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The Northern Studies journal published by the Scottish Society for Northern Studies continues to collate new research on Scotland and its northern neighbours. This fiftieth volume maintains the society's interdisciplinary approach with six essays and two reviews that cross centuries and disciplines.

The first article comes from the Thirteenth Hermann Pálsson lecture by Margaret A. Mackay held in 2017. Mackay gives a quick rendition of Icelandic immigration to Canada beginning in the 1870s and focusing on the province of Manitoba. The presence and impact of Icelandic individuals and culture within the region is highlighted through to the modern day within politics, education, literature and beyond. Despite touching upon many interesting and significant individuals and events, the brevity of this seminar prevents a detailed exploration, which could be a full-length monograph – or several – in its own right. That said this is an excellent overview of Icelandic immigration to Canada, which provokes numerous avenues for future exploration.

Following are two archaeological articles both from Martin Cook and Mike Roy. The first is a summary of results relating to human remains surrounding St Taran's and St Keith's Chapel, Taransay, Western Isles. Further contributions from Dawn McLaren, Anne MacSween and Kath McSweeney focus on iron nails, ceramics and human bone respectively. This report represents a rare insight into chapel sites in the Hebrides from the medieval period and their earlier burial practices. These findings, though limited due to their focus on loose artifacts only, are vitally important for constructing an image of these chapels and their surrounding communities in such unforgiving

surroundings given similar sites have already been damaged or lost due to erosion. Cook and Roy's second contribution confirms a pre-Reformation ecclesiastical site at St Ola's chapel, South Ronaldsay in Orkney based on an excavation in the mid-late 2000s. Sections from Rob Engl, Melissa Melikian and Paul Sharman focus on coarse stone, human bone and steatite, whilst Dawn McLaren and Fraser Hunter commented on the metal and slag. Together, the analysis pushes back the dating of this site to the 12<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. However, as a salvage operation due to erosion, the results from South Ronaldsay are limited, with further excavation and study needed for more certain results.

Next, Brian Smith works on debunking the Unst Lay as an ancient verse with an amalgamation of Nordic and Christian ideology. Recorded by George Sinclair in the 1870s, the validity of the Unst Lay, with its exceedingly close resemblance to the 138<sup>th</sup> strophe of *Hávamál* from the Elder Edda, has been questioned ever since. Using communications between contemptuous academics alongside his own linguistic analysis of the verse and investigation into the origin story, Smith has thoroughly addressed many of the key issues that come with the Unst Lay. Smith begins his well-reasoned argument refuting the ancient verse interpretation of the Unst Lay labelling it a 'glorious hoax' and bringing strong evidence to back these claims, but still ends by acknowledging its position as the first Shetland dialect poem, authored instead c.1877.

As the wife and queen of the protestant James VI of Scotland, later James I of England, Anna of Denmark's conversion and leanings towards Catholicism have generally been categorised as a personal and private decision of faith, with the use of her religion as a tool in political manoeuvres considered an afterthought. However, in this article Jemma Field proposes that greater agency and credit be given to Anna in her own use of religion for political ambition. Much of the evidence comes from outward perspectives and Field accepts the impossibility of knowing

Anna's true beliefs, yet she manages to present a compelling case of subliminal messaging from letters and political preferences that point towards an active choice by Anna to use her religious convictions, or lack thereof, to enhance her political aims and those of Scotland.

In the final article, Steve Murdoch and Kathrin Zickermann present a detailed analysis of the assistance given to widows of Scottish soldiers, who served in the Dutch and Swedish armies during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48). Drawing upon newly located and translated letters from their current project, alongside wills and administrative documents, Murdoch and Zickerman use detailed individual case studies to readdresses the level of support available. They also use comparisons between the states to explain trends in support that defied level of need or status and highlight the fortitude of the widows involved who could wield great influence.

The volume finishes with two book reviews of recent publications. In the first review Maria Gussarsson analyses Carolyn Anderson and Christopher Fleet's 2018 *Scotland: Defending the Nation: Mapping the Landscape*, while Kelsey Jackson Williams focuses on John H. Ballantyne and Brian Smith's 2016 *Shetland Documents, 1612–1637* in the second.

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