The Faroes and Gammalsvenskby: Scandinavian Language Islands. Similarities and Contrasts

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Website of the project

http://akropoleis.net/gammalsvenskby/

Geographical location & climate conditions

Faroes: North-West of Europe, Atlantic Ocean
Gammalsvenskby: South-East of Europe, close to the Black Sea

CONTRAST

Language change in the situation of the absence of language standardisation

Faroese: Significant language change
Gammalsvenskby: No decisive evidence

TENTATIVE SIMILARITY

Spelling

CONTRAST

Faroese: Clear historical principle; considerable discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation

Variety in designating the same vowel

[ɔ]	**o** ***tonn*** [tʰɔnː] ‘tooth’	**á** ***nátt*** [nɔʰtː] ‘night’	**ei** ***steingja*** [ˈstɔɲʧa] ‘shut’	**oy** *oyggj* [ɔʧ] ‘island’
[a]	**a** ***land*** [lant] ‘land’	**ei** ***deiggj*** [taʧ] ‘dough’	**æ** ***vænta*** [ˈvaɲ̊ta] ‘wait’	
[ɪ]	**i** ***fingur*** [ˈfɪŋkʊɹ] ‘finger’	**y** ***ryggur*** [ˈɹɪkːʊɹ] ‘back’	**ú** ***brúgv*** [pɹɪkf] ‘bridge’	
[ɛ]	**e** ***menn*** [mɛnː] ‘men’	**ó** ***nógv*** [nɛkf] ‘much’	**ey** ***eystur*** [ˈɛstʊɹ] ‘east’	
[ʊ]	**u** ***tunnur*** [ˈtʰʊnːʊɹ] ‘thin’	**í** ***síggja*** [ˈsʊʧa] ‘see’	**ý** ***nýggjur*** [ˈnʊʧʊɹ] ‘new’	
[œ]	**ø** ***rødd*** [ɹœtː] ‘voice’	**ó** ***fólk*** [fœl̥k] ‘people’		

Variety in pronouncing the same vowel letter

a	**[a]** ***allur*** [ˈatlʊɹ] ‘all’	**[ɛa]** ***kavi*** [ˈkʰɛave] ‘snow’
á	**[ɔ]** ***nátt*** [nɔʰtː] ‘night’	**[ɔa]** ***nál*** [nɔal] ‘needle’
ó	**[œ]** ***fólk*** [fœl̥k] ‘people’	**[ɔu]** ***sól*** [sɔul] ‘sun’
ú	**[ʏ]** ***tjúkkur*** [ˈʧʏʰkːʊɹ] ‘thick’	**[ʉu]** ***hús*** [hʉus] ‘house’

Mute consonant letters

CONTRAST

tíð [t^{h}ui] ‘time’
verða [ˈveːɹa] ‘become’ (cf. *vera* [ˈveːɹa] ‘be’)
felag [ˈfeːla] ‘company’

Ambiguities in designating consonants

maður [ˈmɛavʊr] ‘man’
góður [ˈkɔuwʊɹ] ‘good’
deyði [ˈtɛije] ‘death’
æðr [akɻ̊] ‘vein’
dagur [ˈtɛavʊɹ] ‘day’
eyga [ˈɛija] ‘eye’
fluga [ˈfluːwa] ‘a fly’

Gammalsvenskby: No discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation

Vowels: *a* [a], *ā* [aː], *e* [ę], *ē* [eːⁱ, ęː], *i* [i], *ī* [iː], *o* [o], *ō* [oː], *u* [u], *ū* [uː], *y* [y], *ä* [ɛ], *ǟ* [ɛː], *ö* [œ], *ȫ* [œː], *ü* [ɞ], *ǖ* [ʉː], *äi* [ɛˈi, ɛĭ], *öü* [œːʉ, œʊ̆].

Consonants: *b* [b], *d* [d], *ḍ* [d̲], *f* [f], *g* [g], *h* [h], *j* [j], *k* [k], *l* [l], *ḷ* [ɽ], *m* [m], *n* [n] ([ŋ] in front of *k*), *ṇ* [n̲], *ŋ* [ŋ], *p* [p], *r* [r], *s* [s], *ṣ* [ʃ], *t* [t], *ṭ* [t̲], *v* [v], *x* [x], *z* [z], *ẓ* [ʒ].

For details, see http://akropoleis.net/gammalsvenskby/dialect_short.html#ortho

Prosody

Stress

No tonal accents **SIMILARITY**

Quantity

Faroese: All stressed syllables are long; no overlong syllables

Gammalsvenskby: Some stressed syllables are short (i.e. some open syllables in disyllabic forms), e.g.

bl̥äse ‘forehead’
buböl̥ ‘bubble’
finu ‘fin’
froka ‘smell’
fädär ‘feather’
homar ‘hammer’
härа ‘hare’
küda ‘cow’
roka ‘to swim’ **CONTRAST**

Occurrence of overlong syllables in Gammalsvenskby
(CV̄CC but not CV̄C̄#)

hōld ‘to hold’
būnd ‘owner’
ēnd ‘end’
hōnd ‘hand’
sōnd ‘sand’ (cf. the loanword *land* ‘land’)
ōndas ‘breathe’
dōmb ‘dust’
tīsk ‘a German’
māvd ‘servant, maid’
āvnar ‘chaff’

CONTRAST

Vowel Evolution

Faroese: Diphthongisation of stressed vowels

ā > [ɔa] (when long): OIcel. *bátr* ‘boat’ — Far. ***bátur*** [ˈpɔatʊɹ]
ō [ɔu] (when long): OIcel. *sól* ‘sun’ — Far. ***sól*** [sɔul]
ū > [ʉu] (when long): *hús* ‘house’ — Far. ***hús*** [hʉus]
ī > [ui] (when long and short): OIcel. *tími* ‘time’ — Far. ***tími*** [ˈtʰuime]

a > [ɛa] (when long): OIcel. *dalr* ‘dale’ — Far. ***dalur*** [ˈtɛalʊɹ]

Gammalsvenskby: No secondary diphthongisation

CONTRAST

Ancient Diphthongs

	Faroese	Gammalsvenskby
ei	**ei** [ai] *steinur* [ˈstainʊɹ]	**äi** [ɛi] *stäin* ‘stone’
au	**ey** [ɛi] *dreymur* [ˈt̲ɹɛimʊɹ] / [ɛ] *eystur* [ˈɛstʊɹ]	**öü** [œʉ] *öüa* [ˈœʉwa] ‘eye’
ey	**oy** [ɔi] *droyma* [ˈt̲ɹɔima], *hoyra* [ˈhɔiɹa]	**ē** *hēr* ‘to hear’

SIMILARITY

Delabialisation of *y*

Far. *systir* [ˈsɪstɪɹ] — Gsv. *sistär* ‘sister’
Far. *ryggur* [ˈɹɪkːʊɹ] — Gsv. *rigg* ‘back’

SIMILARITY

Consonants

The fate of /b, d, g/ and /p, t, k/

CONTRAST

Faroese: /b, d, g/ became devoiced; /p, t, k/ remain aspirated

Gammalsvenskby: /b, d, g/ remain voiced; /p, t, k/ became non-aspirated

Disappearance of *ð, ɣ, þ*

Faroese: ***tíð*** [tʰui], ***laga*** [ˈleːa] ‘arrange’, ***tunnur*** [ˈtʰʊnːʊɹ] ‘thin’, ***har*** [hɛaɹ] ‘there’

Gammalsvenskby ***tī*** [tiː] ‘time’, ***lōa*** [ˈlo̜ːa] ‘prepare’, ***tunndär*** ‘thin’, *tēr* ‘there’

SIMILARITY

Palatalisation

CONTRAST

Faroese: Palatalisation and emergence of affricates

dj, gj, g (before front vowles) > [ʧ];

kj, tj, in most cases *hj, k* (before front vowels) > [ʧ].

sj, skj > [ʃ]

Gammalsvenskby: Palatalisation; no affricates

Faroese	Gammalsvenskby	
djór [ʧɔuɹ]	***djūr*** [dʲʉːr]	‘animal’
gjørdi [ˈʧœɹt̲e]	***gjūḍ*** [gʲuːḍ]	‘made’
tjúkkur [ˈʧʏʰkːʊɹ]	***tjokkär*** [ˈtʲokːɛr]	‘thick’
tjóvur [ˈʧɔuvʊɹ]	***tjṻ*** [tʲʉː]	‘thief’
gera [ˈʧeːɹa]	***gära*** [ˈgɛra]	‘make’
kirkja [ˈʧɪɻ̥ʧa]	***kirke*** [ˈkirke]	‘church’
sjúkur [ˈʃʉukʊɹ]	***sjṻkär*** [ˈsʲʉːkɛr]	‘sick’
skjúrta [ˈʃʏɻ̥t̲a]	***skjoṭṭ*** [skjoṭ̲ː]	‘shirt’
hjún [ʧʉun] ‘husband and wife’	***sjūn*** [ˈsʲuːn] ‘person’	

Verschärfung in Faroese

búgva [ˈpɪkva] ‘to live’ (Icel. *búa*)
brúgv [pɹɪkf] ‘bridge’ (Icel. *brú*)
doyggja [ˈtɔʧa] ‘to die’ (Icel. *deyja*)
moyggj [mɔʧ] ‘girl’ (Icel. *mey*)

No such phenomenon in Gammalsvenskby (examples are found only in the dialect of Stora Rågö, e.g. ***nigiər*** m. — ***nigia*** f. — ***nītt*** n., according to Vendell)

CONTRAST

Liquid Consonants

Faroese:

r [ɹ], alveolar approximant (as in English); *l* [l]; both devoiced in front of voiceless consonants

Gammalsvenskby:

r [r], alveolar vibrant (as in Russian and Standard Swedish);

l [l] vs. [ɽ], retroflex flap

CONTRAST

Distribution of [l] and [ɻ] in Gammalsvenskby

[l] occurs:

- In onset position: ***lilldär*** ‘small’
- When doubled: ***bällat*** ‘pregnant’
- In front of and after *d, t*: ***färald*** ‘butterfly’
- After *s, x*: ***slō*** ‘to hit’; ***gnixl*** ‘to whimper’
- In place of **rl*: ***käliŋ*** ‘woman’
- After *ī* & *äi*: *kvīl* ‘rest’; ***däil*** ‘to divide’

[ɻ] occurs:

- Between vowels and word-finally after vowels: ***fāḷan*** ‘beautiful’
- In front of and after some consonants: ***foḷk*** ‘people’, ***svöḷge*** ‘to swallow’, ***höḷp*** ‘to help’, ***haḷm*** ‘straw’, ***goḷv*** ‘floor’, ***höḷft*** ‘helped’, ***kḷē*** ‘cloth’, *gḷēm* ‘forget’, ***bḷū*** ‘blood’

Noun Morphology

Paradigm

CONTRAST

Faroese: Maximum 7 basic forms

Sg.				Pl.		
Nom.	Acc.	Dat.	Gen.	Nom. & acc.	Dat.	Gen.
bátur	***bát***	***báti***	***báts***	***bátar***	***bátum***	***báta***

Gammalsvenskby: 4 basic forms

	Indef. sg.	Def. sg.	Indef. pl.	Def. pl.
Masculine	***fisk*** ‘fish’	***fisken***	***fiskar***	***fiska***
Feminine	***hēn*** ‘hen’	***hēna***	***hēnar***	***hēnana***
Neuter	***lōmb*** ‘lamb’	***lōmbe***	***lōmbär***	***lōmbena***

Inflexions

Striking parallelism in inflectional classification of masculines:

	Faroese	Gammalsvenskby
1	***fiskur*** ‘fish’, pl. ***-ar***	***fisk***, pl. ***-ar***
2	***smiður*** ‘smith’, pl. ***-ir***	***smē***, pl. ***-är***
3	***hani*** ‘rooster’, pl. ***-ar***	***hona***, pl. ***-(a)r***
4	***fótur*** ‘foot’, pl. ***føtur***	***fūt***, pl. ***fētär***

SIMILARITY

Adjectives

Gammalsvenskby paradigm

Sg. (strong form)			Pl.		Weak form
Masc.	Fem.	Neuter	Attributive	Non-attributive	
varmär 'warm'	*varm*	*varmt*	*varm*	*varmar*	*varm*

CONTRAST

Inflectional types of adjectives in Gsv

	Masc. sg.	Fem. sg.; Attributive pl.; Weak form	Neut. sg.	Non-attr. pl.
Type 1	*tummär* 'empty' *nīär* 'new'	*tumm* *nī*	*tummt* *nitt*	*tummar* *nīar*
Type 2	*dīran* 'expensive' *fāḷan* 'beautiful'	*dīr* *fāḷ*	*diṭṭ* *faṭṭ*	*dīrar* *fāḷar*
Type 3	*likḷendär* 'happy' *rostndär* 'rusted' *nakondär* 'naked'	*likḷe* *roste* *nako*	*likḷet* *rostet* *nakot*	*likḷendar* *rostndar* *nakondar*

CONTRAST

Verbs

Weak verbs

Faroese paradigm

Inf.	Praes. ind.		Imp.		Praet.		Part. I	Part. II	Sup.
	1 sg.	2, 3 sg.	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.			
kasta	*kasti*	*kastar*	*kasta*	*kastið*	*kastaði*	*kastaðu*	*kastandi*	*kastaður*	*kastað*

Gammalsvenskby paradigm

Inf.; Praes. pl.; Imperative sg.	**Praes. sg.**	**Imperative pl.**	**Praeterite & Supine**	**Part. I**	**Part. II**
kast	*kastar*	*kaste*	*kasta*	*kastande*	masc.*kasta//kastandär* fem. *kasta* neut. *kasta//kastat* pl. *kasta//kastandar*

Strong verbs

Faroese paradigm

Inf.	**Praes. ind.**		**Imp.**		**Praet.**		**Part. I**	**Part. II**	**Sup.**
	1 sg.	**2, 3 sg.**	**Sg.**	**Pl.**	**Sg.**	**Pl.**			
strúka	*strúki*	*strýkur*	*strúk*	*strúkið*	*streyk*	*struku*	*strúkandi*	*strokin*	*strokið*

Gammalsvenskby paradigm

Inf.; Praes. pl.; Imperative sg.	**Praes. sg.**	**Imperative pl.**	**Praeterite**	**Supine**	**Part. I**	**Part. II**
bind	*bindär*	*binde*	*band*	*bunde*	*bindande*	masc.*bundndär* fem. *bunde* neut. *bundet* pl. *bundndar*

Striking lexical isogloss

Far. ***skøði*** [ˈskøːje] n. ‘skin from which to make a pair of shoes; shoe’

Gsv. ***skē*** m. ‘shoes worn in bad weather’

Cf. Old Icelandic *skœði* n. pl. ‘piece of leather cut square for making a pair of shoes’, Icel. *skæði* n. ‘leather shoe’

King and Queen of Sweden with speakers of the dialect (2009)
Photo: Tage Brolin