparfelag, Tórshavn.
- Jakobsen, J. (1901): *Shetlandsøernes stednavne*, Thieles, Copenhagen.
- Jakobsen, J. (1921): *Etymologisk ordbog over det norrøne sprog på Shetland*, Vilhelm Priors, Copenhagen.
- Johnston, A.W. and A. Johnston (1907–13): *Diplomatarium Orcadense et Hialtlandense* vol I, Viking Society for Northern Research, London.

- Kristján Árnason (2011): *The Phonology of Icelandic and Faroese*, University Press, Oxford.
- Lockwood, W.B. (1961): *The Faroese Bird Names*, Ejnar Munksgaard, Copenhagen.
- Lockwood, W.B. (2002): *An Introduction to Modern Faroese*, 4th ed., Føroya Skúlabókagrunnur, Tórshavn.
- Marwick, H. (1929): *The Orkney Norm*, University Press, Oxford.
- Matras, C. (1933): *Stednavne paa de færøske Norduroyggjar*, H.H. Thieles, Copenhagen.
- Matras, C. (1939): *Svabos færøske Visehaandskrifter*, Bianco Lunos, Copenhagen.
- Matras, C. (1951–53): *J.H. Schrøter's optegnelser af Sjúrdar Kvæði*, Ejnar Munksgaard, Copenhagen.
- Munch, P.A. (1852): 'Geographiske Oplysninger om de i Sagaerne forekommende skotske og irske Stedsnavne'. *Annaler for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, J.D. Qvist, Copenhagen, pp. 44–103.
- Pétur Helgason (2002): *Preaspiration in the Nordic Languages: Synchronic and diachronic aspects*, PhD dissertation, Department of Linguistics, Stockholm.
- Sibbald, Sir R. (1845): *Description of the Islands of Orkney and Zetland by Robert Monteith*, reprinted from the ed. 1711, Thomas G. Stevenson, Edinburgh.
- Svabo, J.C. (1966): *Dictionarium feroense*, udgivet efter håndskrifterne af Chr. Matras, Munksgaard, Copenhagen.
- Sørli, M. (1936): *Færøyske tradisjon i norrønt mål*, Det norske Videnskaps-Akademi, Oslo.
- Thráinsson, H., H.P. Peterson, J. í Lon Jacobsen, and Z. Svabo Hansen (2004): *Faroese: An Overview and Reference Grammar*, Føroya Fróðskaparfelag, Tórshavn.