

The Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain

Indigenous or not?

BA-Eindwerkstuk Scriptie Keltische Talen en Cultuur

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Februari 2018

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Plagiaatverklaring

Hierbij verklaar ik dat ik tijdens het schrijven van dit BA-Eindwerkstuk geen plagiaat gepleegd heb.

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15/02/2018



1. Introduction

There are many different types of tales that come to us from the past. There are fables, legends, folktales and other kind of stories. All of them, however, have in common that there is often a penchant for magical events or objects. The form of these objects and their functions may differ between cultures, but the concept of magical items is widespread in stories across the world. Looking at some examples, there appears to be many different kinds of magical objects. In classical myths there is, for example, the aegis which Athena wields (even though it is still not clear what this item really was), in Norse mythology there was *Skíðblaðir*, the collapsible ship of Freyr and in Celtic tradition magical cauldrons appear in quite a few stories, such as *The Second Branch of the Mabinogi (Branwen)*¹ and the cauldron of the Dagda in Irish mythology². These magical items often appear in tales as objects standing on their own, but they can also be part of a list of magical items, such as happens in the Celtic tradition. Here there are two such lists, one called the *Four Treasures of the Tuatha Dé Danann*³ and the other named the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain*.⁴ This paper will take a closer look at the latter because it contains more vessels of plenty, on which this paper will concentrate. To limit the scope of this paper three items from the list will be chosen to be looked at more closely, i.e. the Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank, the Horn of Brân the Niggard from the North and the Cauldron of Dyrnwch the Giant.

The time in which we live is a period of discussions about the individuality of countries and regions. The drive for political independence is found almost daily in the newspapers, for example in Scotland and in Catalonia. These regions feel they are different enough to break away from the kingdom or country they belong to. Thus, they feel they have a different identity. Part of this identity is often language, tradition and culture. Since people can use many sources to support their claims of individuality, the question this paper will treat is whether the *Thirteen Treasures* are indigenous to Wales – and thus originated from there – or not. Since this paper will only treat three items from the list, it will not be possible to answer this question completely, but only for the chosen items. An attempt at further reasoning for the whole list will be mentioned briefly in the conclusion. In order to

¹ Davies 2007: 22-34.

² Dunning 2004: 82.

³ Scowcroft 1987: 109.

⁴ Bromwich 2006: 258-260.

see if the three chosen magical items are indigenous or not, parallels will be sought in other Celtic (mostly Irish) tradition (chapter 3.1), in Indo-European tradition (chapter 3.2) and non-Indo-European tradition (chapter 3.3).

If there are indeed parallels it will be examined whether these cultures could have influenced the Welsh tradition (chapter 4). Depending on whether these parallels are between the three items of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* and other Indo-European cultures, it could be said that they go back to a common Indo-European background. However, if there are also parallels in non-Indo-European tradition, this presence of magical items that provide food and drink in a culture's tradition might exist because of its fulfilment of one of the most important human needs and man's fascination with magic.

1.1 Theoretical Frame

The list of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Isle of Britain* is found in different manuscripts and therefore it is not that surprising that the versions of the list vary sometimes. It is an index of thirteen (or more) magical items. At first it was just a list, but in later manuscripts more information was added. Most often it is seen as an record of objects that poets should know by heart.⁵ If they knew the list they could remember the story attached to this object. The reasons why this index is seen as a mnemonic device is because lists are easy to remember, but also because it resembles other lists, such as the *Pedwar Marchog ar Hugain* ('The Twenty-four Knights of Arthur's Court') and the *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* ('The Triads of The Isle of Britain'), both of which are seen as having this function.⁶ Since the list was probably a mnemonic device and some items are mentioned in stories that were originally oral, it is safe to say they were part of the folk-tradition, and as such, part of folklore.

It is difficult to find a strict definition of folklore, and it depends on the writers' point of view and their field of work what they find important to include in the definition. Very broadly, according to the Oxford Dictionary of literary terms, folklore is everything that is transmitted orally in a community and concerns the traditions of customs, beliefs, songs and stories.⁷ Since the list of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* was probably used as a mnemonic device, it can be seen as part of folklore. It does not matter that the list was ultimately written down – and thus was no longer orally transmitted – since written texts can also be seen as part of folklore if they are the product of a tradition that was at first oral.⁸ Even if there were no stories connected to the list, it is still part of folklore on its own, especially because some items figure in transmitted stories such as *Culhwch ac Olwen* ('Culhwch and Olwen').⁹

Connected to folklore are folktales. There are different definitions, but the one from William Bascom will be used here. According to him folklore should better be called *prose narrative*, since this term is less confusing than *folklore*. What he understands as *prose*

⁵ Bromwich 2006: lviii-lix.

⁶ Bromwich 2006: lviii-lix.

⁷ Baldick 2004: lemma *folklore*.

⁸ Botkin in Balys 1996: 256.

⁹ Davies 2007: 179-213.

narrative are myths, legends and folktales. Thus folktales, according to him, are prose narratives and what sets them apart from legends and myths is the fact that they were seen by their culture as fiction. This is in opposition to myths and legends which were seen as having actually happened.¹⁰ In the case of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* it is difficult to decide whether they were indeed part of folktales, i.e. whether this list was used by story-tellers to remember folktales, or whether they referred to tales that were believed in.

When talking about folklore and folktales there are two main theoretical approaches. The first one is descriptive, and it tries to collect and describe as much folklore as possible of a certain culture. The other approach is the comparative method. This method consists of comparing certain parts of the folklore of one culture to parts that are similar to it in other cultures. The aim is then to find the one original text or form of that part of folklore, whether it is a certain belief, a song or a story and the manner in which the original form was transmitted from one culture to another.¹¹ This paper will use the second approach since it compares magical items from one culture with magical items in other cultures and attempts to find if their origin is indigenous to Wales or not.

To do this, the paper will make use of several motif-indices of folk-literature and folktales. Even though *The Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* might not be connected to folktales, some items from it are listed in Tom Peete Cross' *Motif-index of early Irish literature*.¹² Despite the title, this motif-index also lists Welsh examples. Because of this, the theoretical frame which is used to categorize folktales according to their narrative motifs can be used. This classification was originally made by Antti Aarne and translated and expanded by Stith Thompson.¹³ Their work distinguishes many different motifs that occur in folk-literature and they have categorized them under different headings.¹⁴ These motif-indices – from Thompson and from other authors dealing with specific cultures – will be used to find parallels of the three chosen items in other cultures.

¹⁰ Bascom 1965: 3-4.

¹¹ Robe 1967: 34.

¹² Cross 1952.

¹³ Thompson I 1885-1976: 9-11.

¹⁴ Thompson 1885-1975.

Culture(s) is another word that is hard to define. There is of course the connection to civilization, i.e. someone who is cultured, is civilized, which often places the term *culture* in opposition to nature.¹⁵ However when the term is used in this paper it is used to refer to a group of people – often a nation or inhabitants of a certain region – who share the same social behaviour, ideas and customs.¹⁶

1.2 Methodology

As seen under the theoretical frame, this paper will use the comparative method and the Aarne-Thompson classification¹⁷ to compare the three chosen items to items from other cultures. These are *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*, *The Horn of Brân* and *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch*. The reason for choosing these items is because these are all vessels of plenty connected to nourishment in the list and their function is thus similar. There are more vessels of plenty in the list, e.g. the Vat and Dish of Rhygenydd the Cleric, but the chosen three have very specific forms and functions and more than three items would exceed the size of a BA thesis. Since the main function of all these vessels is similar they might have been the same item originally and thus, the conclusion of this paper will also be applicable to the vessels of plenty not treated individually.

As said before, parallels will be sought between these three items and magical objects from folklore of Celtic, Indo-European and non-Indo-European cultures. Not only folktales will be examined, but myths and legends too, since it is not possible to determine what kind of stories were connected to this list. To start, ‘absolute’ parallels will be sought, i.e. the magical objects must have the exact same magical function in both cultures. However, since not all cultures use the same objects (e.g. drinking-horns), the descriptions of the magical items will become a bit broader, e.g. the form of an item can differ a bit, such as a drinking cup instead of a horn. After possible parallels are found, this paper will examine if it is possible that these cultures have influenced the Welsh culture, or if the Welsh culture has inspired the others, though this is less likely. To end the paper, a conclusion will be given

¹⁵ Ennaji 2010: 21.

¹⁶ Stevenson 2010: lemma *culture*.

¹⁷ The used Motif-Index is Thompson, Stith, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends* (Bloomington 1955-1985).

in which the findings will also be briefly applied to the rest of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain*.

2. The Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain

Now the *'Thirteen' Treasures of the Island of Britain* are given. As said before, the list sometimes varies and therefore fifteen items are listed. Where one of the last two items is included in the list, one of the others is left out. This collection of all possible items on the list was made by Rachel Bromwich in an appendix to her edition of the *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*.¹⁹ The manuscripts in which the *Thirteen Treasures* are transmitted date mostly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²⁰

1. Dyrnwyn, gleddyf Rhydderch Hael
'Dyrnwyn (literally 'White-Hilt'), the Sword of Rhydderch the Generous'.
2. Mwys Gwyddno Garanir
'The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank'.
3. Korn Bran Galed (o'r Gogledd)
'The Horn of Brân the Niggard (from the North)'
4. Kar Morgan Mwynfa(w)r
'The Chariot of Morgan the Wealthy'
5. Kebystr Klydno Eiddun
'The Halter of Clydno Eiddyn'
6. Kyllell Llawfrodedd Farchog
'The Knife of Llawfrodedd the Horseman'
7. Pair (Dyrnwch Gawr)
'The Cauldron (of Dyrnwch the Giant)'
8. (H)ogalen Tudwal Tutklud
'The Whetstone of Tudwal Tudglyd'
9. Pais Badarn Beisrüdd
'The Coat of Padarn Red-Coat'
- 10/11. Gren a desgyl Rhygenydd Ysgolhaig
'The Vat and the Dish of Rhygenydd the Cleric'
12. Gwyddb(w)ll Gwenddoleu (ap Ceidio)

¹⁹ Bromwich 2006: 258-260.

²⁰ Bromwich 2006: cvi.

'The Chessboard of Gwenddolau (son of Ceidio)'

13. Llen Arthür (yng Nghernyw)

'The Mantle of Arthur (of Cornwall)'

14. (Mantell Degau Eurvron)

('The Mantle of Tegau Gold-Breast')

15. (Maen a Modrwy Eluned ddedwyd)

('The Stone and Ring of Eluned the Fortunate')

In the next part of this chapter, this paper will take a closer look at the three chosen items, their functions and whether there are attestations of them apart from their presence in the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain*.

2.1 *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*

The magical ability of *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank* is connected to the production of food. In the earliest manuscript, dating from the fifteenth century, there is no extra information given.²² According to the explanation added to later manuscripts (many of the sixteenth century)²³, someone has to put one portion of food in it and when it is opened again there is enough food to feed a hundred men.²⁴

This *Hamper* is the object attested earliest in a text other than *The Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain*. This text is known as the story *Culhwch ac Olwen* from *The Mabinogion*, a collection of stories which were written in Welsh prose. The earliest manuscript in which this story was transmitted, i.e. *The White Book of Rhydderch*, is dated ca. 1350.²⁵ However, it is possible that some of the stories were written down earlier, without those manuscripts surviving.²⁶ The date conventionally given to the first written version of *Culhwch ac Olwen* is around the first half of the twelfth century.²⁷ Despite debates about the specifics of the matter, *Culhwch ac Olwen* probably started out as an oral tale, with the tasks occurring in it varying according to the audience and the story-teller. This means that parts of the story – such as *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank* – could even be older than the twelfth century.²⁸ In this story, the *Hamper* is one of the items Culhwch has to obtain in order to marry Olwen. It also serves food, but the specifics are a little different. Here, the amount of people able to eat from it has grown exponentially, i.e. it is said that the whole world could be fed by it. There is also no mention of food needing to be placed into the *Hamper* in order to be increased. Another slight change is that in this story it is specified that each person eating from the *Hamper* would receive the food he wanted the most.²⁹

Another reference to *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank* was made by the poet Tudur Aled. In his *awdl* to Robert Salesbury, written around 1500,³⁰ he mentions some of the *Thirteen Treasures*, among them *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*. There are no specifics

²² Bromwich 2006: cvi-cvii.

²³ Bromwich 2006: cvii.

²⁴ Bromwich 2006: 259.

²⁵ Davies 2007: ix.

²⁶ Davies 2007: xvii.

²⁷ Davies 2007: xxii.

²⁸ Davies 2007: xxiii.

²⁹ Davies 2007: 196.

³⁰ Bromwich 2006: cvi.

given as to the magical abilities of the *Hamper*, but it stands in a list of items all connected to the magical ability to produce nourishment.³¹

It appears that these two references to *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank* agree that the *Hamper* was a magic object that produced food. Even though the specific circumstances differ, be it the amount of people being fed by it or how the food was produced from the *Hamper*, this is the common basic ability.

If food is one of the necessities of life, then drink is another one. The next item that will be treated – the *Horn of Brân* – is an object with a specific form that provides beverage.

³¹ Bromwich 2006: 262.

2.2. *The Horn of Brân the Niggard (from the North)*

The Horn of Brân the Niggard from the North was another magical item connected to producing sustenance for the people. In this case, it was drink that was produced. The added information given in some versions of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* states that this horn produced whatever drink the owner wished. More interesting however is that there is a story added in the marginalia of Peniarth 147, which was written around 1566 and thus in the same period as the *Thirteen Treasures*. It recounts how Hercules, from classical mythology, came in possession of the horn.³² This story will be examined more closely in chapter 3.2, where the parallels with and the connections to Indo-European (non-Celtic) magical objects will be investigated.

No further attestations of *The Horn of Brân the Niggard* are found. There is another horn mentioned in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, but this one is called the *Horn of Gwlgawd Gododdin* and there is no indication of it being a magical item, other than being named right after *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank* and occurring in a list of items of which some possess magical powers. The only extra information on this object, given by Ysbaddaden is that it should be attained so it can be used to pour drinks for the people at Culhwch and Olwen's wedding.³³ This may indicate a magical ability, but it is not a certainty. The only possible reason to believe this horn to be the same as the horn from *The Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain*, is the use of 'Gododdin' in its name, since the Gododdin are connected to the Old North³⁴ and *The Horn of Brân* is also said to originate from the North.³⁵ Whether it is the same horn or not, it shows the presence of horns as drinking vessels in Welsh folklore.

Returning to magical items that provide food, the last item that will be treated is the Cauldron of Dyrnwch the Giant.

³² Bromwich 2006: 259-261.

³³ Davies 2007: 196.

³⁴ Davies 2007: 292.

³⁵ Bromwich 2006: cviii.

2.3. *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch the Giant*

The last magical item from the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* connected to nourishment that will be treated in this paper is *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch the Giant*. According to the explanation given in later manuscripts, this cauldron boiled meat, but only if the person who put it in the cauldron was a brave man. If someone cowardly would try to boil meat in it, the meat would never become ready.³⁶

According to Bromwich, this cauldron is also mentioned in the list of tasks Culhwch has to fulfil in order to marry Olwen.³⁷ Here the name of the original owner is a bit different from the one given in the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain*, i.e. Diwrnach Wyddel.³⁸ This man is said to be the steward of the Irish king Odgar son of Aedd. Ysbaddadden wants Culhwch to obtain this cauldron so it can be used to boil food for the people who will come to Culhwch's wedding. However, there is no further mention of possible magic abilities of the cauldron.³⁹

According to Loomis there is another cauldron in Welsh literature that has a similar ability.⁴⁰ He refers to a poem of *The Book of Taliesin* where the poet talks about the *Pair Pen Annwyn* (the 'Cauldron of the Head of Anwfn'). The text gives a description of the cauldron and also mentions that the cauldron does not cook the food of cowards.⁴¹ This is indeed the same ability the cauldron listed in the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* has. This cauldron can thus be seen as a parallel to the *Cauldron of Dyrnwch*, in the next part other parallels will be sought.

³⁶ Bromwich 2006: 258-260.

³⁷ Bromwich 2006: 262.

³⁸ See Davies 2007: 269, n. 197.

³⁹ Davies 2007: 197.

⁴⁰ Bromwich 2006: 262.

⁴¹ Evans 1915: 126-127.

3. Parallels

To compare the magical items from the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* to the magical items in other cultures, the focus will be on their shared ability to produce nourishment. Their forms may differ slightly since not all cultures have the same materials or habits (e.g. drinking horns), but their basic form must remain the same. This means that if there are no exact parallels to be found of a *Hamper*, a *Horn* and a *Cauldron* that provide food or beverage, the descriptions will be broadened. *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank* will then be described as a man-made vessel which is normally used to contain food (not to cook food) and which provides food (including baskets, chests and bags). The *Horn* will be described as a drinking vessel that provides drinks (including horns, cups and tankards) and the *Cauldron* will be seen as a vessel used to cook food (thus cauldrons, kettles and pots) which produces food.

3.1 Celtic

Since the culture of Wales is closely connected to other Celtic cultures, the forms of the magical items will be the same because close parallels exist between these two cultures. Each object will at least be given two parallels to show the presence of these items in other Celtic cultures. If the parallels are less close, more parallels might be given (e.g. with the *Horn*). The *Cauldron of Dyrnwch* also has more parallels to show how important cauldrons were in Celtic literature.

3.1.1 *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*

Starting with *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*, this item is described by Cross as a food-basket that provides food. In broader terms it is described as a vessel that does so.⁴² In Irish literature there is one magical item that can be considered as a parallel of *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank* according to Cross. This is the vessel named *criol* which is in the possession of queen Medb of Cruachan and is mentioned in *Loch Erne*.⁴³ According to Arthur Brown this *criol* was probably a talisman of plenty since queen Medb was a “plenty-giving goddess”.⁴⁴ He also gives three other examples of this *criol* in Irish literature. In one of these its ability appears to be connected to the provision of clothing instead of food (in *Ní car Brigit*)⁴⁵, another might have the ability to provide food (in *Reicne Fothaid Canainne*)⁴⁶, and in the other one no special ability is given (in *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin*).⁴⁷

Brown himself reasons that two of these examples show the *criol* as a plenty-providing vessel (*Ní car Brigit* and *Reicne Fothaid Canainne*) and since he believes the first example about Medb to be about a vessel of plenty, this *criol* appears to be a vessel of plenty. He even suggests that it originally might have been a food-providing vessel like the Grail, which he tries to connect to this *criol*.⁴⁸ Cross gives other references to vessels of plenty in literature but these refer back to the Welsh magical items. An item that has more parallels in Celtic literature is the *Horn of Brân*.

⁴² Cross 1879-1951: 158 (D1472.1.19).

⁴³ Gwynn 1905: 465.

⁴⁴ Brown 1966: 440.

⁴⁵ Brown 1966: 440-442

⁴⁶ Brown 1966: 442-443 and 446.

⁴⁷ Brown 1966: 442-443

⁴⁸ Brown 1966: 446.

3.1.2 *The Horn of Brân*

The Horn of Brân is a horn that provides beverage. Gerard Murphy sees parallels between this magical item and an Irish folk-tale existing in two variants (as he knows at least), called *An Tarbh Breac* ('the Speckled Bull') and *An Tarbh Donn* ('the Brown Bull').⁵² The Speckled Bull tells the story of a boy whose step-mother forces him to tend to the cattle without food. When he becomes hungry, one of the animals – the speckled bull – hears him complaining and comes to him. The bull commands the boy to remove his horn to find food where the horn used to be. Indeed, when the boy does so, he finds a tablecloth, food and drink.⁵³ The other variant, i.e. *An Tarbh Donn* tells almost the same story, except for the protagonist being a girl and the food, beverage and blanket coming from the ears of the bull rather than the horns.⁵⁴

Cross mentions two different kinds of drink-supplying horns. One horn supplies wine, the other supplies mead.⁵⁵ The first horn is given by one of the Túatha Dé Danann and the giver says the horn will change salt water into wine.⁵⁶ Thus, this horn does not provide drink of itself, but creates it by means of transformation. The second kind of horn appears in several stories. One of these stories is the *Chase of Sid na mban Finn*. Although some parts of the text are missing, the horn appears to have the same ability as the one mentioned before, except for the change being from water into mead.⁵⁷ The last treated vessel, which also has a very distinct form, is the *Cauldron of Dyrnwch*.

3.1.3 *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch*

As can be expected from the number of cauldrons in Celtic literature, Cross refers to many Irish stories in which food-providing cauldrons appear.⁵⁹ The first one is *The Banquet of Dún na n-Ghéd*. In this story a cauldron is mentioned which has almost the same magical quality as *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch*. This cauldron also needs food to be put inside in order to provide enough food for the company that wants to eat from it. It is interesting that it also has certain conditions for boiling the food. No matter what is put inside, the cauldron

⁵² Murphy 1953: 193.

⁵³ Hyde 2014: 9.

⁵⁴ Ó Tuathail 1933: 34.

⁵⁵ Cross 1879-1951: 111 (D477.2)

⁵⁶ O'Grady 1892: 111.

⁵⁷ Meyer 1910: 63.

⁵⁹ Cross 1879-1951: 158 (D1472.1.11).

only cooks what fits according to the status of the company.⁶⁰ In *The Tale of the Ordeals*, *Cormac's Adventure in the Land of Promise*, and *the Decision as to Cormac's Sword* there is also a special cauldron. In this cauldron food could be held without rotting and there would only be enough food in it to supply the whole company, nothing more.⁶² Another Irish cauldron resembling *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch* is *The Cauldron of the Dagda*, the most important god to the Irish. Of this cauldron it was said that no person would be left unsatisfied if he ate from its food.⁶³ There are other examples given by Cross, but the foregoing stories already show that there are many parallels of *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch* in Irish literature. Not all of them have the same conditions that have to be fulfilled in order for the owner to eat, but all of them provide food in some way.

Parallels between two cultures which are connected to each other, such as Ireland and Wales, are not that surprisingly, so now this paper will look at possible parallels within Indo-European cultures.

⁶⁰ O'Donovan 1842: 51.

⁶² Stokes 1891: 205-206.

⁶³ Loomis 1941: 909.

3.2 Indo-European

The choice to look first at Indo-European cultures was taken because the Indo-European languages are connected to each other and thus originate from the same proto-Indo-European language. If the languages were connected and stem from the same proto-Indo-European language it would not be strange if certain elements from stories could also be connected in these cultures. As said before, not all cultures know the same objects.⁶⁴ Because of this bags will also be included as parallels of the *Hamper*. Since there are parallels of horns and cauldrons to be found, these descriptions will not be broadened. An important remark is that the Grail and all discussions connected to it (among them the question of its origin and possible connection to Celtic vessels of plenty) will not be treated in this paper, since this would lead too far away from the objective of this paper. To prevent an overabundance of examples, this paper will attempt to give one European example and one non-European.

3.2.1 *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*

Since the broadened description for this magical item is a man-made vessel which is normally used to contain food (not to cook food) and which provides food, this includes baskets and bags. Since the basket that provides food given by Thompson⁶⁵ is non-Indo-European, this part will cover the bags that provide food.

Thompson refers to *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm* when listing attestations of bags that supply food.⁶⁶ The German tale as it was written down by Grimm is called *Tischchen deck dich, Goldesel und Knüttel aus dem Sack* ('The Wishing-Table, the Gold-Ass, and the Cudgel in the Sack') and goes as follows: the story talks about a man whose three sons each come in possession of a magical item, the oldest receives a table that provides any food you want without running out, the second obtains an ass that produces gold and the youngest one acquires a bag and a cudgel that will hit anyone he wants. The first two lose their magical objects because an innkeeper steals them. When the younger brother discovers what has happened he acts as if he has wonderful items in his bag. When the innkeeper tries to steal these he commands the cudgel to hit the man until

⁶⁴ See page 15.

⁶⁵ Thompson 1955-1958: 711 (D1472.1.23).

⁶⁶ Thompson 1955-1958: 711 (D1472.1.22).

he returns the gifts of his brothers.⁶⁷ In this version of the tale it is a table that provides food, but in other variants (as given by Bolte) there are other objects that provide food, such as a table cloth⁶⁸, a basket or a bag (for example *Le père Maugréant* 'The grumbling father'⁶⁹ and a story from Serbia⁷⁰).

There is an Indian tale too, in which a bag provides whatever the owner wants, which logically includes food. However, the owner of the bag never uses it to produce food since he also has a cup that fulfils this function. The story is collected as the Sixth Story in *The Dravidian Nights Entertainment*⁷¹ and tells about two sons who leave their parents. One of them is crowned a king, the other acquires some magical items, namely sandals that bring him wherever he wants, a cup that provides food, a bag that gives whatever he wants and a cudgel that beats whoever he wants. He loses them for a while because two women use a ruse to steal them, but in the end he recovers them and meets his brother and parents again.⁷² It is remarkable that in this story two items appear that are present also in the story *Tischchen deck dich, Goldesel und Knüppel aus dem Sack* – i.e. something that provides food (even though it is a cup in this story) and a cudgel – but the plot itself is different.

3.2.2 *The Horn of Brân*

Since there are drinking vessels shaped as horns that provide drink in non-Celtic stories, these will be treated here and the description will not yet be broadened. In the Icelandic saga *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* a drinking horn which is never emptied, is mentioned.⁷³ This brings to mind a horn from the Norse mythology. The horn described in this story, a part of the Edda, is not a completely identical one, but it has some similarities. The horn is used by Utgard-Loki to challenge Thor to a contest. He has to empty the whole horn in one swallow. Thor tries to do this, but fails. He then takes two more swallows but still does not succeed in his attempt to empty the horn. It almost seems as if the horn is inexhaustible. At the end of the story Utgard-Loki explains that the horn was connected to the sea and that – when Thor drank from it – water from the sea

⁶⁷ Grimm 1996: 101-107.

⁶⁸ Bolte 1913: 349-350.

⁶⁹ Bolte 1913: 353

⁷⁰ Bolte 1913: 355.

⁷¹ Sastri 1886: 129.

⁷² Sastri 1886: 129.

⁷³ Lagerholm 1927: 59.

disappeared.⁷⁴ This horn might not be the same sort of drink-providing horn as *The Horn of Brân*, but it is in a sense an inexhaustible horn.

Another horn one would think of when talking about nourishment-providing horns is one of the best known magical horns, namely the *cornucopia*. This is the horn of plenty from classical mythology. According to one version of the story written by Apollodorus, Hercules wrestles with the river god Achelous who changes into a bull. Hercules breaks off one of his horns, but Achelous exchanges it for the horn of Amalthea. In this version of the story Amalthea is a nymph who possesses a bull's horn which could provide all the drink or meat the owner wants.⁷⁵ Amalthea appears in other classical stories as well, either as the she-goat that fed Zeus when he was hidden by his mother, or as the nymph who owned this goat. When she is seen as the goat itself, one of her horns is sometimes said to produce ambrosia, while the other provided nectar.⁷⁶ According to other stories, Zeus thanked her by changing her into a constellation and making one of her horns the *cornucopia*.⁷⁷ When seen as the nymph there is a story in which Zeus gives her a horn in gratitude for her help and endows the horn with the ability to bestow on the owner whatever they wanted.⁷⁸

Connected to this classical myth is the story which can be found in the marginalia in Peniarth 147. As said before, this is an account of how Hercules came in possession of *The Horn of Brân*, i.e. he slew a centaur who had this horn on his head. It goes then on to say that the wife of the centaur soaked Hercules' shirt in the blood of her husband and gave it back to him. When he put it on, it ate away his body and killed him.⁷⁹ It appears as if the writer of this text saw *The Horn of Brân* as the horn connected to Hercules, i.e. the *cornucopia*. He also appears to confuse the abovementioned myth of Amalthea with the myth of Hercules' death. In this myth Hercules' wife Deianira is harassed by a centaur. Hercules kills him, but the centaur fools Deianira into believing that his blood will prompt Hercules to stay true to her if she smears his shirt with it. The gullible woman does so which leads to the same death as in the story of the marginalia.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Mudrak 1965: 38-40.

⁷⁵ Apollodorus 1921: 257.

⁷⁶ Apollodorus 1921: 257, n. 4.

⁷⁷ Claes 2017: 13

⁷⁸ Apollodorus 1921: 257, n. 4.

⁷⁹ Bromwich 2006: 261.

⁸⁰ Schwab 1956: 160-162.

If the description of this magical item is broadened, and all drinking vessels producing beverage are looked into, there are other drinking vessels producing drink aside from drinking horns. Since their form is less similar to *The Horn of Brân* and because enough examples have already been given, they will only be mentioned here in passing, namely magic cups and magic glasses that provide drink. Thompson cites examples from India and Denmark.⁸¹ In both countries tales are also told about a food-providing cauldron, which will be shown in the next part.

3.2.3 *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch*

In Thompson's work⁸², when looking at cauldrons or kettles that provide food, he refers to Feilberg who lists some Danish tales.⁸³ In one of them – called *Potten* ('Pot') a poor man exchanges his last cow for a cooking pot. The pot then proceeds to run away each day and come back with pudding, grain and money.⁸⁴ Both this Danish pot and *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch* are similar because they have to obtain food from somewhere else instead of producing it themselves, as for example *The Horn of Brân* does. Here the difference is that *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch* only boils the meat put inside, whereas the Danish pot goes to take the food from elsewhere and gives it to the poor family. Another story Feilberg refers to tells almost the same story, but it is called *Pimpegyryden* ('Skipping Pot').⁸⁵

In India there are also stories about a food-providing kettle. In the Punjabi story *The Rat and the Three Magic Things*, a rat obtains a kettle from herders. They tell him that if he calls it "Potter's Kettle" the kettle will produce ghee, i.e. a kind of butter, and bread.⁸⁶ This story is closely connected to the story *Tischchen deck dich, Goldesel und Knüppel aus dem Sack* since the narrative is the same. The magical items differ a bit (instead of a table, here a kettle is used whereas the ass is a goat), but they still have the same key elements and moral. Another story featuring a food-providing kettle which does not resemble this tale is told in another part of India, namely in Mirzapur. In the story *The Nightingale with the Thousand Notes* the children of the king – who had been sent away by their jealous step-mothers – are given a kettle, a stick and a quilt of rags. Each of these has its own magic

⁸¹ Thompson 1955-1958: 710 (D1472.1.14 and D1472.1.16).

⁸² Thompson 1955-1958: 170 (D1472.1.12).

⁸³ Feilberg I 1886: 494.

⁸⁴ Grundtvig 1861: 79-81.

⁸⁵ Kristensen 1881: 202-206.

⁸⁶ King 1925: 258-260.

ability. The magic quality of the kettle is that it gives whatever food the owner wishes when he just washes it and places it on a fire.⁸⁷ This kettle is once again a food-providing kettle, even though it only plays a small part in the story.

To see whether parallels are only found between Indo-European tales or whether they are also found in cultures that are far more different, the next part will look at parallels in non-Indo-European cultures.

⁸⁷ North Indian Notes and Queries II 1892: 83-84 (no. 340).

3.3 Non-Indo-European

The last part of this chapter deals with parallels of the *Hamper*, the *Horn* and the *Cauldron* in non-Indo-European cultures. The descriptions of the magical items will be broadened in this part since the cultures can differ much more from each other than when they all belonged to the Indo-European cultures. Thus, the magical items of which parallels will be sought are: a man-made vessel used to contain food (*the Hamper*), a drinking vessel (*the Horn*) and a vessel used to cook (*the Cauldron*). The first and the last one provide food, the second one produces beverage. This paper will try to give at least two examples and if possible even more, especially if the stories are found in different parts of the world in order to show how widespread these items are.

3.3.1 *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*

The first possible magical items that will be treated are the ones paralleling *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*. One non-Indo-European tale that contains a parallel is an Arabian story called *Djaudar* which takes place in Africa.⁸⁸ The story itself is a part of the well-known collection named *One Thousand and One Nights*. The protagonist Gawdar accompanies a magician to Méquinez, a city in Fez. The magician provides them both with food from a travelling-bag which produces any food one wishes when the empty plates are placed in it.⁸⁹ To thank Gawdar for his service, the magician gives him the bag and some other gifts. However, his brothers steal it from him. At the end of the story he succeeds in regaining the magical bag and marrying the daughter of a king, but his brothers again betray him and kill him. In the end, the daughter of the king is the one who obtains the magical bag.⁹⁰

Thompson⁹¹ mentions a Polynesian story from Tonga⁹² in which a man has married a woman. He wants to tell his father the news and his mother tells him to go to a woman who will tell him who his father is. He discovers that his father is the sun. The sun sends him back to the woman who gives him a basket that will give him what he wants whenever he is in

⁸⁸ Chauvin 1901: 257-260.

⁸⁹ Chauvin 1901: 259.

⁹⁰ Chauvin 1901: 257-260.

⁹¹ Thompson 1955-1958: 711 (D1472.1.23).

⁹² Gifford 1924: 111-113.

need. When he does this the basket provides different kinds of food (including pigs).⁹³ Food is not only produced by parallels of the *Hamper*, but also by a cup in one version of a tale containing a parallel of the *Horn of Brân*.

3.3.2 *The Horn of Brân*

A horn that supplies drink of its own is not found outside the folklore of Indo-European cultures. However, drinking-vessels that produce drink are to be found. One Chinese story called *Why Wildcats Eat Chickens* tells of a man who steals silver and golden cups from some monkeys. When he says a certain phrase the cups fill themselves with meat and wine. When another man wants to do the same it goes wrong and the man ends up in the lair of a bear. He escapes with help of wildcats but then refuses to repay them which leads to them starting to eat chickens, hence the title.⁹⁶ Another drinking-vessel is mentioned in *The Alchemist*. In this story the drinking-vessel is a tankard made of jade. It is in the possession of an Immortal who possesses other magical items as well. When the owner pours some wine in it, the tankard fills itself to the brim and stays that way no matter how much wine is taken from it.⁹⁷ The parallels for the *Horn of Brân* are not numerous, in opposition to the *Cauldron of Dyrnwch*, which has more parallels as can be seen in the next part.

3.3.3 *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch*

Cauldrons and kettles that provide food are found far less frequently outside Indo-European cultures, but pots that provide food can be found much more often. An Arabian story called *Les Deux Frères, la Marmite et le bâton* ('The two brothers: the cooking pot and the stick') again resembles *Tischchen deck dich, Goldesel und Knüppel aus dem Sack* with respect to the narrative, even though only two gifts are given to the protagonist, this time by a jujube tree. Again one of these is a magical item that provides any food one could want and it is taken away from the owner by someone else. There is a difference in the way this cooking pot also provides other things besides food, such as money.⁹⁸

A story from Ghana is similar to the previous one. The protagonist is Anansi, a well-known trickster character from folktales, who often takes the form of a spider. Again, the

⁹³ Gifford 1924: 113.

⁹⁶ Graham 1954: 216-217.

⁹⁷ Werner 1922: 382.

⁹⁸ Basset 1903: 31.

protagonist finds a pot that gives inexhaustible food if the right command is given and again it is taken away, or in this case, his children break the cooking pot. Anansi then punishes his children by using the whip he has found which strikes the person he wants if he uses the right commands.⁹⁹ Anansi plays the protagonist once more in another African version of this tale where the vessel is a magic kettle. Although there are some differences the main story is quite the same. Here, however, Anansi is the one who is seen as being at fault for keeping the kettle for himself and the kettle melts when his wife uses it to feed the whole village. When he afterwards receives the cudgel he is the one who is beaten by it.¹⁰⁰

In the Philippines still another version of this story is told. This story resembles *Tischchen deck dich, Goldesel und Knüppel aus dem Sack* more than the previous one, since the protagonist (Juan) receives a goat that can shake money from its whiskers, a net that will always catch fish, a cooking pot with spoons that provide rice and ulam and finally a cudgel that beats people. The nourishment the cooking pot produces here is just one kind of food, but it still gives as much as Juan needs.¹⁰¹ A non-Indo-European tale that does not have the same narrative is a Chinese tale called *A Poor Orphan Became Wealthy*. Here a woman puts a grain of rice in a kettle and in some way the rice multiplies until the kettle is filled. It is however not clear if the kettle or the woman is responsible for this miracle.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Barth 1856: 467-468.

¹⁰⁰ Barker 1917: 39-44.

¹⁰¹ Gardner 1907: 106-107.

¹⁰² Graham 1954: 252.

4. Possible influences

As this paper shows, there are many parallels to be found within different cultures. The question whether they somehow influenced each other, and especially, if one or some of them influenced the existence of *The Hamper of Gwyddno Long-Shank*, *The Horn of Brân* and *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch*, is difficult to answer. First of all, there is the problem of the dates. The list of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain* stems probably from the fifteenth century at earliest.¹⁰³ However, many of the magical items from the list are probably older and already existed in the Welsh tradition before this list was composed.¹⁰⁴ Both the *Hamper* and the *Cauldron* are mentioned in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and Bromwich argues that probably most of the magical items that satisfy human wants and needs are as old as both of these.¹⁰⁵ Since the *Horn* is such a magical item providing nourishment, it is reasonable to believe that this item was at least as old as the other two. *Culhwch ac Olwen* was written down for the first time in the first half of the twelfth century, but could be older.¹⁰⁶ To see if influence was possible from any of the listed parallels, the history of Wales will be given in a short overview from roughly 55 BC till 1200 AD. The a Romans arrived in 55 BC and that is the reason this date is used as a beginning point since before this time there were no written records on Wales.¹⁰⁷ The year 1200 is chosen as ending point because *Culhwch ac Olwen* was written in the twelfth century. Since two of the treated items are mentioned in this story, any influence from other cultures on them must have been present before the time the tale was written down.

It is not possible to say much about the period before the Romans arrived in Britain (55 BC) since there are no written records of this time. Haywood argues that there was some form of influence from the continent (especially in art styles) because of political contacts and of course trade.¹⁰⁸ In 55 BC Caesar invaded Britain to punish the inhabitants for helping Gaulish tribes resist him. Although the Romans took over the south-east of Britain fairly quick, Wales posed a larger problem, and it was only between 78 AD and 84 AD that the last

¹⁰³ Bromwich 2006: cvi.

¹⁰⁴ Bromwich 2006: cviii.

¹⁰⁵ Bromwich 2006: cviii.

¹⁰⁶ Davies 2007: xxii.

¹⁰⁷ Haywood 2001: 73.

¹⁰⁸ Haywood 2001: 78.

parts of Wales were invaded. Even then, parts of Wales kept rebelling.¹⁰⁹ Roman influence was thus not that strong in Wales. However, in the fifth century, after the Romans had withdrawn from Britain, Irish people settled in parts of Wales as can be seen by the ogham inscriptions they left behind.¹¹⁰ The Anglo-Saxons had started invading Britain too after the Romans had retreated and in the sixth century they succeeded in seizing parts of Britain. Wales, however, remained in hands of the Britons and the cultural interaction between them and the Anglo-Saxons remained little.¹¹¹ The next possible influence came from the Normans who started to invade Wales in the late eleventh century. Nevertheless they encountered resistance and succeeded only in getting hold of the southern part of Wales.¹¹²

Connected to the Romans, however, is the Greek culture. In Ireland there was some (passive) knowledge of the Greek language.¹¹³ It can therefore not be ruled out that there was some knowledge about Greek culture too, especially since the Romans had adopted much of it. Thus, it could have been possible that awareness of Greek culture reached Wales through the Romans or the Irish. A direct link between the Greek culture and Britain could be found in the person of Theodore of Tarsus, who was archbishop of Canterbury, and Hadrian, the abbot.¹¹⁴ They taught their pupils the Latin and Greek language, so these pupils could have learned some Greek culture as well.¹¹⁵ However, there is no knowing how far the influence of these people could have reached and especially if it ever influenced Wales.

It appears thus as if only the Romans, the Irish, the Anglo-Saxons, the Normans and possibly the Greeks could have influenced the Welsh culture directly for only these cultures had the time and position to really be of any importance. The same goes for Welsh influence on other cultures. Indirect influence, however, is harder to rule out. Aside from this, trade with other cultures of course might have existed but there would have been less opportunity to influence tales or elements from tales when the contact was so fleeting. Influence from Arabian, Chinese or Polynesian tales – in which parallels are found – is most unlikely.

¹⁰⁹ Haywood 2001: 82-83.

¹¹⁰ Haywood 2001: 88-89.

¹¹¹ Haywood 2001: 94.

¹¹² Haywood 2001: 108.

¹¹³ Moran 2012: 190-192.

¹¹⁴ Moran 2012: 174.

¹¹⁵ Plummer 1896: 204-205.

5. Conclusion

As seen in this paper, there are many parallels of the *Hamper of Gwyddno Long Shank*, *The Horn of Brân* and *The Cauldron of Dyrnwch* in other cultures. The similarities between the magical items are greater when the cultures in which they appear are more closely connected to each other. As such, the Irish parallels are fairly close to the Welsh ones; the cauldron for example keeps the ability to differentiate between people according to their rank or worth. The farther away from the Welsh culture the more generic the magical ability of providing nourishment. Since only some cultures had the possibility to influence the genesis of these Welsh magical vessels, the question is how the other parallels came to be.

According to Littleton, who talks about the origin of the Grail, the concept of vessels of plenty that produce food and drink is common in cultures where an Indo-European language was spoken. He shows this by referring to the magical cup (that sometimes provides beverage) from the Motif Indices, a magic item that occurs in only one non-Indo-European attestation.¹¹⁶ Another scholar, Gerard Murphy talks more broadly about Irish folktale motifs and how they originate from the time Indo-European was spoken. According to him these motifs are the parts from which stories are built and thus part of the Indo-European common history.¹¹⁷

However, there are two remarks to be made concerning this Indo-European origin of folktale motifs. First of all, the subject of this paper is not really folktale motifs, but a certain element that occurs in folktales and other kind of stories such as myths. This paper only looks at nourishment-providing vessels and often these vessels play but a small part in the narrative. Secondly, as the examples of parallels have shown, there are non-Indo-European parallels too, for example in China and Africa. These might be less close in form or function compared to the Indo-European ones, but there are parallels. Important to note is that there even are folktale motifs and folktale types that are found in non-Indo-European folktales such as variants of the story *Tischchen deck dich*, *Goldesel und Knüppel aus dem Sack*. Even

¹¹⁶ Littleton 1994: 220-221.

¹¹⁷ Murphy 1953: 192.

though other objects are used and the story might be shortened or lengthened, the narrative plot remains the same.

The concept of a vessel of plenty providing food or drink appears thus to be a concept that exist all over the world. This is not surprising since food and drink are universal human necessities. It is only logical that people would invent magical vessels which produce as much food and drink as needed, or vessels that provide any drink or food one wishes for. The reason for the differences between the specifics of the magical items, for example the difference in form (e.g. horn or drinking cup) or in magical ability (e.g. providing inexhaustible food or/and any food one wants) is probably influenced by the habits and way of life from the culture in which the story is told. If a culture invents a magical item that will provide drink, it is logical they choose the item they use to drink from and provide it with that ability. In this way some cultures will invent a drink-providing horn, while cultures that do not use drinking-horns will give this ability to their kind of drinking-vessel. Thus, while the concept of vessel of plenty is known over the whole world, the specifics of each vessel are filled in by specific cultures.

This paper has now looked at three of the *Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain*. These three magical items show that there are parallels for them within other cultures both Indo-European and non-Indo-European. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that these items are not indigenous to Wales. The idea of nourishment-providing magical objects is indeed not indigenous to Wales since it is known over the whole world, but the objects in which these ideas take shape are closely connected to Wales. Even though these three items are vessels of plenty that produce nourishment, it might be possible to apply the same logic to the other magical items (not related to food) on the list. More research is needed for this outcome to be confirmed, but it appears logical that the other items will also be shaped to fulfil worldwide human needs, such as the desire to travel (the Chariot of Morgan the Wealthy) or to be invisible (the Mantle of Arthur in Cornwall).

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