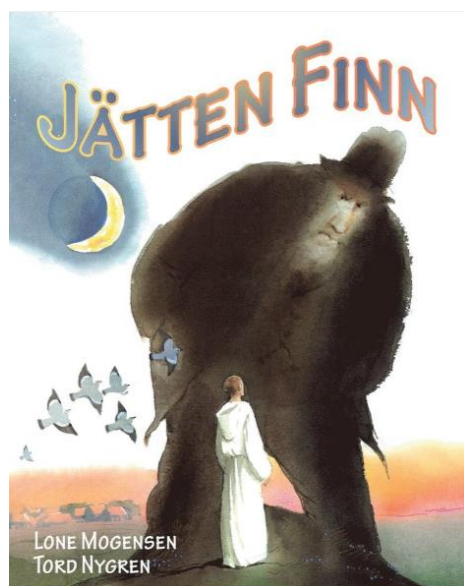


## Abstract: Finn the Giant: Folklore of Church-building giants in Scandinavia and Japan

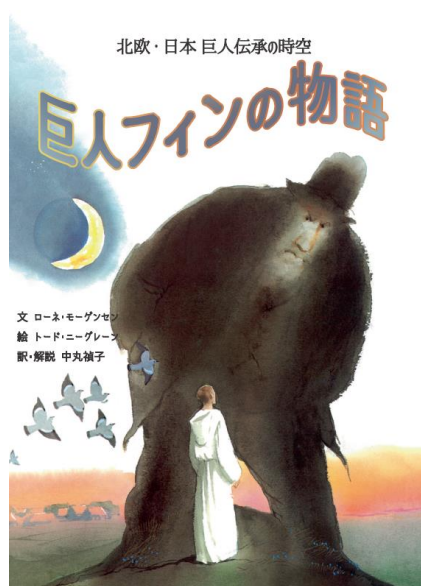
Teiko NAKAMARU

This book, titled *Finn the Giant. The Folklores of Church-building-giants in Scandinavia and Japan* [*Kyojin Finn no monogatari. Hokuou Nihon kyojin densyo no jiku. 巨人フィンの物語 北欧・日本 巨人伝承の時空*], comprises two sections: the Japanese translation of a Swedish picture book titled *Jätten Finn (Finn the Giant)*, authored by Lone Mogensen and illustrated by Tord Nygren, and an exposition on the folklore surrounding “Finn the Giant”.

The picture book *Finn the Giant* recounts the folklore surrounding Lund Cathedral in Sweden. According to the story, a holy man named Sanktus Laurentius, also known as St. Lars, arrived in Lund to preach to the Vikings. A giant appeared to St. Lars and offered to build the grand Cathedral on the condition that the holy man either give him the sun and the moon, or forfeit both of his eyes. He added that St. Lars could keep his eyes if he could correctly guess the giant’s name. Despite his efforts, St. Lars couldn't guess the name, and the giant swiftly constructed the cathedral. As St. Lars rested on a hill, he overheard a song: “Tomorrow, your father Finn will come back to us with both eyes of the holy man.” It was a lullaby that the wife of the giant was singing for her baby. Alarmed, St. Lars rushed to the Cathedral and found that the giant was about to lay the final stone. He cried, “Finn, Finn, lay the final stone!” Enraged, the giant descended into the crypt, intent on destroying the pillar and the entire cathedral. However, as the morning sunlight touched him, the giant turned into stone, becoming the "Finn the Giant stone" visible in the crypt of Lund Cathedral today.



▲ Swedish Original Book



▲ Japanese Translation&Exposition



▲ Finn the Giant in Lund Cathedral

The exposition on the folklore comprises foundational information and a thesis in three parts.

The foundational information, "Let's go to Finn the Giant!" serves as a guide for readers, detailing the geographical locations of Scandinavia, Scania, and Lund, along with their populations, capitals, political situations, notable features, and materials, and enabling readers to acquire knowledge. Additionally, readers have the opportunity to peruse a plethora of pictures captured by me in Lund, Scania, and Scandinavia in 2018 and 2023.

The first part of the thesis "How was the story of *Finn the Giant* created?" delves into the various origins of the folklore. It is notable that the original tale stems from Norse mythology, wherein a mountain giant disguises himself as a builder and ventures to Asgard, the realm of the gods. The giant proposes to construct a fortress (some books say "a wall") to protect against giants, on the condition that the gods surrender the sun, the moon, and Freja, a beautiful goddess, if he completes building the fortress by the first day of summer. Accompanied by his stallion, the giant swiftly erects the fortress. However, Loki, a trickster god, assumes the form of a mare to distract the stallion, causing it to flee and leaving the fortress incomplete. Enraged, the giant reveals his true form, prompting Thor, the god of thunder, to slay him.

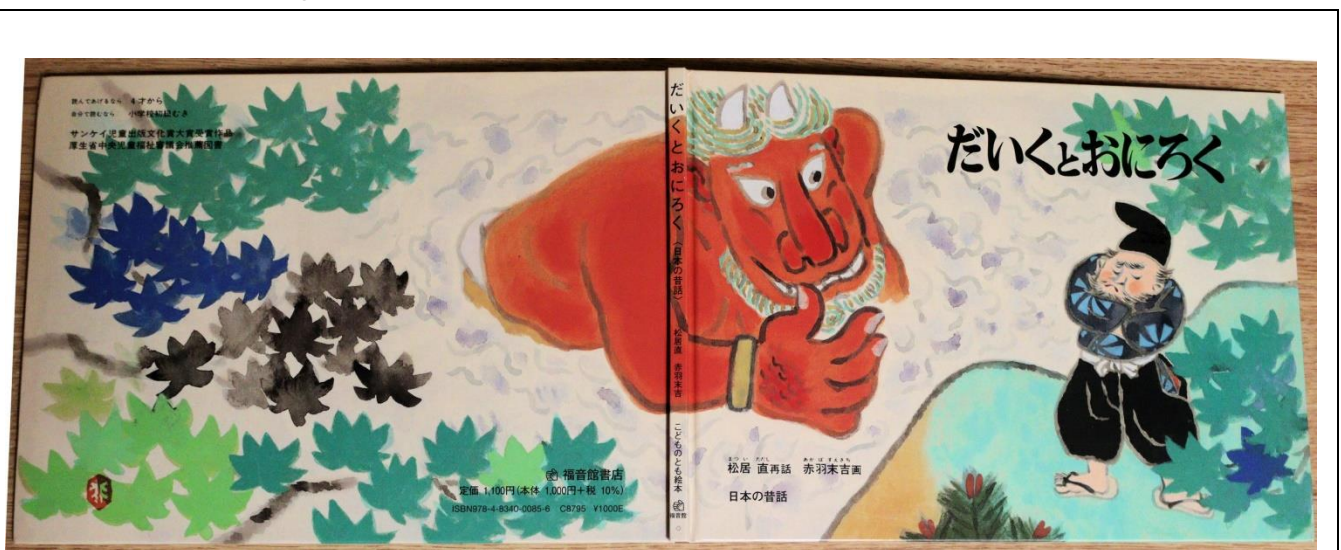
Scholars posit that this episode from Norse mythology evolved into the folklore of the church-building-giant during the Christian era. However, this transformation did not occur in Lund, but rather in Central Europe, before spreading to Nidaros, or present-day Trondheim. Nidaros held significance as a pilgrimage site, leading pilgrims to disseminate the folklore throughout Scandinavia, including Lund. In Nidaros, the folklore recounts how a troll named Skalle constructs Nidaros Cathedral under the condition that St. Olof either forfeits the sun and the moon, or himself. Upon St. Olof revealing the troll's name, Skalle plummets from the top of the tower of the cathedral and shatters into numerous pieces of flint. Scholars suggest that the "giant-stone" in Lund was originally not associated with Finn the Giant (the guide I encountered mentioned, "there are numerous hypotheses about the pillar, one of which suggests that it was a carving of Samson from the Bible"), but over time, people began to associate the stone with Finn the Giant due to the folklore. The first chronicle regarding "the giant-pillar" emerged in the late sixteenth century, documented in a German diary by Erich Lasota, which remains extant today, followed by subsequent texts.

In the thesis, I present translations of various texts concerning Finn the Giant as identified by historian Lauritz Weibull (1873-1960) and folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878-1952): Erich Lasota's *Diary* (1593, German), Jens Lauridsen Wolf's *Encomion Regni Daniæ* (1654, Danish), Hans Ernstson Baden's *Gamle Graffschriffter och andet mindvedr* (1667, Swedish), Nils Henrik Sjöborg's *Samlingar för Nordens Fornälskare* (1824, Swedish), Arvid August Afzelius' *Svenska folkets sago-häfte* (1841, Swedish), Esaias Tegnér's *Gerda* (1847, Swedish), and Herman Hofberg's *Svenska folksäger samlade* (1882, Swedish).

Towards the conclusion of the first part, I introduce the thesis proposed by Japanese mythologist Tomoaki Mizuno (1949-2005) regarding the name "Finn". The most intriguing aspect of his thesis revolves around Thor, the predominant deity in pagan belief systems, later vilified as an adversary of Christianity. Mizuno suggests that Thor

serves as a dual model embodying both St. Lars who combats the giant as a force of evil and Finn who is perceived as an antagonist to Christianity

The second part of the thesis explores the creation of the Japanese folklore "Daiku to Oniroku" from Scandinavian folklore. "Daiku to Oniroku," which translates to "A Builder and a demon Oniroku," is a renowned tale in Iwate, northern Japan. In this folklore, a builder endeavors to construct a bridge over a treacherous river but struggles. Suddenly, an oni, a Japanese demon, appears and offers to build the bridge on the condition that the builder forfeits his eyes. However, if the builder can correctly identify the oni's name, he can retain his eyes. Despite the challenge, while wandering through the forest, he hears a lullaby: "I am looking forward to Oniroku coming back with eyes." Empowered with this knowledge, the builder confronts the oni and identifies him as "Oniroku!," derived from "oni" and "roku", meaning "six", a common suffix for male names in ancient times.



▲ Daiku to Oniroku . Text by Sunao Matsui, illustrate by Sukeichi Akaba, Fukuinkan shoten, 1962

In the 1980s, two Japanese scholars posited that *Daiku to Oniroku* is not an original Japanese folklore, but adaptation of Nordic folklore concerning Church-building-giants. Nobukatsu Takahashi (1942-2001) argued that *Daiku to Oniroku* was adapted from Nordic tales featuring giants or trolls constructing churches. Takahashi highlighted Lund and Nidaros as renowned locations associated with such folklore. Miki Sakurai (1933-2010) identified the earliest adaptation, *Oni no Hashi (The Bridge by Oni, 1917)* by Mitsu Mizuta (1882-1964). In the afterword, Mizuta introduced the Scandinavian folklore and wrote that she had changed a troll to an oni, a holy man to a builder, and a cathedral to a bridge for Japanese children who are unfamiliar with Christianity. However, Mizuta provided no information on how she was introduced to the Scandinavian folklore. Sakurai suggested that Mizuta, a teacher and author, likely acquired knowledge of Scandinavian folklore through her brother-in-law, Takeo Matsumura (1883-1969), a prominent mythologist in Japan. Matsumura notably introduced Norwegian folklore concerning St. Olof and a troll named "Winter und Wetter," accompanied by annotations from Uhland's *Der Mythus von Thor*.

In the second part of the thesis, I analyse the texts written by Matsumura and Mizuta, as well as the original sources referenced in their notes. These sources include Ludwig Uhland's *Der Mythos von Thor* (1836, German), Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835, German), Arvid August Afzelius' magazine *Iduna* Vol.3 (1812, Swedish) and *Svenska folkets sago-häfte* (1841, Swedish), Benjamin Thorpe's *Northern Mythology* (1851, English), William Alexander Craigie's *Scandinavian folk-lore* (1896, English).

As a result, I present two findings. First, Mizuta's familiarity with the original folklore did not stem from Matsumura and Uhland, but rather from Thorpe. This indicates that Mizuta acquired knowledge of the folklore independently by reading Thorpe's work in English. Secondly, the discrepancy between the names "Winter und Wetter" and "Wind und Wetter" can be attributed to Matsumura's background. Matsumura's studies in mythology during that era often intertwined Norse mythology with climatic conditions in Scandinavia. The imagery of the strong and resilient Scandinavians enduring harsh climates contributed to the ethnic associations prevalent in the study of mythology at the time.

The third part of the thesis explores the further expansion of the episode of the fortress-building giant in Norse mythology. Notably, Hajime Isayama (1986-) created the widely acclaimed manga *Shingeki no Kyojin* (known as *Attack on Titan*, originally titled *An Advancing Giant*, 2010-2021).

First, I delve into Norse mythology in greater detail than in the first part, providing examples and interpretations from texts such as *Völuspá*, *Snorra Edda*, and the *Völsunga saga*. The most pivotal episode in relation to the manga is when the god Odin and his brothers, slay the first giant, Ymir, and use his body to build the world for mankind.

Following this, I analyse *Shingeki no Kyojin* in comparison to Norse mythology. The manga opens with a pivotal scene, where a giant breaches the wall separating the realm of giants from that of mankind. The protagonist, Eren Yeager, witnesses his mother being devoured by a giant and is compelled to flee his hometown following the onslaught. He then vows to eradicate all giants. As the narrative unfolds, the readers discover that the walls are constructed using the bodies of numerous giants, and a particular human race possesses the innate ability to transform into giants.

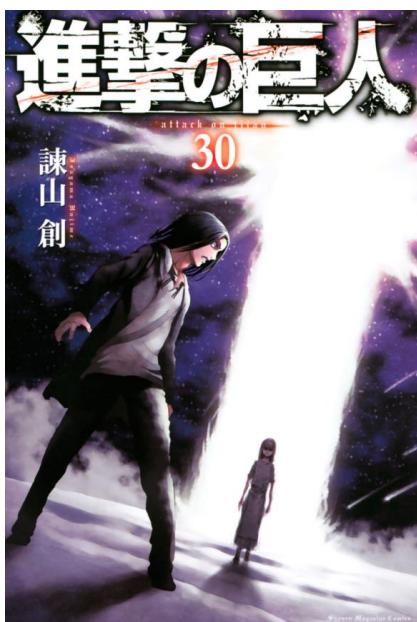
The depiction of walls being constructed with giants in *Shingeki no Kyojin* bears a striking resemblance to Norse mythology, where mountain-giants build fortresses or walls, or where Odin and his brothers fashion the world of mankind using the body of a slain giant. However, there are notable differences between the mythology and the manga. Firstly, in the manga, the walls carry a predominantly negative connotation, contrasting with the positive image of walls or fortresses as defenders of mankind in mythology. This negative portrayal may stem from contemporary associations with walls, such as the Berlin Wall, evoking themes of confinement and oppression. In the manga, the walls imprison not only humanity, but also the giants whose bodies form the wall.

Secondly, the subjugation of giants in the manga is explicitly criticized and intertwined with the subjugation of women. Female characters — such as Hange, who was modelled after Odin, or the War Hammer Titan, who was

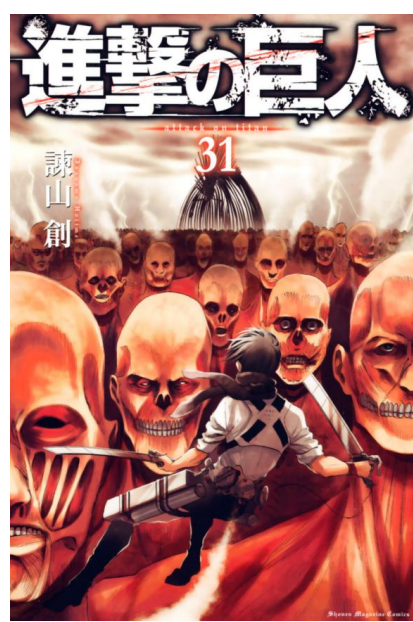


modelled after Thor — are depicted as symbols of resistance and liberation, and draw parallels to certain male characters from Norse mythology. For example, the first giant Ymir, is portrayed as a young slave girl in the manga. By the story's conclusion, Ymir and the protagonist liberate the giants in the wall and decimate 80 % of the mankind worldwide. Ultimately, the liberation of women and giants leads to upheaval rather than the establishment of a peaceful world, challenging patriarchal ideals. Through gender reversal, characters like Hange Zoe, modelled after Odin in Norse mythology, and heroine Mikasa Ackerman (whose first name "Mikasa" is masculine and means "general" in old Japanese, and family name "Ackerman" originally meant "man" in German ) attain independence. They demonstrate their autonomy by engaging in activities typically deemed unsuitable for women, such as committing crimes and assuming responsibility. No female characters actively strive for peace or bear children with their romantic partners, thus rejecting traditional patriarchal norms. In doing so, they challenge and reject patriarchy.

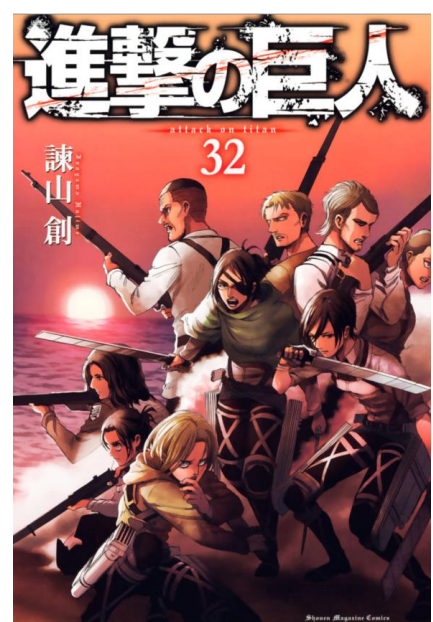
▽Attack on Titan by Hajime Isayama, Kodansha, 2010-2021



▲ Vol. 30. Eren and Ymir



▲ Vol. 31. Mikasa and Wall-Giants



▲ Hange, Mikasa with the women

It is indeed complex; however, the protagonist Eren Yeager conforms to patriarchal norms. At the onset of the narrative, he embodies traits traditionally associated with female characters. The name “Eren” is traditionally associated with females, and he often finds himself in situations reminiscent of a damsel in distress, being kidnapped and rescued like a princess. Despite possessing the ability to foresee events and the future as “an advancing giant”, Eren is unable to alter them, akin to a shrine maiden in *Völspa*. Ultimately, in the story's culmination, he returns to Mikasa in the form of a seagull., as “Yeager” denotes a type of seagull. For the protagonist, the journey represents a transformation from the feminine Eren to the masculine Yeager. Eren, modelled after Loki, embodies the trickster archetype and remains detached from the moral lessons of the story and the world's affairs.