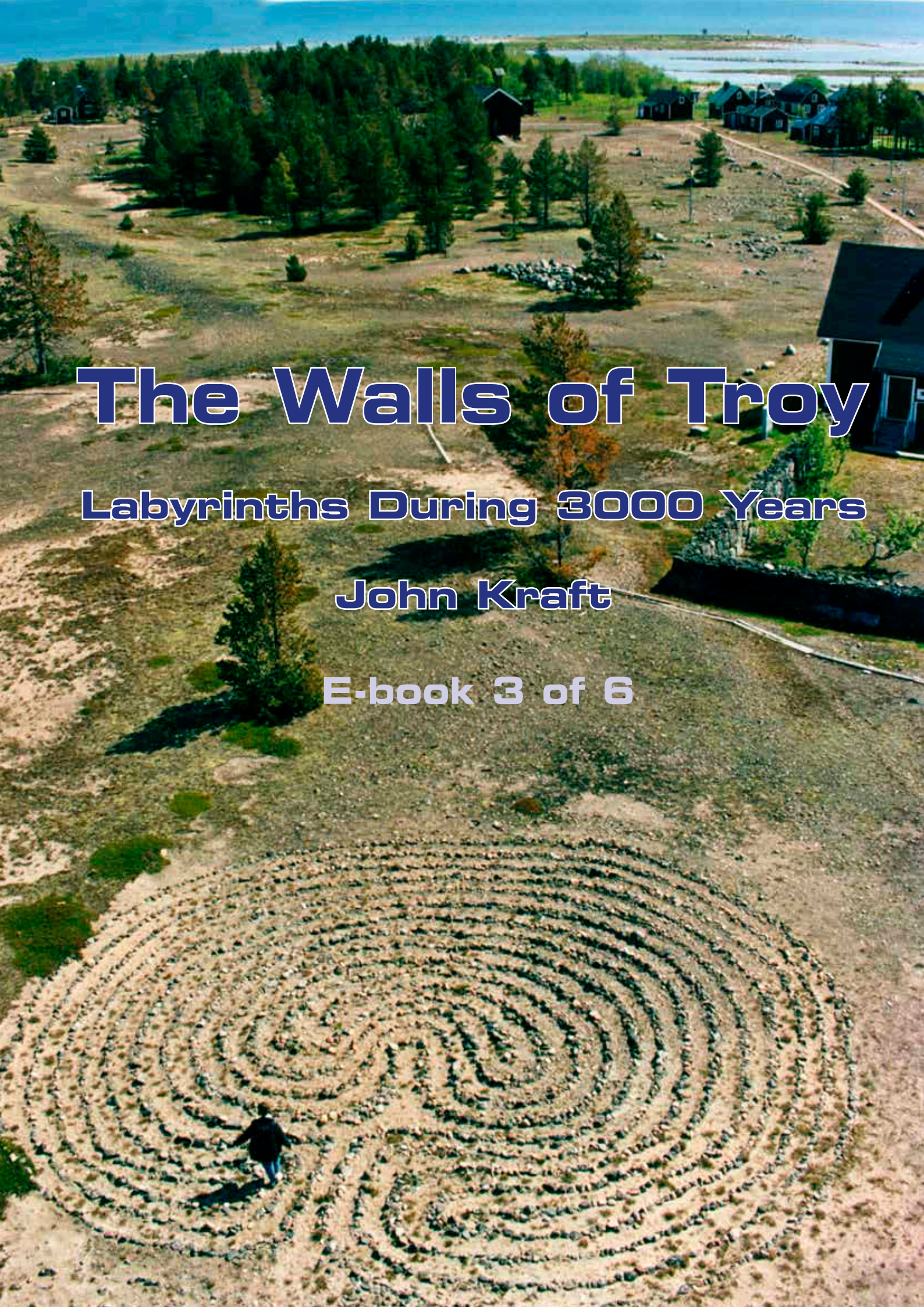


The Walls of Troy

Labyrinths During 3000 Years

John Kraft

E-book 3 of 6

Contents

Part 3

Labyrinth Lore

34. Magic

What was the purpose of the labyrinths? There are many indications that people went into the labyrinths on the fishing sites to protect themselves from bad weather or to get lucky with their fishing. Or both. There should therefore have been some form of magic, where correctly performed rites in the labyrinths improved one's chances. A detailed account of the information I have gathered is be found in Appendix 13.[1]

In a 1979 book, Erling Matz describes a fisherman from the Stockholm archipelago who saw an old local fisherman running through a labyrinth at a fishing hamlet in Hälsingland. "He ran and kept spitting over his shoulder. That would bring luck in fishing."[2]

As soon as I read this, I started unravelling the story, found the informant and visited the labyrinth. It turned out that the incident had taken place in 1955 at Kuggören. The old fisherman spat in his hand, or on something in his hand, and then sort of threw it over his shoulder. This happened when his sons were out at sea in bad weather. The old man probably didn't notice that anyone was watching him as he ran through the labyrinth.

This was perhaps the last time in Europe that anyone witnessed labyrinth magic of the old kind. The old fisherman died in 1963 so I came too late to see him. The fact that his sons were out at sea in bad weather suggests that the purpose of the labyrinth magic was to give them protection from the dangers at sea rather than good luck in fishing. However, the fisherman from the Stockholm archipelago who witnessed the rites in the labyrinth was told by another fisherman at Kuggören that this "was a superstition for good fishing luck." It would bring good luck in fishing if you ran through the paths of a labyrinth without touching the stones and without jumping over any 'walls.'

The old fisherman, who was born in 1875, came to the fishing hamlet of Kuggören as a labourer in his 20s. The inhabitants of Kuggören, whom I spoke to, unanimously claimed that he was a bit "magical." He was asked for help when animals got sick. He could staunch blood and was regarded as a 'wise old man.' He often walked the labyrinth but never told anyone why.

At Kuggören there were also other information about the labyrinth. The local population's most common explanation was that it was built by sailors who had anchored at Kuggören harbour. Some added that the sailors who built the labyrinth had probably been waiting for wind.

A number of records in the Nordic countries suggest that people walked in labyrinths to conjure bad weather and protect themselves from storms. They hoped to appease the forces of the weather, which was important when travelling on an unpredictable sea in small fishing boats.

The local historian Johan A. Udde at Haparanda was told that labyrinths in Luleå and the central Norrland archipelago were built to conjure strong winds. There are also reports from the area around Örnsköldsvik that labyrinths were built to appease the forces of the weather. According to a report from the fishing village of Lörudden outside Sundsvall, the labyrinth would trap the winds so that people could fish in peace. From Estonia it is said that a labyrinth could be used to conjure bad weather and storms.

Other information suggests that the purpose of walking a labyrinth was to get a good catch or simply to get lucky in fishing. At Nederkalix in Norrbotten, an old fisherman said that if you first walked through the labyrinth to the centre and then ran quickly from there to the boat, you wouldn't get *the bad luck guys* 'otursgubbar' in the boat.

At Lövånger in Västerbotten it is said that *the evil demon* 'den onda demonen' was got rid of by walking in the labyrinth and then jumping out of it.

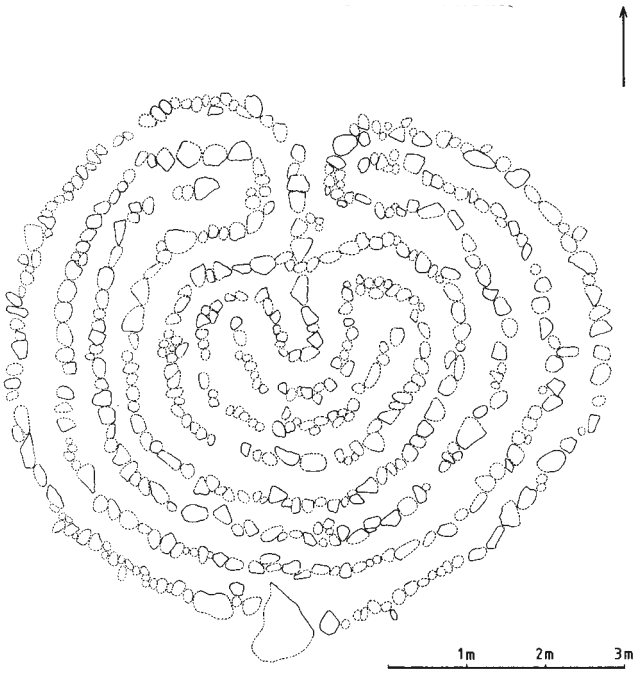
At Nora in Ångermanland it is said that an elderly fisherman entered the labyrinth sure that *the devil* 'Hin håle' was following him into the labyrinth. Once in the centre of the labyrinth, the fisherman could step over the innermost stone to get to the entrance, while the devil had to walk all the way back. In the meantime, the fisherman could launch the boat knowing that the devil was still on the shore. In this way he ensured his fishing luck.

According to one of the traditions from Lörudden outside Sundsvall, the labyrinths would catch anything that was *unknowable* 'oknytt' so that it would not get into the boat.

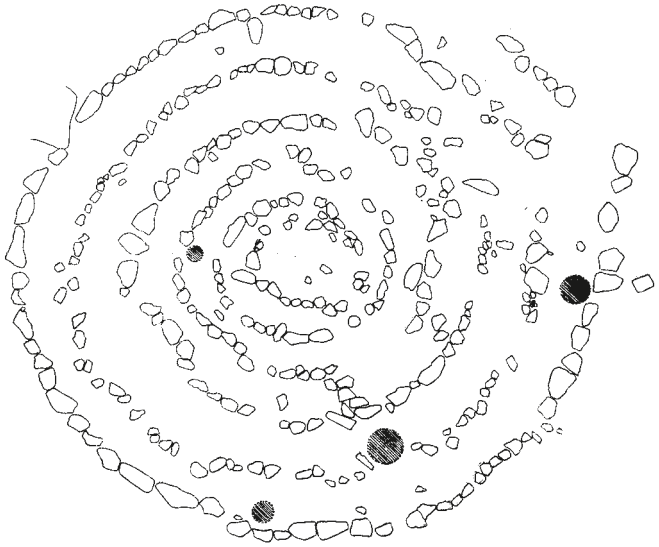
A similar story comes from northern Norway. It is said that a labyrinth in Omgangslandet, 100 kilometres east of the North Cape, was used to deceive *evil spirits* 'onda andar' by luring them into the labyrinth and using spells to make them disappear or be rendered harmless.

From Rådmansö, near Norrtälje in Sweden, it is said that when they laid their nets, they went into the labyrinth to exorcise *evil spirits* 'onda andar' and get a good catch; it was also said that the purpose was to get luck with fishing and good winds.

Bo Stjernström has told me that Ornö residents in the southern Stockholm archipelago had heard that people walked the labyrinth to get good luck with fishing. Several residents of the archipelago said they had heard that one could count on luck and success in general after going through a labyrinth without missing the way. From Svenska högarna in the Stockholm archipelago, it is said that a labyrinth there gave *magical luck* to those who made it through the windings without displacing any stones. According to archipelago tradition, you could count yourself lucky and successful if you could find your way to the centre of the labyrinth without jumping over any of the stones and then get out again. It went well if you walked correctly, but if you walked it the wrong way, it went badly.



34:1 Jatulintarha at Pellikä in Övre Vojakkala on the Torne River.



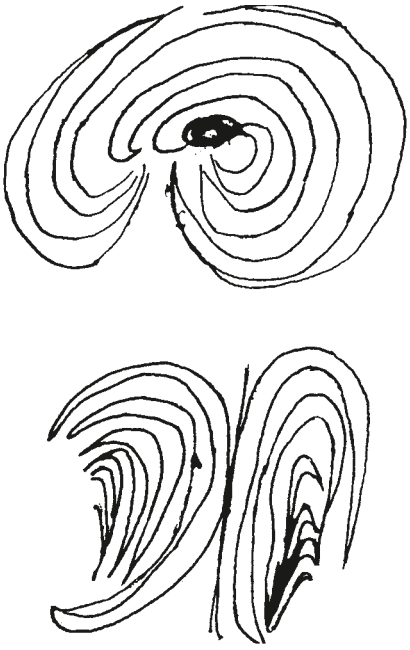
34:2 Tröenborg, spiral-shaped stone setting at Spisakullen on Älvsgården's landholdings in Hedareds parish, Västergötland.

As the records from Kuggören and several other places show, it is often difficult to separate the weather magic from the hope of getting lucky in fishing. Perhaps the coastal population did not see a crucial difference between these two purposes. Labyrinth magic simply increased their chances of success and survival in general. So, the most reasonable conclusion is that labyrinth magic could be used both to improve fishing luck and to conjure winds. There are also accounts that labyrinths were considered to bring luck in a wider sense, as well as good fortune and success.

A few labyrinths in the far north are located some distance inland at the fishing sites of the major rivers (Lule River, Torne River, Kemi River, Enare Träsk, the Ponoi River and Varzuga River on the Kola Peninsula). Here, protection against storms cannot have been the purpose, but the labyrinths were probably considered to bring luck in fishing.

A story from Mattila on the Torne River is that people used to walk in a nearby labyrinth before taking up the nets. It was also stated that the labyrinth was used for sorcery; people went into it when they laid out the nets or placed trapping gear in the forest.

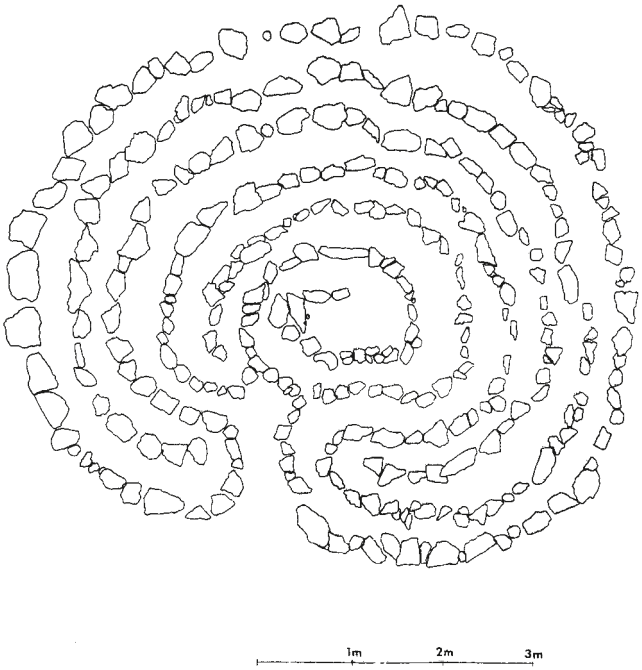
A little further up the Torne River, at Övre Vojakkala, there is a labyrinth which, according to tradition, was created by a man with magical skills, Abraham Erro, around 1800. He entered it when he had important business to attend to. Erro's labyrinth is only 200 metres from the river, which suggests that it was associated with river fishing. Perhaps Erro felt that he was performing an "important action" while fishing, but this account suggests that the labyrinth magic here had a broader purpose. The information from Mattila that people went into the labyrinth when laying out trapping gear in the forest also suggests that the magic was not strictly linked to fishing.



34:3 Sketches of Trollcirklar 'Magic Circles,' Skår near Alingsås.

Several other inland labyrinths have also been associated with magic. There are also some records of labyrinth magic among the Sami. According to a record from Gällivare, it was possible to move other people's reindeer over long distances with the help of a labyrinth. A poem from the early half of the 18th century shows that the Sami believed they could protect their reindeer from the ravages of the wolverine with the help of a labyrinth.

A similar motif emerges in Hedared in Västergötland, where it is said that shepherd boys walked through a labyrinth to find protection against the wolves. Not far away, at Skår near Alingsås, there are stories of *magic circles* which, judging by a drawing, must have been labyrinths. They were laid out



34:4 Trällestad, Trellebostan, Trelleborgstad or Trojeborg at Tvingelshed, Fridlevstad parish, Blekinge.

to frighten evil goblins and provide protection against 'evil.' The stones were laid out "in rings and circles so that it would not be possible to find your way out of the circle once you had entered it."

A labyrinth at Fridlevstad parish in Blekinge, which cannot be older than the early 1870s, is said to have been used by people seeking cures for illnesses. A person in this parish has said that as a small boy in the 1930s he was told that labyrinths were used for occult purposes at Midsummer and in connection with weddings.

In northern Norway, labyrinths are reported to have been used for important social events, such as weddings. Elderly people warned children playing in labyrinths that touching the stones could bring bad luck.

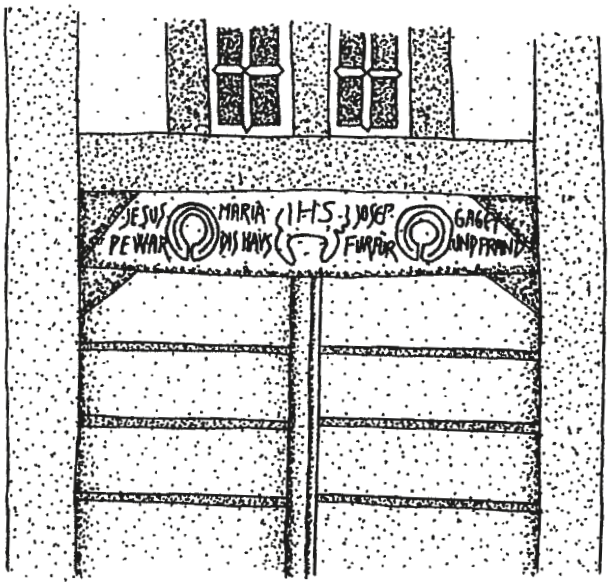
Two local researchers in Närpes on the west coast of Finland have investigated some labyrinths inland. A local resident says that when he was 12-14 years old, sometime in 1942-1944, he and other boys found coins in a birch-bark case under the centre stone of a labyrinth. There were a number of copper coins, some of which were large and had an N on one side, which was the monogram of Emperor Nikolai who ruled Finland 1895-1917. They also found coins under the centre stone in another labyrinth in Närpes. When he visited the labyrinths 70 years later, the old copper coins had been replaced by fresh coins! The coins thus appear to have been sacrifices of some kind, but it is unclear what they wanted to achieve by sacrificing in the labyrinth.

The coins in Närpes can be compared with a report by Zacharias Castrén[3] about a pair of labyrinths in Hannuksenvaara and Pajarin kangas in Tervola on the Kemi river. Bits of bones were found under their centre stones.[4] I suspect that they also sacrificed in the labyrinths.

In Finland, on the way to funerals, the deceased's initials, year of birth and death and a cross were carved on a tree, or on a board with these details that was nailed to the tree. It was hoped that this would prevent the deceased from walking the earth again. In two cases, angle-type figures have been carved into such trees.

An interesting piece of information comes from the USA. A well-known Swedish professor, who was very interested in labyrinths, said that his father spent 18 years in the United States where he travelled frequently. He encountered immigrants from Sweden and Finland who had brought labyrinth traditions to

34:5 Labyrinth where coins were found under the centre stone, Svartliden, Närpes parish in Österbotten.



34:6 Labyrinth-like images over a door, Marmeke in Saurland, Germany.

their new country. They would build labyrinths and walk them before making important journeys or doing other things, believing that this would bring them luck.[5]

In Marmeke, Sauerland, Germany, until 1939 there were some labyrinth-like figures on the outside of a house wall, above the door. Around the figures an incantation could be read: "Jesu, Maria, Josef Saget [an?]; Pewar dis Haus fur Für und Prand."[6] The figures were apparently thought to protect the house from fire.

In a museum in Cornwall, England, there is a slate slab with a carved labyrinth figure that was supposedly owned by a famous 'witch.' Stones of this kind were used at night for magical purposes. By moving a finger over the stone while humming rhythmically, a hypnotic state could be achieved (see Appendix 3).

The records of inland labyrinth magic show a more diverse range than the examples found in coastal areas. Among both coastal and inland labyrinths, magic points in a variety of directions. This is why I have described labyrinths as a universal instrument in the service of magic.[7]

The evidence is fairly clear. But not all folk traditions provide a reliable picture of the use of labyrinths. Some may be downright misleading.

According to several records, labyrinths were laid by *sailors waiting for wind*. (see Appendix 6). It is conceivable that this is an outgrowth of the idea that bad weather and storms could be conjured in a labyrinth. However, there are reasons to be suspicious of stories that blame the creation and use of labyrinths on strangers. The location of the coast labyrinths clearly indicates that they were used by the coastal population in connection with fishing. The information that sailors laid labyrinths while waiting for favourable wind has a fairly uniform character and a wide range. I therefore believe that this is a migratory legend with no basis in reality.

According to several other reports, coast labyrinths were built by shipwrecked people (see Appendix 5). Again, these are strangers. It is also unclear what reason shipwrecked people might have had for building labyrinths. I suspect that this tradition is misleading. This is probably also a migratory legend with no basis in reality.

A motif that recurs in several local traditions among both coast and inland labyrinths is that the stone figures were called domarringar 'rings of judgement' and that they were used to try suspected criminals (see Appendix 14). Anyone who managed to walk through the labyrinth without touching the stones was free, but those who failed were punished. Again, this is in all likelihood a migratory legend with no basis in reality. There is no reason to believe that the administration of justice in ancient times took such forms. Many other archaeological sites have also been called domarringar, even though they were obviously graves.

Isn't it possible that the stories about magic in labyrinths were also migratory legends with no basis in reality? No, hardly. Firstly, there are a number of clear records of people actually walking or running in the labyrinths for magical purposes. These are not just legends but practised magic. In several cases, named individuals are identified as having performed the rites.

Secondly, the descriptions point in different directions. The magic of the labyrinth has taken many forms, probably because it is old and has developed in different ways. Migratory legends with no basis in reality, such as those about domarringar, shipwrecks and sailors waiting for favourable wind, make a simpler and more stereotypical impression.

The magic associated with fishing can hardly be older than the coast labyrinths, so it should be later than the 12th or 13th century. The question of whether the labyrinths provided protection against dangers at sea or whether they provided luck in fishing is thus of no decisive importance for the attempts to clarify the original use of the labyrinths.

My impression is that all the stone labyrinths associated with magic are probably fairly late. Records of magic have never been linked to the labyrinths in Sweden that can be suspected of being prehistoric. Through the traditions, we can thus get a picture of the different aspects of labyrinth magic during the last two or three hundred years. However, this does not prevent magic from having ancient roots.

All known Swedish traditions of labyrinth magic associated with the sea and fishing come from the Baltic coast, from the Stockholm archipelago in the south to the Torne River in the north. No stone labyrinths on the west coast or on the coast of Småland have been associated with magic. These gaps in the material may be due to coincidence. But it may also be because labyrinth magic ceased there so long ago that no such labyrinth lore has been preserved to our time.

34:7 Labyrinths associated with magic.

Not many folk traditions have been recorded on the Swedish west coast. Those that exist are about sailors waiting for the wind, and there are some records of labyrinths being used as domarringar. These are probably migratory legends that were later associated with the stone figures.

The labyrinths of the Arctic coast are also poor in folk traditions. Tora Sandal Bøhn has collected some accounts in Finnmark and Åse Sørgård mentions an example of possible labyrinth magic near Umba on the Kola Peninsula, but the overall impression is poor. This could be because the labyrinths on the Arctic coast lost their magical significance so early that the traces of tradition have disappeared. But it is also conceivable that the Russian archaeologists' focus on Stone Age settlement remains meant that they neglected to listen to what the local population had to say. Archaeology and folklore research have not always gone hand in hand in a straightforward manner. And of course, there is the usual complication that coast labyrinths were usually built on seasonal fishing sites without permanent settlement, making it difficult to find any local people to interview.

The magic of coast labyrinths probably had predecessors among inland labyrinths. When people started building coast labyrinths, probably on the Swedish west coast sometime in the 12th or 13th century, the motivation was probably to get protection from the dangers at sea and/or luck in fishing. This was a creative adaptation to the fishing conditions of magic that had probably already been practised for a long time in inland labyrinths.

Chapter 28 discussed so-called "clusters", groups of labyrinths where it seems that an older labyrinth has given rise to younger successors in the same area. None of the probably oldest labyrinths in these clusters have been associated with magic. On the other hand, some of the younger stone figures have folk traditions indicating that they were used for magical purposes.

The three clusters of coast labyrinths on the Swedish west coast have no folklore about magic, but it is probably a safe guess that labyrinths were built at fishing sites in the archipelago because they were considered to have magical significance. They were thought to provide protection from the dangers at sea and/or good luck in fishing.

In the cluster of inland labyrinths near Borås in Västergötland, near the west coast, two probably younger labyrinths have been associated with magic: the labyrinth on Spisakullen in Hedared is said to have been built by shepherd boys who believed it provided protection against wolves. In Skår, five kilometres west of Alingsås, there are said to have been so-called *troll circles*, stone figures laid out to frighten evil goblins and provide protection against evil.

Of the eight labyrinths in the Fridlevstad parish in Blekinge, the one in Tvingelshed has been considered to cure diseases. From the same parish comes the information that labyrinths were used for occult purposes at midsummer and in connection with weddings.

I suspect that Gotland formed a single cluster. The oldest of them is probably the Visby labyrinth, popularly known as *Trojaborg* and associated with a series of legends centred on a maiden (see Appendix 23). But no labyrinths on Gotland have been associated with folklore about magic. The explanation could be that all the secondary labyrinths on Gotland were built quite late by school teachers and their pupils, by lighthouse keepers or by other interested persons who had no magical intentions. On Gotland there are obviously many labyrinths that have been built late and new ones are added from time to time.

But it is hard to believe that all of Gotland's secondary labyrinths were of such a late date. Gotland is difficult to see through. It cannot be ruled out that some labyrinths were already built in pre-Christian times and perhaps some of the probably later labyrinths were built with magical intentions. The question is which ones?

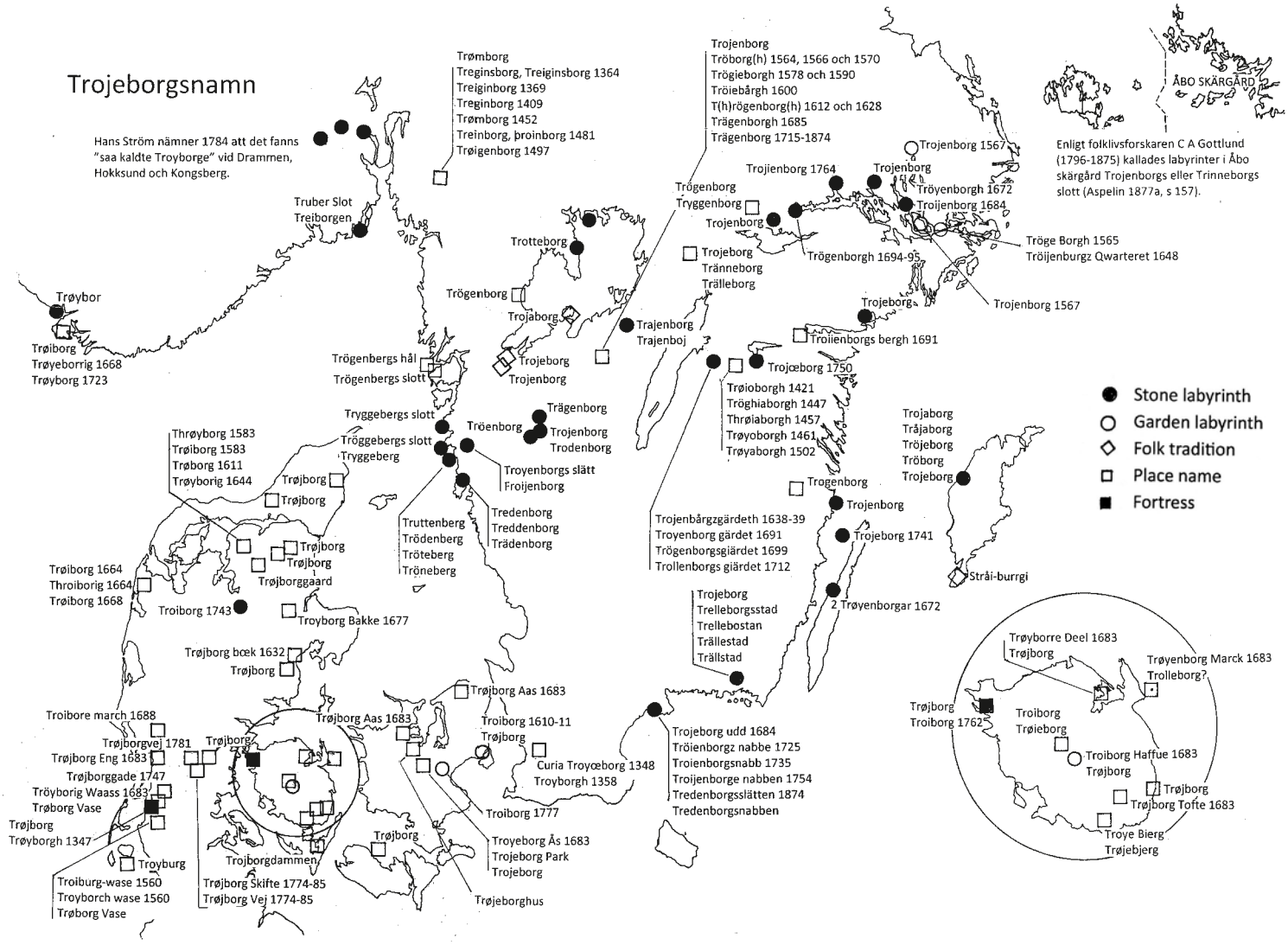
In two seminar papers, Bengt Arvidsson has questioned my view that the coast labyrinths were used to bring luck in fishing and/or to control the forces of weather. He has made a thorough review of the Nordic Museum's ethnological survey and corresponding reports from Gothenburg, Uppsala, Umeå and Lund. His conclusion is that there is little support for my opinion.

However, I have worked with a broader basis. The reason why he came to different conclusions is probably that the reporters in Sweden who contributed to the ethnological survey rarely lived in coastal areas and as a rule did not have a background in the environments where fishermen, pilots and lighthouse keepers worked. This may explain why the questionnaires give a fairly comprehensive account of the game of drawing a labyrinth and also offer many other interesting details from the inland, while information from the archipelagos is remarkably scarce.

However, there is so much evidence from other sources, suggesting that fishermen walked in labyrinths to promote fishing luck and ensure good weather, that there is no doubt that this was the main purpose of the coast labyrinths.

Nowhere in the extensive labyrinth lore in the Nordic countries can one discern the slightest influence from Christian beliefs. This suggests that labyrinth magic has pre-Christian origin.

There are records of 30 labyrinth images in 23 Nordic churches. As already mentioned in Chapter 31, there is much to suggest that these paintings and graffiti had magical significance. The intention may have been to provide protection against something, ensure success or bring luck in general. It is also conceivable that some stone labyrinths located near Swedish medieval churches were built for magical purposes.



35:1 Trojeborg names with variants.

Staffan Lundén has examined ancient labyrinth images and found that some of them may have been related to protective magic. He emphasises the parallels with India.[8] As Hermann Kern has pointed out, several labyrinth figures in India seem to have had an apotropaic purpose.[9] There is thus a connection between the protective magic in Nordic stone labyrinths and labyrinth images in medieval churches and similar beliefs in India and the Mediterranean region. Everything seems to be connected. The magic of labyrinths has a history that goes back more than two thousand years.

35. Labyrinth Names

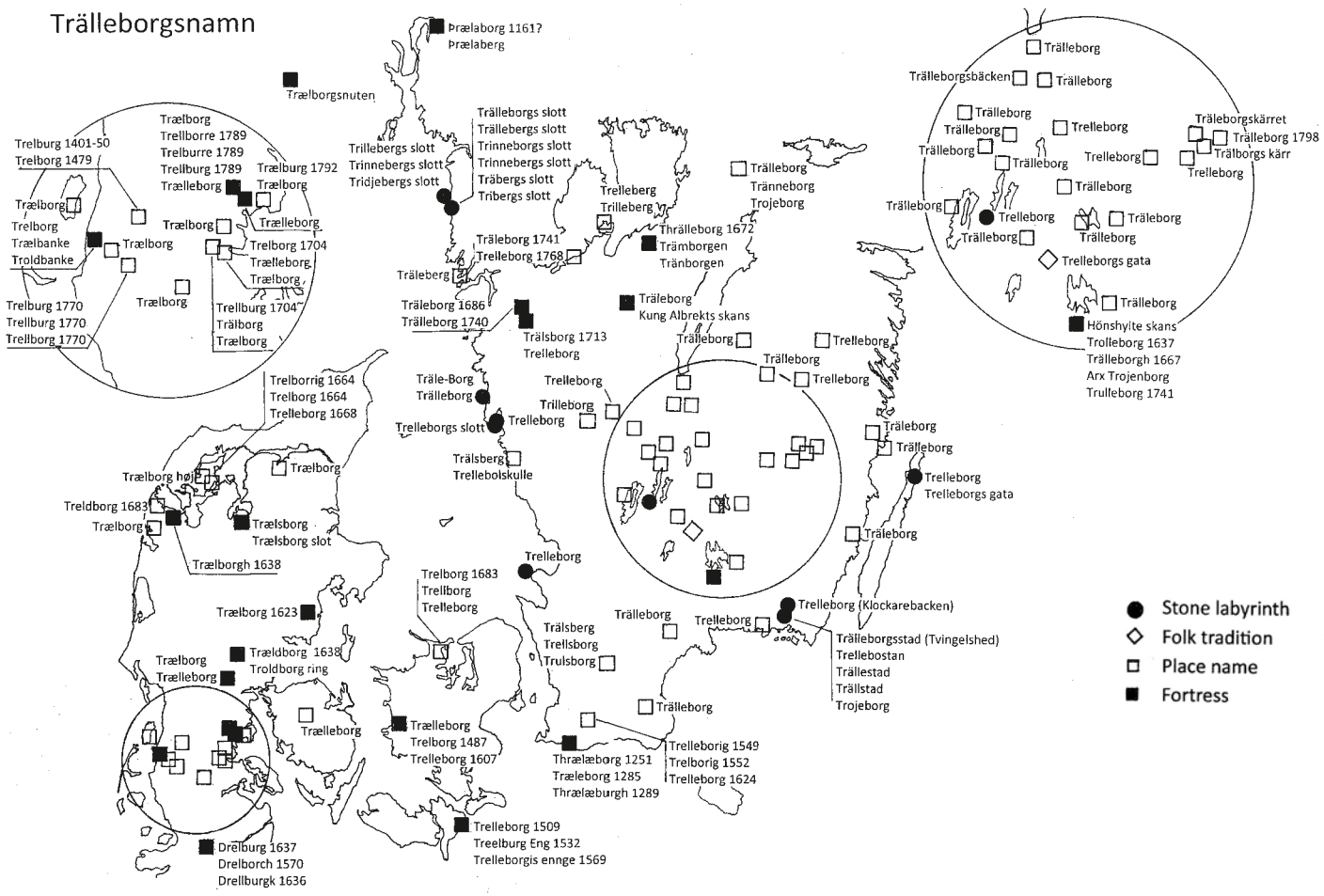
Archaeologists call them *labyrinths*. But the old, popular and established name in Scandinavia was *Trojeborg*. In Iceland, the labyrinth figures have been called *Völundarhús* (see Appendix 2). In Finland, the dominant and established names are *Jungfrudans* 'Maiden dance' in Swedish and *Jatulintarha* 'Giant fence' in Finnish. In Russia, the stone figures are called *Babylon*.

There have also been a number of other labyrinth names in the Nordic countries, many of which refer to famous cities. There is much information about labyrinth names that is worthy of attention, not least the oldest records of names. However, as this would unduly burden the current text, it is presented in appendices (appendices 15-21).[1]

Labyrinth names in the Nordic countries are strongly influenced by the idea that the labyrinths depicted cities, castles or often fortified cities. Many names have the suffix *-borg*. The most common are different variants of Trojeborg, i.e. the city of Troy, and a number of names that resemble Trojeborg but where the prefixes probably had a different meaning, such as *Trelleborg*, *Trinneborg*, *Treddenborg* and *Tryggeborg*.

Trojeborg names have been common in Denmark, south-eastern Norway, southern and central Sweden. The term *labyrint* appears in Swedish and Danish sources in the 18th century, butonly in isolated cases. It was not until the second half of the 19th century that the term Trojeborg was replaced by the word labyrinth (see Appendix 15).

The dominance of the Trojeborg name in earlier times was evident, for example, when garden labyrinths were first introduced at some of the Swedish royal castles in the mid-16th century. They were then generally referred to as Trojeborgar, even though the work was supervised by gardeners called in from the continent, where this name was still unknown. In Denmark, too, several garden labyrinths have been given the name Trojeborg.



35:2 Trälleborg names with variants.

Trojeborg names are usually associated with inland labyrinths. They are rare, almost non-existing, among the coast labyrinths, although there are some distorted names such as *Trilleborg*, *Tryggeborg* and *Trinneborg*, where the prefix has been transformed to give it a more easily understood meaning. Both the undistorted Trojeborg names and the remodelled variants are native to Scandinavia, and only in a few cases are they found east of Sweden.

In Sweden, about ten stone labyrinths have been called *Trelleborg*. I suspect that a few more place names of the same type testify to disappeared labyrinths. About twenty castle ruins in Denmark, Sweden and Norway have also been called "Trelleborg." There are also quite a few place names of the Trelleborg type in Sweden and Denmark that probably belonged neither to labyrinths nor to castles. As a rule, these places make a rather anonymous impression.

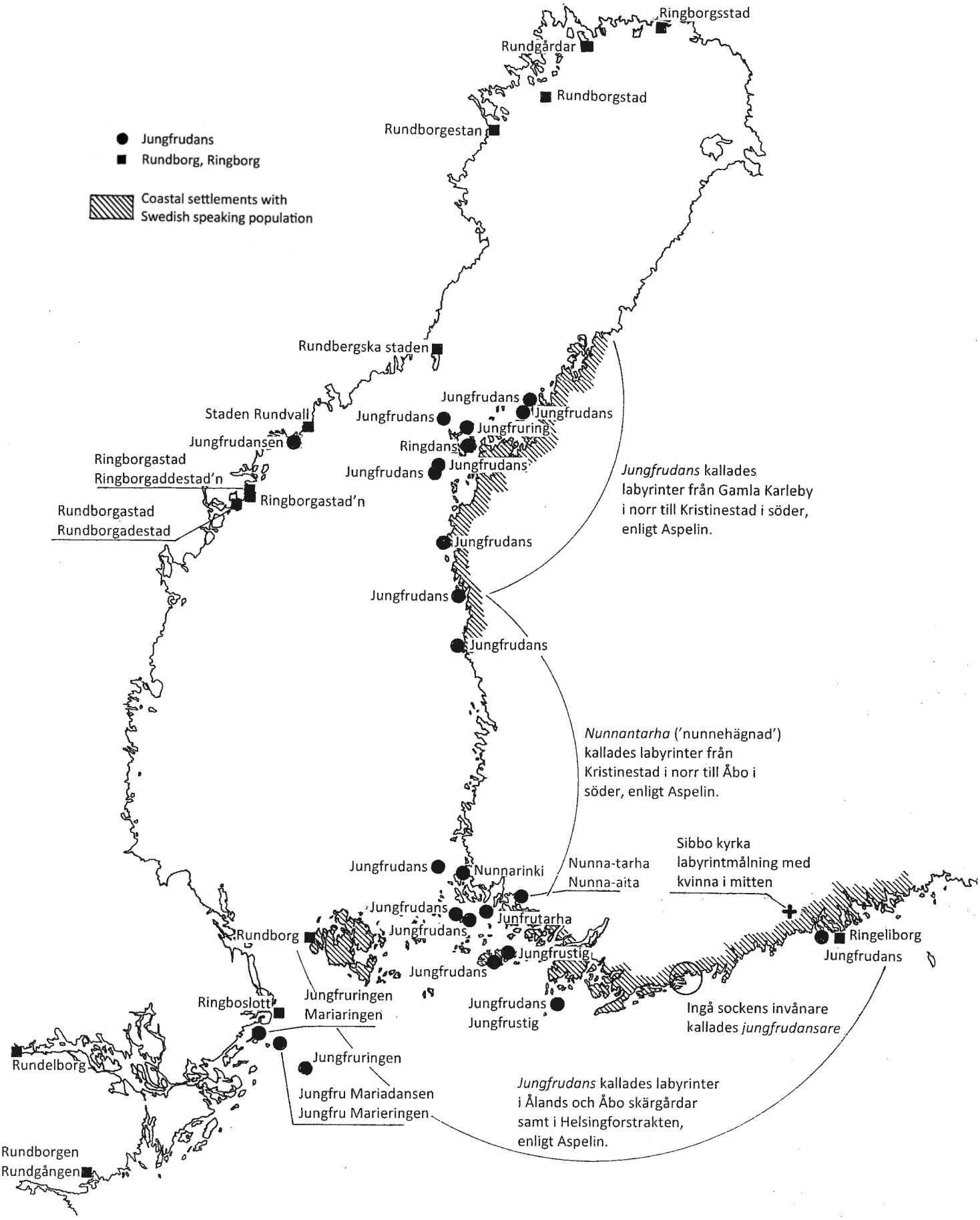
Two of the spectacular ring forts with high earthworks built by the Danish King Harald Bluetooth in Denmark around 980 have been called Trelleborg. One is in Hejninge parish near Slagelse in western Zealand, the other is the town of Trelleborg in Skåne, where remains of a similar earthwork has been excavated.

From the Haparanda archipelago in the north to Nordingrå in Ångermanland in the south, a number of names along the coast refer to the round shape of the stone figures: *Rundborgstad*, *Rundbergska staden*, *Staden Rundvall*, *Ringborga-stad* and *Ringborgadestad*. The same type of name also appears in some places in central Sweden and southern Finland.

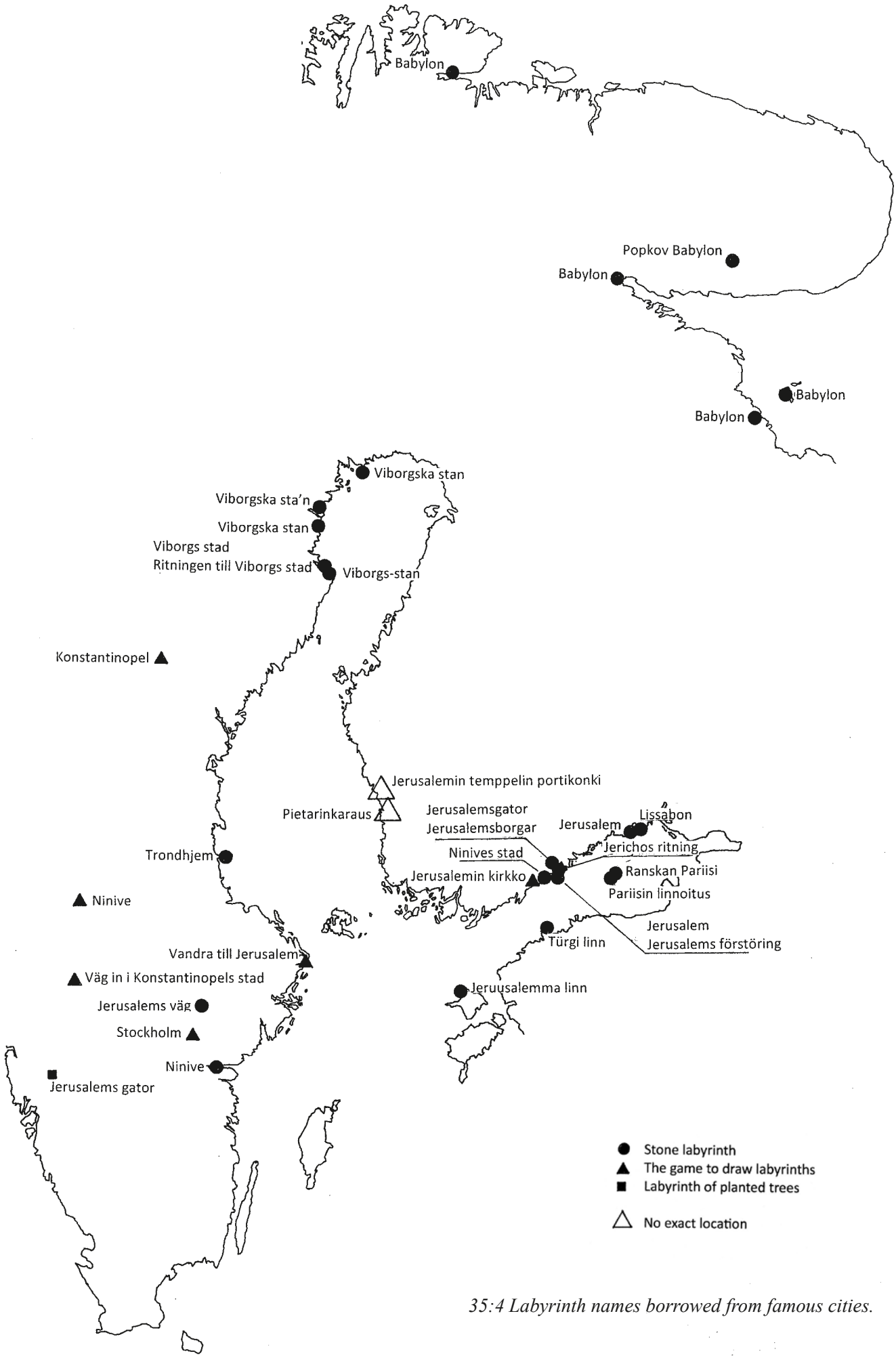
In the Swedish-speaking coastal areas of Finland, labyrinths are usually called *Jungfrudanser*, but there are also some variants such as *Jungfruring*, *Ringdans* and *Jungfrustig*. Among the labyrinths in the northern archipelago of Stockholm there are more similar variants: *Jungfruringen*, *Jungfru Marie-ringen*, *Jungfru Maria-dansen* and *Mariaringen*. However, the name *Jungfrudans* is only found at one place in Sweden, at Grundsunda in Ångermanland.

The labyrinth name Jungfrudans 'Maiden dance' probably refers to games played in field labyrinths in both Finland and Sweden. A.O. Freudenthal reports in 1874 from eastern Nylannd that in the centre of the labyrinth a maiden took her place, while others danced along the paths of the stonework, "hence the name 'Jungfrudans'."[2]

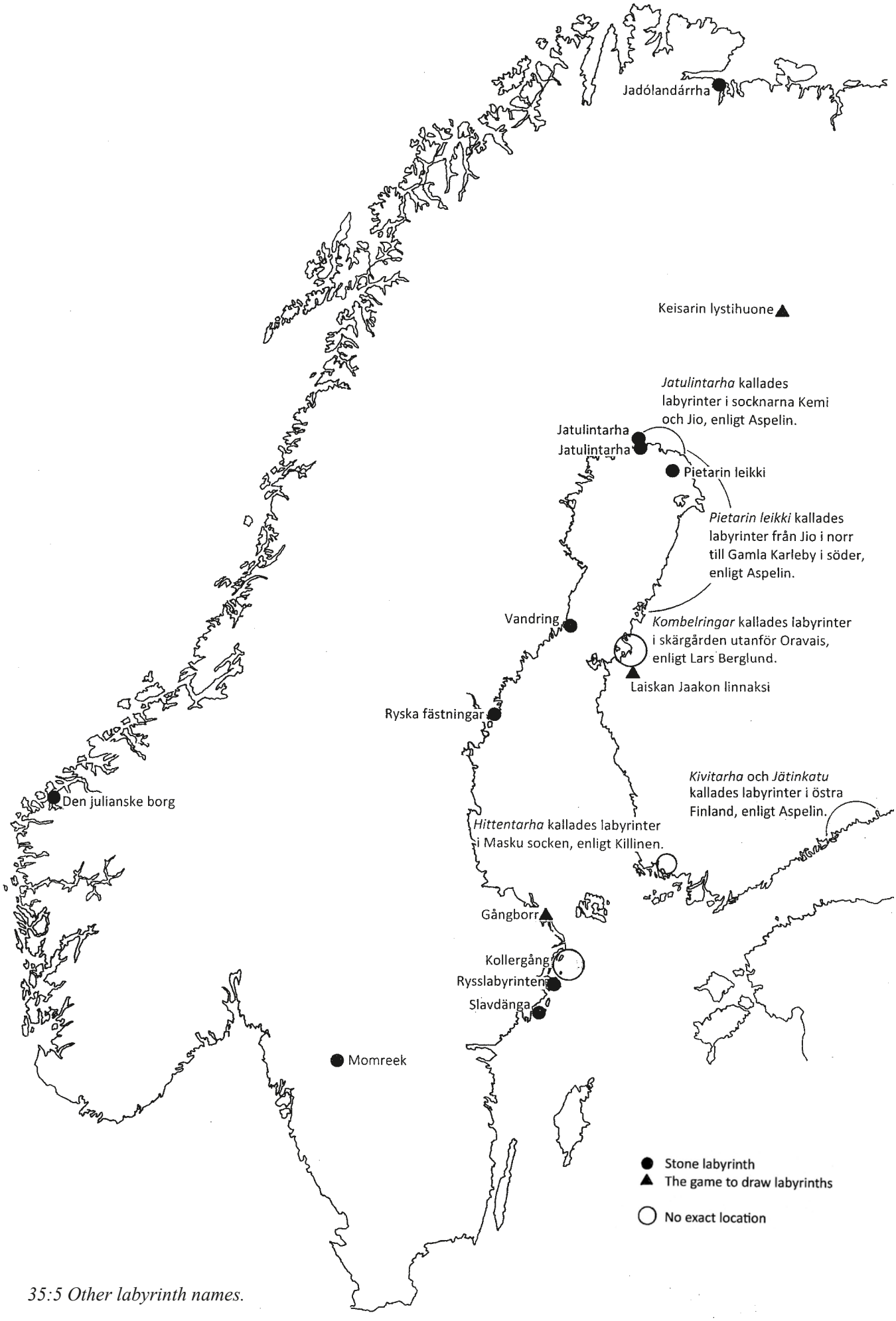
Along the west coast of Finland, between Kristinestad in the north and Åbo in the south, where Finnish is spoken, labyrinth names such as *Nunnanrinki* 'Nun's ring' and *Nunnantarha* 'Nun's enclosure' may be free translations of the Swedish *Jungfrudans* or may have been inspired by the games with a maiden at the centre of the labyrinth.



35:3 Labyrinth names of the types Jungfrudans 'Maiden dance' and Rundborg/Ringborg 'Round castle/Ring castle.'



35:4 Labyrinth names borrowed from famous cities.



35:5 Other labyrinth names.

A number of coast labyrinths in Sweden and Finland have borrowed names from famous cities other than Troy. Such names occur both in Swedish-speaking areas and where Finnish is spoken. In many cases, the game of drawing a labyrinth has also been associated with the names of famous cities.

On the Gulf of Bothnia in northern Sweden, several stone labyrinths are called *Viborg, Viborgska stan* or *Ritningen till Viborgs stad*. They are thus named after the Swedish border fortress Viborg in Karelia, which was established in 1293. In Finland, however, this labyrinth name is unknown.

In Sweden there is a stone labyrinth on the Hälsingland coast called *Trondhjem* and in Bråviken there is one called *Ninive*. On the southern coast of Finland and in Estonia, some labyrinths have been associated with *Jerusalem.* Less common are *Jeriko, Ninive* and K*onstantinopel*. On the islands of Hogland and Virgen (Wier) in the Gulf of Finland, labyrinths have been named after the French capital *Paris*. On the Russian side of the border, the labyrinth name *Lissabon* 'Lisbon' occurs.

The Russian labyrinths on the Arctic Ocean were called *Babylon*. Nobody knows why, but there are a number of possible explanations (see Appendix 20).

Many of these names may have been inspired by the Bible. Some of the cities are known for their fortifications or for being besieged, conquered or destroyed. But it is difficult to see any clear pattern that would explain why these cities have given their names to labyrinths. Perhaps the explanation is as simple as choosing a name that was very well known. Lisbon, for example, was well-known for a devastating earthquake in 1755. Paris became highly topical during the French Revolution in 1789, but it is also conceivable that the siege of Paris during the Franco-German War in 1870 and the bloody subjugation of the Paris Commune in 1871 left their mark on labyrinth names.

It is likely that many of these city names were created quite recently, but the naming is linked to the ancient idea that labyrinths represent fortified cities, which is already evident in Roman mosaics. The same idea has spread all the way to India. The idea is therefore ancient, even if many of the names in the Baltic region seem young.

There are a few different types of names in Finland's Finnish-speaking areas. In northern Finland, in the parishes of Kemi and Jio, stone labyrinths were called Jatulintarha 'Giant fence.' On the Swedish side of the border, along the Torne River and in the Haparanda archipelago, where Finnish is also spoken, stone labyrinths have had the same name. In 1908, the Swedish archaeologist Gustaf Hallström visited Kjøøya on the southern side of the Varangerfjord in northern Norway. There, he saw a labyrinth and heard a local person of Finnish speaking background say that the stone figure was called Jadólandárrha and was used in a game of 'walking' in it. The person claimed that it had been there for a long time and that it was "kvänsk."[3] "Kväner" has long been the name of the Finnish-speaking inhabitants in Finnmark.

In southern Finland you come across a few other Finnish labyrinth names where the popular imagination has probably had fairly free rein: *Jätinkatu* 'The street of giants,' *Munkkilaisten heittämä kivitarha* 'Stone enclosure thrown up by the monks' and *Hittentarhoiksi* 'The devil's enclosure.'

Many labyrinths probably received their names when they were built. But names may also have been added later. Some names have probably travelled over long distances in a similar way to migratory legends and have been attached to existing labyrinths afterwards. Even the game of drawing a labyrinth, as well as its associated labyrinth names, may have spread in this way.

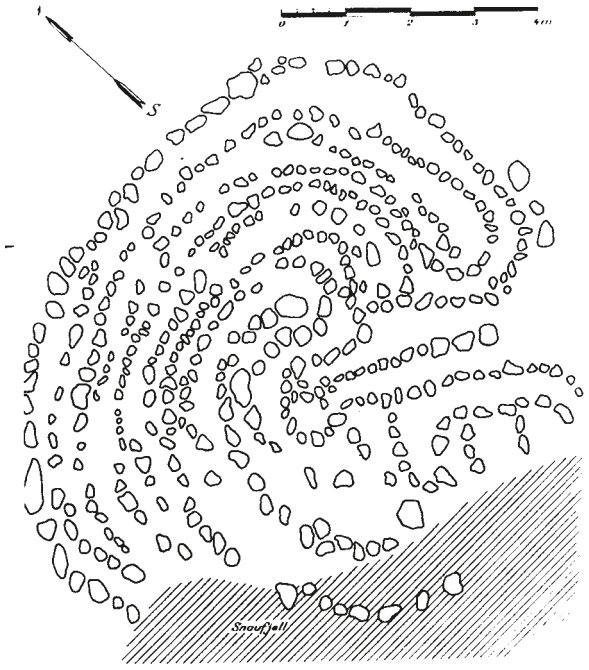
But the labyrinth names have not floated around randomly. There are some clear patterns. For example, the Trojeborg names are found in Scandinavia and have as a rule not spread eastwards to Finland. Coast labyrinths in general don't have unaltered Trojeborg names. The explanation for this may be that the Trojeborg names were already old and difficult for people to understand when the construction of coast labyrinths began on the Swedish west coast. Therefore, the Trojeborg names were easily replaced by *folk etymological transformations*, such as Trinneborg, Trilleborg, Tryggeborg and Treddenborg among the coast labyrinths.

However, the unaltered Trojeborg names persisted for a long time in Scandinavia, mainly among inland labyrinths. Particularly in Västergötland, labyrinth figures continued to be called Trojeborgar until very recently, as evidenced by several records of the game of drawing a labyrinth. And in the Swedish standard language, labyrinths were usually called Trojeborgar until the second half of the 19th century, when they gave way to the term *labyrint*.

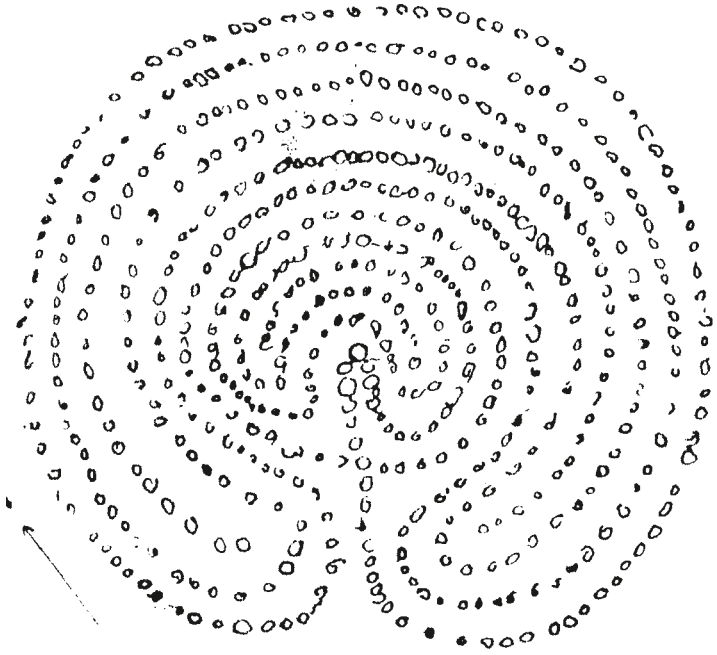
Most interesting are the name types that have large areas of distribution and early evidence. Among them, the Trojeborg names occupy a special position. They are widespread and can be traced far back in time (see Appendix 15).

Angle-type labyrinths were already associated with Troy by the Etruscans in 650-600 BC, in France in the Basque Country in the 17th and 18th centuries. In the British Isles, Troy names have been linked to a number of turf labyrinths. But nothing compares to Scandinavia, where there is a plethora of labyrinth names alluding to Troy.

A peculiarity of Scandinavia is that the figures here were called *Trojeborg*, usually with the suffix *-borg*. I have only found two records of labyrinth figures in the Nordic countries simply being called *Troja* 'Troy.'[4] These are probably the exceptions that confirm the rule.



36:1 Labyrinth on Slottefjellet, Tisler island in Hvaler parish, Östfold.



36:2 Trelleborgs slott 'Trelleborg's castle' on the island of Yttre Lön, in Kungsbackafjorden.

36. Castle or City?

The names of the labyrinths on the Swedish west coast often have the addition of *slott,* such as *Trinneborgs slott, Trillebergs slott* and *Trelleborgs slott.* There are some equivalents in Norway, where a labyrinth just south of Tönsberg was called *Truber Slot.*[1] In 1784 three "so called *Troyborge"* were mentioned, located in Bragnæs (Drammen), Hougsund (Hokksund) and Kongsberg. A footnote adds that "such places were also called *Troyborg-Slot* and sometimes simply *Slottet"* 'The castle.'[2] According to a report from 1895, one of the properties in Hougsund was called *Slottebacken*, where in its day there would have been "a so-called troyeborg, a kind of labyrinth with many intricate corridors made of stones."[3]

A couple of labyrinths on the Norwegian island of Tisler near Strömstad are located on the so-called *Slottefjellet* (the castle mountain).[4] The addition of the word *slot* 'castle' is also found in northern Norway, but this is probably a misleading clue. According to a report from 1835, on Grimsholmen, north-east of Tromsö, one could see "a now almost overgrown so called *Troiborg-slot*."[5] However, this is probably not a local name in northern Norway, but it only shows that in Norway at that time such stone figures were generally called *troiborg* with the addition of *slot*.

The addition of castle also appears in Denmark, where drawn labyrinth figures are called *Fru Trolleborg's Slot* 'Mrs Trolleborg's castle.'[6]

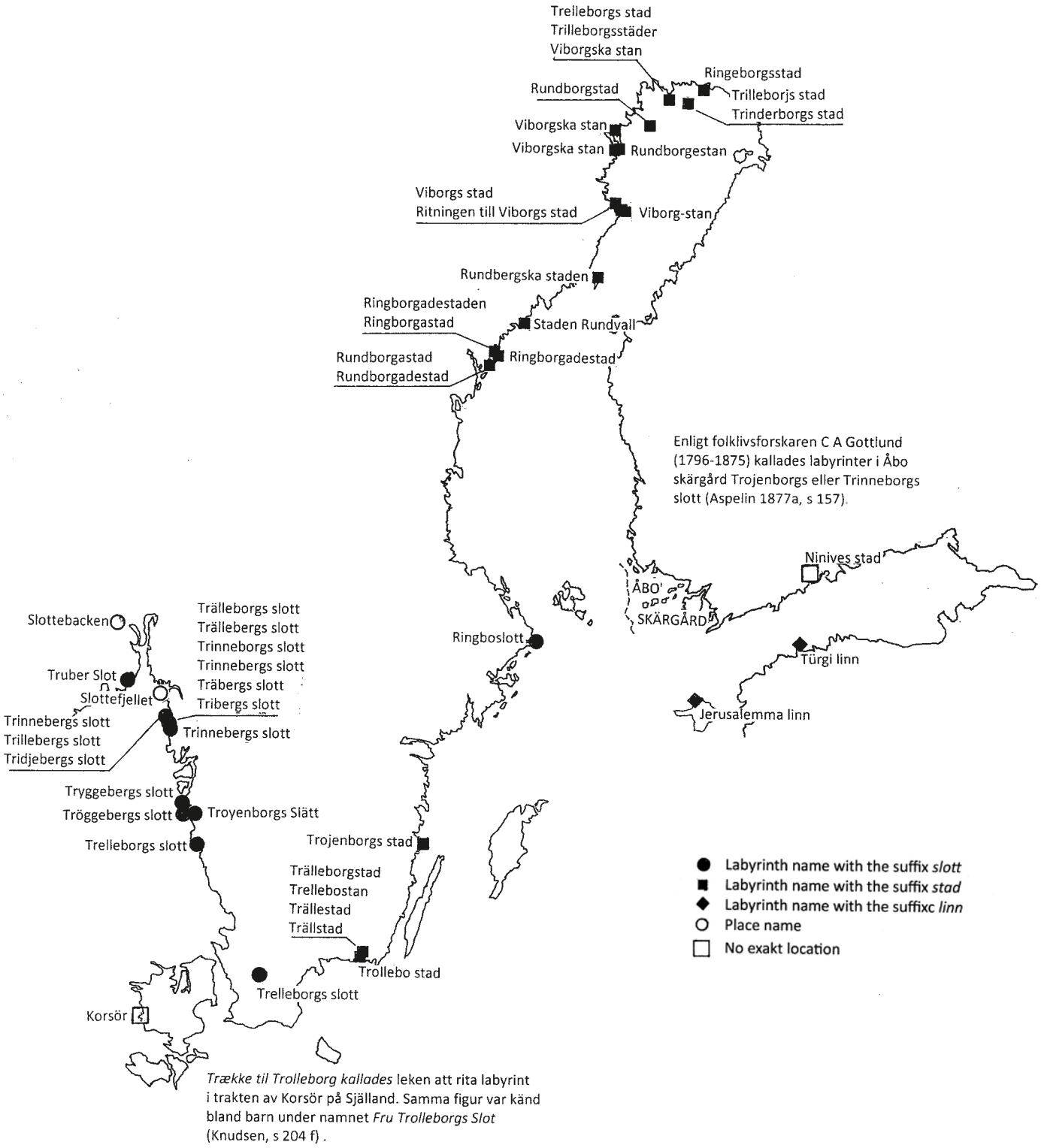
In Skåne, at least in its western parts, the angle-type figure was probably called Trelleborgs Slott because the antiquarian Sven Nilsson wrote in a notebook from 1818-1825 that in an old sandstone quarry at Vittseröd he encountered a rock with a carved Trelleborgs Slott (see Appendix 16).

These names are puzzling because they seem tautological, that is, two words with the same meaning (borg and slott) are repeated one after the other. But the question is whether borg in older times really meant 'fortress' or 'castle' in Norway.

The suffix *-borg* is an ancient and widely used word. The meaning of the word (fortress or castle) seems simple and obvious to most people today. But in Icelandic, the most old-fashioned language in the Nordic region, *borg* means 'city.' *Trójuborg*, as Troy is sometimes called in Icelandic manuscripts, may also have meant 'the city of Troy' in Norway, which is a direct parallel to the British labyrinth names *Troy Town*, *City of Troy* or *Caerdroia*. In Iceland and Norway in the Middle Ages, several other well-known city names were written in a similar way: *Jórsalaborg* 'Jerusalem,' *Rómaborg* 'Rome,' *Parísarborg* 'Paris' and *Lundúnaborg* 'London.' Eva Nyman has pointed out that the word *borg,* in addition to its usual meaning (or meanings), has also been used for foreign cities and as a translation word for the Latin *urbs*.[7] The question is whether the word Trojeborg could have long ago meant the same thing in Scandinavia as in Iceland, i.e. 'The city of Troy.'

If *borg* meant 'city' in Bohuslän on the Swedish west coast, which was part of Norway until 1658, it would not be surprising if the word *slott* 'castle' was added over time to clarify that labyrinths were also perceived as fortresses.

Among labyrinths on the Swedish coast of the Baltic there are several examples of the addition of the word *stad* (city), such as *Trelleborgs stad, Trilleborjs stad* and *Trinderborgs stad*. There are also examples such as *Rundborgstad, Ringborgastad* and *Rundborgastad*. If *borg* meant 'city' on the Norrland coast, these labyrinthine names seem strange. But if *borg* meant



36:3. Labyrinths with names where the word slott 'castle' or stad 'city' appears.

'fortress,' as it does today in Swedish, it is not surprising that someone added the word *stad* to clarify that the labyrinths were also perceived as cities.

Other types of labyrinthine names along the coasts of the Baltic Sea have also been given the suffix *-stad,* such as *Viborgs-stan, Viborgs stad, Viborgska stan, Ninives stad, Jerusalems stad* and *Jerikon kaupunki* 'the City of Jericho' in Finnish.

The addition stad also appears at Kråkelund on the coast of Småland where, according to Richard Dybeck, a labyrinth was called Trojenborgs stad.

Also, in the Fridlevstad parish in Blekinge, the addition stad is found in the labyrinth names Trelleborgsstad, Trellebostan, Trällestad and Trollebo stad.

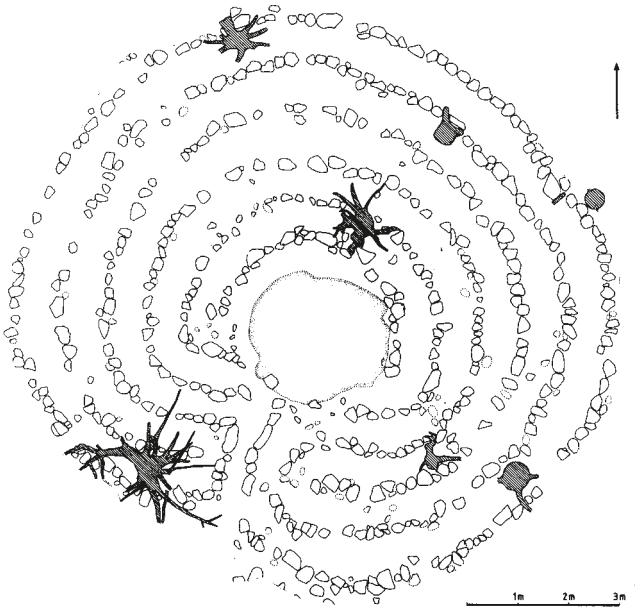
Many of the labyrinth names on the Swedish west coast have been given the suffix *slott*, while those on the Baltic Sea have been given the suffix *stad*. But no rule without exception. J.R. Aspelin stated in 1877 that in the Åboland archipelago there were labyrinths called *Trojenborgs slott* or *Trinneborgs slott.* And on Gisslingö outside Norrtälje the labyrinth name *Ringboslott* is found.

It is possible that the difference between west and east was due to the fact that *borg* meant 'city' on the Swedish west coast but not in the east. However, the evidence is too fragile to draw any firm conclusions. It is clear, however, that the addition *slott* was consistently chosen in the west and that, as a rule, the word *stad* was preferred in the east.

The words *slott* and *stad* (in this context meaning urban centre/city) are both loanwords from Low German. So, they hardly existed in Swedish, Danish and Norwegian until the Middle Ages. This fits well with the age of the coast labyrinths. They can hardly be older than the 12th or 13th century on the west coast and 1250-1350 on the Baltic.

In the parish of Fridlevstad in Blekinge, there is a hint of confirmation that the additional *stad* belongs to a late period. There are records of eight labyrinths. The probably oldest of them, which was located on Klockarebacken not far from the church, was called *Trelleborg* without the addition. All the others, which are probably later, have names in which the word *stad* appears: *Trelleborgsstad*, *Trellebostan*, *Trällestad*, *Trillebostad*, *Trollebostad* and *Trollebo stad*.[8]

The additions *slott* and *stad* thus seem rather late and are usually associated with coast labyrinths, which are probably not older than the Middle Ages. The



36:4 The labyrinth on Storeberg in Gothenburg before restoration. In the centre, soldiers had dug a trench when the area was used as a military training field. The shaded "lumps" are trees that were still present in the labyrinth.

Trojeborg names are rare among the coast labyrinths, and they have rarely received additions such as *slott* or *stad*. My interpretation of this pattern is that the Trojeborg names are probably so old that they did not keep up with the building of coast labyrinths during the Middle Ages. But in the few cases where coast labyrinths have been given Trojeborg names, there seems to have been no obstacle to giving them the medieval additions of *slott* or *stad*.

In the entire Nordic region there are only two coast labyrinths with unaltered Trojenborg names, and these two also happen to have the addition of a *slott* or *stad*. Aspelin mentions *Trojenborgs slott* in the Åbo archipelago and Richard Dybeck tells of a stone labyrinth on an island near Kråkelund's pilot station northeast of Oskarshamn, that an old man stated "that no one other than those who had been so far out that they had seen *Trojenborgs stad* had the right to build such 'hiding places'"[9]

There is only one inland labyrinth with the name Trojeborg (and a small burial ground) where the addition of the word *slott* is visible, namely the labyrinth at Storeberg in Gothenburg. In 1827 it was called *Troyenborgs Slätt,* which is probably a misspelling of Troyenborgs Slott. However, Storeberg is so close to the coast that a secondary influence from coast labyrinths is possible.

A look at the maps shows that the suffix *-borg* is common among the labyrinth names along the Swedish coast of Norrland. But on the Finnish side of the Gulf of Bothnia and the Bothnian Sea, it does not occur, apparently these names have been replaced by the name type *Jungfrudans*. In southern Finland, however, there are a few examples of the suffix *-borg*. In the Åland archipelago there are labyrinths called *Rundborg* and *Borgen*, and in the Åbo archipelago there are records of *Trojenborgs slott* and *Trinneborgs slott.* In the neighbourhood of Borgå, there is *Ringeliborg* and *Jerusalemsborg*.

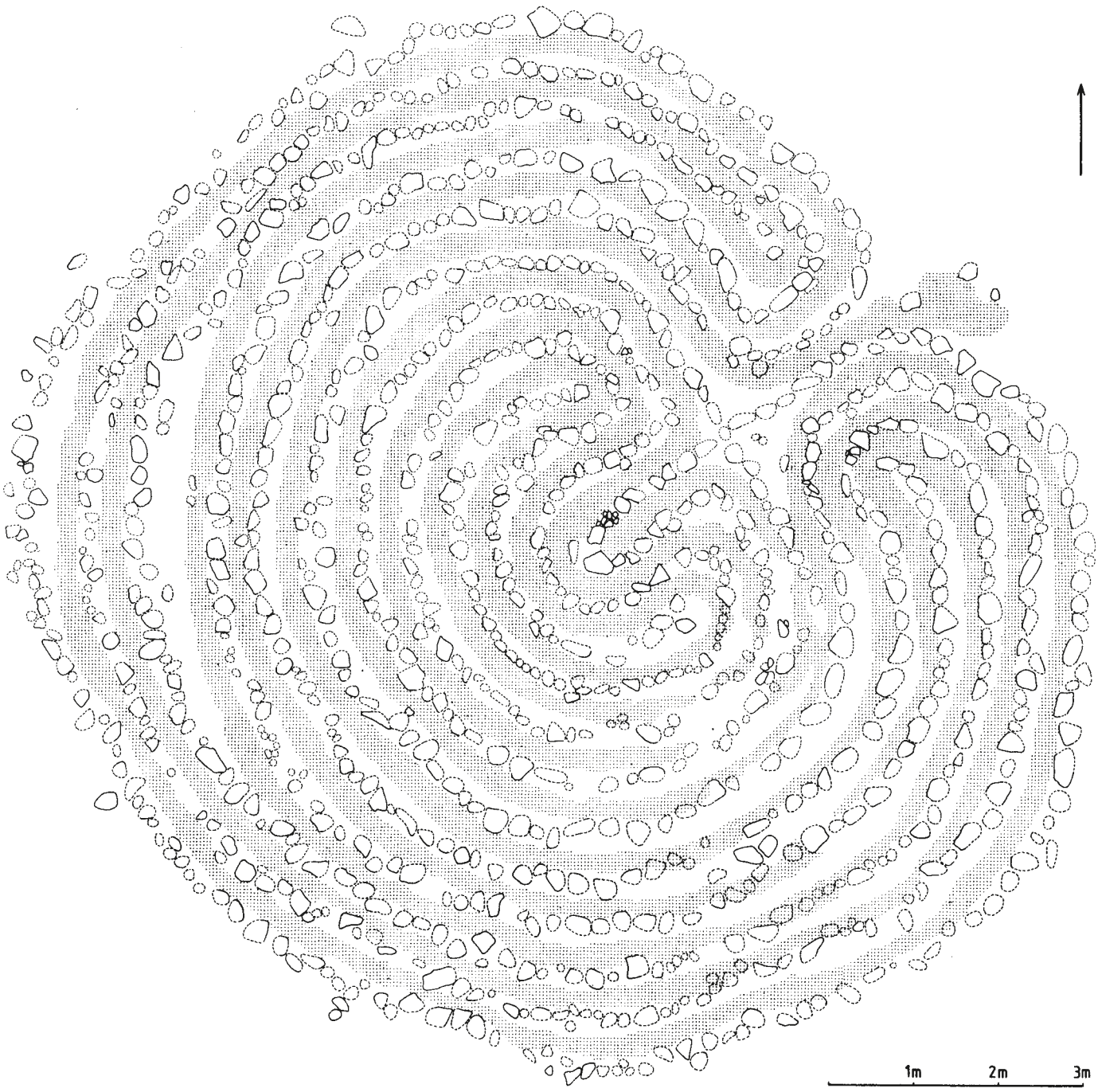
The Finnish labyrinth names never have the suffix *linna* 'castle' or 'fortress.' In the Gulf of Finland, however, there are several labyrinth names, both in the Swedish and Finnish language areas, borrowed from famous cities: *Lissabon, Paris, Jerusalem, Jeriko, Ninive*.

On the southern side of the Gulf of Finland, the labyrinth names *Türgi linn*, 'Turkish city,' probably referring to Constantinople, and *Jeruusalemma linn* 'City of Jerusalem' are found. In modern Estonian, *linn* means 'city' but further back in time *linn* also meant 'castle' or 'fortress.'

37. Transformed Names

Trojeborg names often show slight variations such as *Trojaborg*, *Trojenborg, Tröjeborg, Tröjenborg* or the shortened forms *Trögborg* and *Tröborg*. But some Trojeborg names have been corrupted in a remarkable way, such as at Skänninge where the name *Trojenborg* dominates in the 17th century but is replaced by *Trollenborg* from 1712.

Near Sölvesborg there is a site where there was probably a labyrinth, which in the 17th and 18th centuries was called *Trojeborg* or *Trojenborg,* but since 1874 has been called *Tredenborg.*



37:1 The labyrinth in Ulmekärr. Shaded areas mark trampled paths.

Trollenborg, of course, refers to *trolls* and Tredenborg should refer to *walking* in the labyrinth, the prefix *träda,* corresponding to English 'tread,' is probably the same word that we have left in *beträda* 'set foot upon' *träda in* 'enter,' *träda ut* 'exit.' Tredenborg should thus have had the meaning 'walking castle.'[1]

Researchers refer to such changes as re-interpretations of obscure place-names through association with sound-alike word",[2] but to make it easier to discuss this phenomenon I chose here to simply call them folk-etymological transformations. Probably the old names' reference to the city of Troy has been forgotten and become difficult to understand. People have then started to stretch and pull the Troy names to make them more understandable. Hearing errors and ingenuity have fuelled the changes. So Trojenborg has been transformed into Trollenborg and Tredenborg, which are fairly similar to the unaltered Trojeborg names but have a new and more easily understood meaning. There are a number of examples of how this has happened (see Appendix 17).

Trelleborg names seem to have been transformed in a similar way. In Fridlevstad parish in Blekinge, it can be seen that the *Trelleborg* was transformed into new labyrinth names such as *Trellebostan, Trällstad, Trillebostad, Trollebostad* and *Trollebo stad*. The prefix *trolle-* feels familiar. *Trillebostad* gives a hint that the prefix *trelle-* was easily interchangeable with *trille-*.

The labyrinth at Ulmekärr in Tanum in northern Bohuslän has been called *Trinnebergs-slott*, *Träbergs-slott*, *Tribergs-slott*, *Trällebergs-slott*,

Trinneborgs-slott and *Trelleborgs slott*. Here the prefix *trälle-* seems to have been interchangeable with *trinne-* probably with the meaning 'round.' On Kalvön, also in Tanum parish, one finds the labyrinth names *Trinnebergsslott*, *Trillebergsslott* and *Tridjebergsslott*, which suggests that the prefix *trinne-* was also interchangeable with *trille-*. On a couple of other islands in northern Bohuslän, one finds labyrinths named *Trinnebergs slott*.

Thus, in Blekinge and northern Bohuslän we find labyrinth names where the prefixes *trälle-*, *trille-* and *trinne-* seem to have been interchangeable. Conversions of the suffix *-borg* 'castle' to *-berg* 'mountain' are also common among labyrinth names on the west coast from the Norwegian border in the north to Vrångö outside Gothenburg in the south.

In the archipelago outside Gothenburg, you come across other labyrinth names, which are probably transformations of Trojeborg. On Tornholmen southeast of Marstrand, a labyrinth has been called *Tryggebergs slott*, where the prefix should be the word *trygg* 'safe/secure.' Not far from there, on Hönö, there is a labyrinth called *Tröggebergs slott* and *Tryggeberg*.

Somewhat further south, around the Onsala peninsula, there are other transformations. A probably very old labyrinth at Högaryd in Vallda parish was called *Tredenborg*, *Treddenborg* or *Trädenborg,* i.e. parallels to the already mentioned *Tredenborg* 'walking castle' at Sölvesborg. On Vrångö, northwest of the Onsala peninsula, some labyrinths have been called *treddenborgarna.*

In the interior of Västergötland you can find labyrinth names such as *Tröenborg*, *Trägenborg*, *Trodenborg* and *Trajenborg*. The names are similar to Trojeborg names, but they have been slightly remodelled, probably to give them a more understandable meaning. *Trajenborg* could be derived from the dialectal verb *traja* 'to walk, trudge, trample.' *Tröenborg* has been associated with the local dialect verb *tröa* 'tread, step.' These names may thus have had the meaning 'walking castle.'

It seems that above all, Trojeborg names, but also some Trelleborg names, have been replaced by folk-etymological transformations. New labyrinth names have arisen, such as *Trolleborg* where the prefix is *troll*, *Tredenborg* 'walking castle,' *Tröenborg* 'walking castle,' *Trajenborg* 'walking castle,' *Tryggeborg* 'safe castle,' *Trinneborg* 'round castle' and *Trilleborg* probably also 'round castle.'

The prefix *trinne-* is probably a variant of the adjective *trind* 'round' and thus referred to the fact that the labyrinth was round. The prefix *trille-* may have had a similar meaning, it is a dialectal noun meaning 'something round' or 'roundish,' especially 'something disc-shaped.' The word is recognised in the nouns *trilla* 'wagon' and *trillebör* 'wheelbarrow.' *Slå trill* is a game where two teams try to roll a pulley or disc as far as possible towards each other. The labyrinth names *Trinneborg* and *Trilleborg* may therefore have had roughly the same meaning, namely 'round castle.'

However, the Trelleborg names are hardly folk-etymological transformations of Trojeborg names. The Danish linguist Gunnar Knudsen, who investigated the background of the Trelleborg names, believed that they go back to the Viking Age and he flatly rejects the possibility that they could have developed from Trojeborg names. The oldest name evidence suggests that the prefix was the word träl 'thrall' with the meaning 'slave.' He believed that the overlap between Trojeborg names and Trelleborg names may have originated rather late, when people began to forget the original meaning of the two types of names, and they could therefore become confused (see Appendix 17).

The name *Trelleborg's* superficial resemblance to *Trojeborg* could explain why the name Trelleborg is associated with labyrinths. It may also have been important that many real castles from the Viking Age and early Middle Ages had the name Trelleborg, while the labyrinths were considered to represent castles or fortified towns.

As Gunnar Knudsen surmised, the original meanings of the names of Trojeborg and Trelleborg may have been forgotten over time. My guess is that at the time when the original meaning of the Trojeborg name for the mythical city of Troy began to seem difficult to understand and therefore people started to use transformations such as Treddenborg and Tryggeborg, it was also easy to call labyrinths Trelleborg. The Trelleborg names may thus have been confused with the transformed names of Troy even though they had different origins.

In northern Bohuslän, this resulted in labyrinthine names such as Trinneborg, Trilleborg and Trelleborg, which seemed to be interchangeable. In the Norrbotten archipelago in the north of the Baltic, similar labyrinth names like Trinteborg, Trilleborg and Trelleborg occur. I suspect that the fishermen who used these labyrinth names considered that they meant roughly the same thing, namely *rundborg* 'round castle.'

On Kållandsö in Västergötland there are some place names, without any connection to labyrinths, where the prefix trälle- also seems to have been interchangeable with trille-. There are also some examples showing that the written form trille- corresponded to the pronunciation trelle- or trølle- (see Appendix 17).

It is thus conceivable that the Trelleborg names have undergone a change of meaning from the original prefix *träl* 'slave,' as suggested by Knudsen, to the meaning 'rundborg.' Such a change may have been facilitated by the existence of a dialectal word *träll* or *trälle* meaning 'disc' or 'gear wheel, cogwheel.' There are examples of this word from the Swedish speaking rural regions of Finland and from northern Småland, southern Västergötland and eastern Jutland. In eastern Swedish dialects, the gears in windmills were called *trillhjul* and *trällhjul* (see Appendix 17).

This confirms that *trill* and *träll* then had the same meaning, i.e. 'something round.'

Along the Norrland coast there is another type of name that refers to the round shape of the labyrinths, but which has no similarities with the prefix Troja: *Rundborgstad* and *Ringeborgsstad* in Norrbotten and *Rundborgastad*, *Rundborgadestad*, *Ringborgastad*, *Ringborgadestad* and *Staden Rundvall* in Ångermanland. On Holmön in Västerbotten, the stone figures were called *Rundbergska staden*.

It is conceivable that the names of the type Rundborgastad and Ringeborgsstad represent the next step in a development away from the Trojeborg or Trelleborg names. The prefixes *trinne-, trille-* and *trälle-* in Norrbotten are then replaced by new names with the meaning 'round' or 'something round,' but which have lost all resemblance to the Trojeborg names. Comprehensibility has triumphed. The only thing that remains of the original Trojeborg names is the suffix *borg.*

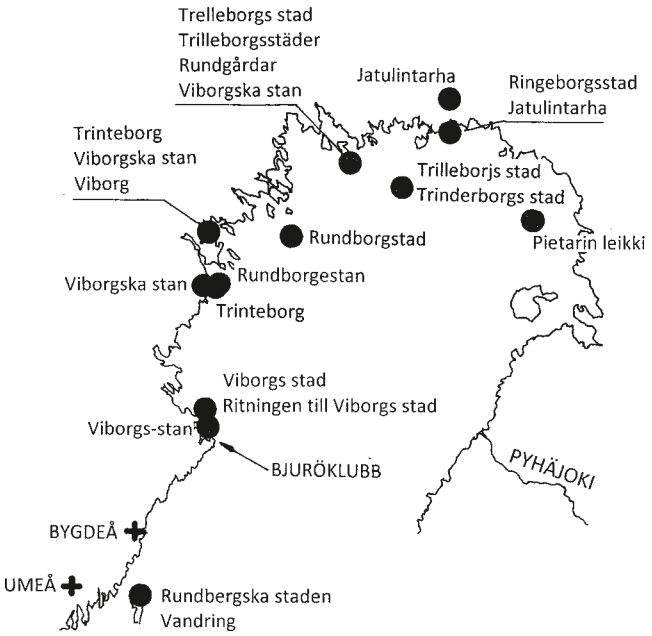
The Trojeborg names are thus in all probability the oldest among the labyrinth names in the Nordic countries. They have mainly been linked to inland labyrinths, with a distribution area that broadly covered Denmark, south-eastern Norway, southern Sweden and central Sweden, or more simply put: Scandinavia.

Coast labyrinths almost never have Trojeborg names, which may be due to the fact that Trojeborg names are very old while coast labyrinths are from historical times. Among the labyrinth names in Finland there are no traces of Trojeborg or its corrupted variants, except for a few examples in the Åbo archipelago. Instead, new names have appeared in Finland, Russia and even among the coast labyrinths in Sweden. Many of them have borrowed names from famous cities, such as Babylon, Jerusalem, Jericho, Nineveh, Constantinople, Lisbon, Paris, Stockholm, Viborg and Trondhjem. Apparently, the labyrinths have continued to be perceived as images of cities, thus linking them to the ancient notion that labyrinth figures represent Troy.

Coast labyrinths show a number of examples of folk-etymological transformations. Such transformations dominate among the coast labyrinths along the coasts of Skagerack and Kattegat, but they are rare among the coast labyrinths of the Baltic. I suspect that the reason for this is that when the first coast labyrinths were built on the west coast, folk-etymological transformations had already begun. When the coast labyrinths spread from the west coast to the Baltic Sea, some transformations came along, but in the east they were soon replaced by new labyrinth names without the slightest resemblance to Troy.

38. Settlers in the North

Where did the first coast labyrinths originate and what were their routes of dispersal? Labyrinth names can provide clues.



38:1 Labyrinth names on the Gulf of Bothnia. Judging by the Hälsingland law, which was written down in the 1320s, Umeå and Bygdeå were then Sweden's northernmost parishes. From the 1320s, the coast north of Bjuröklubb was colonised. I suspect that some of the settlers brought the idea of building labyrinths from northern Bohuslän on the Swedish west coast. The prefixes in labyrinth names such as Trinteborg, Trinderborg, Trilleborg and Trelleborg may have meant the same thing to those who built the labyrinths, namely 'round' or 'something roundish.' After a while it was probably easy for the new inhabitants in the north to give new labyrinths more easily understood names with the same meaning, such as Rundborgstad, Ringeborgsstad, Rundgårdar and Rundbergska staden.

As shown in Chapter 28, there is much to suggest that the first coast labyrinths were built on the Swedish west coast, where three probably prehistoric inland labyrinths with adjacent grave fields (Ulmekärr, Storeberg and Högaryd) may have each given rise to a cluster of coast labyrinths. But how did the coast labyrinths spread from the west coast to the Baltic Sea?

Some labyrinth names indicate that there was a close connection between Bohuslän on the west coast and Norrbotten in the northern Baltic. In northern Bohuslän there are labyrinth names such as *Trelleborg, trilleborg* and *trinneborg.* In Norrbotten, and only there, the same types of names are found. It is hard to believe that such striking similarities can be due to coincidence.

The explanation may be that there was a cultural spread from Bohuslän to Norrbotten. The similarities between the names indicate that one or more fishermen from northern Bohuslän moved to the coastal regions of Norrbotten. They brought with them the idea of building stone labyrinths of the angle-type as well as the belief in labyrinth magic in connection with fishing. And they introduced the Bohuslän labyrinth names *Trinneborg, Trilleborg* and *Trelleborg* to the northern fishing islands.

But how likely is it that a fisherman from Bohuslän came up with the idea of moving to the Gulf of Bothnia? After all, Bohuslän was part of Norway until 1658 and Norway was ruled for more than 400 years by Danish kings, who were often in conflict with Sweden.

However, during the 13th and most of the 14th century, Norway was not united with Denmark. Instead, there were strong ties to Sweden in the 14th century. Magnus Eriksson was elected King of Sweden in 1319 at the age of three and inherited the Norwegian crown in the same year. Both countries were governed by guardians but were thus united under a common king. Magnus' son Håkan became king of Norway in 1343, but as he was only three years old at the time, his father Magnus Eriksson became his guardian until 1355. In 1363 Håkan married the Danish princess Margareta, who survived him and eventually came to rule Norway, Denmark and Sweden, united in the so-called Kalmar Union from 1397. Against this background, it is quite conceivable that some fishermen from northern Bohuslän may have been attracted to settle in Sweden in the 14th century.

In the early 14th century, Sweden's northernmost ecclesiastical parishes were Umeå and Bygdeå. The ecclesiastical organisation and the ledung organisation that regulated defence and tax collection did not extend further north. The northern "boundary" of Sweden reached approximately to the well-known rock formation of Bjuröklubb, though it was hardly a sharp boundary in the sense of our time. Further north there were, of course, Sami people, and it is likely that many farmers in Norrland used the northern coast as a common land where they made expeditions for hunting and fishing. Perhaps there were also some settlers there.

The vast areas in the north were probably also crossed by traders from the east. Novgorod's claims to power extended far to the north and west. The boundary between Sweden and Novgorod in the 1323 Treaty of Nöteborg was unclear and soon became disputed. The Swedish view was that the border ran northwards from southern Finland towards the Arctic coast, making the coasts of the Gulf of Bothnia Swedish. But Novgorod considered itself entitled to all the land north of the river Pyhäjoki in central Österbotten, making it a significant coastal state on the Gulf of Bothnia.[1]

Shortly after the Peace of Nöteborg, Sweden launched an organised campaign to colonise the northern coast. The driving force seems to have been the Archbishop Olof Björnsson. Freedom from taxation was promised to the settlers. At a meeting in Tälje in 1328, it was decided that anyone could settle on the northern border of Hälsingland. At that time, Hälsingland included all the inhabited coastal areas of Norrland.[2] Most settlers in the north probably came from Norrland, but there may also have been settlers from further afield.

From one point of view, the timing of the great colonisation enterprise was poorly chosen. Around 1300, a prolonged climatic deterioration began in Europe, which gave rise to crop failure in many places and would have had a significant impact in the north. There were probably political reasons for starting the colonisation anyway: Sweden was not going to tolerate Novgorod operating freely around the Gulf of Bothnia and in Lapland. One reason why colonisation was successful after all may have been that the supply of cheap salt gave a long-term boost to fishing, which compensated for the poor farming conditions.

In 1340 the settlements were placed under the Hälsingland Law, the settlers' rights to their farms were confirmed and tax exemption ceased. This marked the end of the most intensive phase of colonisation.[3] The arrival of the Black Death in 1350 would have led to stagnation, perhaps even decline. Settlement in the coastal region of Norrbotten should therefore have essentially taken place between 1323 and 1350.

I suspect that it was in connection with the colonisation of the coasts of the Gulf of Bothnia in the first half of the 14th century that some immigrants from Bohuslän introduced the first coast labyrinths in the Baltic region. This would fit well with the early lichen dating of the coast labyrinths in Norrland. A labyrinth on Högberget near Jävre dates from 1299 (plus or minus 35-40 years), and another at Lörudden outside Sundsvall also dates from 1299 (plus or minus 50 years). The first coast labyrinths in Norrland may therefore have been built sometime between 1250 and 1350.

Unfortunately, there are not many lichen dates to compare with in the Gulf of Bothnia. Of the 46 labyrinths that have been lichen-dated, only four are located in Norrbotten.[4] When the investigations were carried out, no one could have known that the northernmost coast labyrinths would be the most interesting to date.

Alternative theories about the spread of coast labyrinths from the Swedish west coast to the Baltic cannot be dismissed, but in my opinion, it is difficult to imagine a more likely place than the colonisation area at the Gulf of Bothnia and a more likely time than the colonisation period 1323-1350. The Norrbotten archipelago is Sweden's and probably the world's most labyrinth-rich region, and no one has been able to explain why there are so many labyrinths there. If this was the core area for the first coast labyrinths on the Baltic, it is not surprising that many labyrinths were built there.

There is only one other area in the Baltic where the names of the labyrinths also indicate a possible relationship with the labyrinths in Bohuslän. Aspelin stated in 1877 that in the Åbo archipelago, labyrinths have been called *Trojenborg slott* and *Trinneborg slott*.[5] *Trinneborg* is a transformation that has been found both on the Swedish west coast and in the Gulf of Bothnia. The addition of *slott* is typical of laby-

38:2 My proposal for how the idea of coastal labyrinths may have spread from the Swedish west coast to the coasts of the Baltic and the Arctic coast. The arrows give a schematic picture of the distribution routes. The settlers who are assumed to have emigrated from northern Bohuslän to the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia should have travelled by boat, not by land.

rinths on the west coast; in the Baltic it is only known in the Åbo archipelago and on Gisslingö (*Ringbo slott*) in the northern archipelago of Stockholm. It is therefore conceivable that the labyrinths in the Åbo archipelago received their name directly from Bohuslän or via the Gulf of Bothnia, but the evidence is weak.

Somehow, the labyrinth traditions of the Baltic were then picked up by easterners who brought the idea to the Arctic coasts in the north. Vyacheslav Mizin has suggested that the so-called *Pomors*, seafaring traders and fishermen, learnt about labyrinths in the Baltic and then introduced them along the Arctic coast. The Pomors traded between north-west Russia and northern Norway along the northern coast.

It seems likely that traders from the east reached the Baltic and picked up the idea of coast labyrinths. Novgorod's traders, who may have been Karelians or Russians, travelled over large distances and probably subsisted on fishing and hunting during their movements. It is therefore not surprising that those who reached the Gulf of Bothnia picked up the idea of coast labyrinths and carried it eastwards or northwards to the Arctic coast.

In the Gulf of Bothnia, fishermen from the south may also have taken up the idea of coast labyrinths. We know from later times that they could travel astonishingly long distances in search of rewarding fishing grounds. The early dating of a labyrinth at Lörudden outside Sundsvall (1299, plus or minus 50 years) suggests that the spread of the labyrinths was rapid.

My view, that the labyrinth names with prefixes such as *trinne, trille* and *trälle were* probably introduced in Norrbotten sometime between 1323 and 1350 by settlers from northern Bohuslän, naturally leads to the conclusion that the corresponding names on the west coast should be older.

It is likely that the first coast labyrinths, which should have been built on the west coast, had already lost contact with the unaltered Trojeborg names. Perhaps the Trojeborg names were already so old and difficult to understand when the first coast labyrinths were built, that they did not come along to the fishing sites. However, the unaltered Trojeborg names remained inland and became established in the standard languages, but they are remarkably poorly represented among the coast labyrinths.

But isn't it possible that, by coincidence, identical transformations of names took place in both Bohuslän and Norrbotten?

No, hardly. Firstly, this combination of transformations is only found in two areas, namely in northern Bohuslän and in Norrbotten. Secondly, two or three different transformations are repeated. Possibly a single such conversion could have been repeated by chance in widely different parts of the Nordic region, but a group of several different variants can hardly have been repeated by chance.

From this we can also conclude that the additions *slott* on the west coast and *stad* on the Baltic Sea should be younger than the 1320s. If the addition *slott* was common among the coast labyrinths on the west coast earlier than the 14th century, they should reasonably have followed the move to the Gulf of Bothnia. But they are not there.

The coast labyrinths probably originated on the Swedish west coast and from there they spread to the Baltic. Four circumstances indicate that the coast labyrinths spread in that direction and not in the opposite direction.

Firstly, it is only on the west coast that one finds mixed clusters with some probably prehistoric inland labyrinths that may have given rise to separate clusters of coast labyrinths. In the west three such mixed clusters can be discerned, in the Baltic there are none.

Secondly, on the west coast all labyrinths seem to have a central cross, there are no figures of the Köpmanholm and Skarv types. The latter, however, are common in the Baltic and on the Arctic coast. If coast labyrinths spread from east to west, figures without a central cross should also have been found at the Swedish west coast.

Thirdly, all the names of coast labyrinths in the west are of the Trelleborg type or transformations of Trojeborg and Trelleborg. But such names are rare on the Baltic Sea, where other types of names dominate instead. If coast labyrinths spread from east to west, one should also find variants of Rundborg and Ringborg as well as a number of names borrowed from famous cities, such as Viborg, Trondhjem, Paris on the west coast, perhaps even names of the Jungfrudans type. But such names are not found in the west.

Fourthly, the labyrinth names in northern Bohuslän are repeated in a remarkably clear way in the Bay of Bothnia and only there. Since such names are rare on the Baltic, it is unlikely that the names migrated from east to west, it's more likely that they originated in the west and reached the Baltic through the colonisation along the Gulf of Bothnia in the 14th century.

To sum up, during these long-distance migrations the labyrinth names have "mutated" in an interesting way. When the first coast labyrinths were built on the coasts of Skagerrack and Kattegat, the Trojeborg names of the inland labyrinths did not keep up but were replaced by folk etymological transformations such as *Trinneborg*, *Trilleborg*, *Tryggeborg* and *Treddenborg*. Some coast labyrinths on the west coast have also been given Trelleborg names. Many of the labyrinth names on the west coast were later given the addition *slott*.

The first labyrinths on the Gulf of Bothnia have been given labyrinth names from northern Bohuslän such as *Trelleborg, Trilleborg* and *Trinteborg*. But they were soon replaced by names such as *Ringeborgsstad*, *Rundborgsstad*, *Rundbergska staden* and *Ringborgastad,* which were probably perceived as synonyms of *Trelleborg, Trilleborg* and *Trinteborg*.

Along the eastern coast of the Baltic, labyrinth names developed in a different direction. In Finland's coastal Swedish settlements, *Jungfrudans* became the dominant name. There also emerged designs like the Köpmanholm-type and, in the next step, the Skarv-type. These new types became particularly common in the Gulf of Finland and the Stockholm archipelago.

The labyrinths in the Stockholm archipelago have two characteristics that indicate that they were inspired from Finland rather than from the Swedish northern coast. Firstly, the figures are predominantly of the Köpmanholm-type and there are some examples of the Skarv-type. In addition, in the northern archipelago of Stockholm, we find labyrinth names that seem to have been inspired by the Jungfrudans names, such as *Jungfruringen*, *Jungfru Mariaringen*, *Jungfru Mariadansen* and *Mariaringen.*

The large labyrinth of Köpmanholm-type at Blå Jungfrun indicates that the influence from the Stockholm archipelago reached south to the Kalmar Strait.

In addition to the usual angle-type, the labyrinths along the Arctic coast have, in several cases, layouts of the Köpmanholm-type and the Skarv-type, but the naming has gone its own way. The dominant labyrinth name is *Babylon*, a name that does not seem to have been borrowed from the Baltic.

Around the Baltic too, we find a number of labyrinth names borrowed from famous cities such as *Jerusalem*, *Jericho*, *Nineveh*, *Constantinople*, *Viborg*, *Trondheim*, *Stockholm*, *Lisbon* and *Paris*. *Babylon* fits into this pattern, but it is difficult to speculate on the routes of spread. Only two of these name types form coherent groups, namely *Viborg* in the western Gulf of Bothnia and *Babylon* on the Arctic coast.

The first coast labyrinths probably originated on the Swedish west coast. From there they probably spread with some settlers from northern Bohuslän to the Gulf of Bothnia sometime in the 1320s or 1330s.

In the Baltic Sea, two directions can be traced: one southwards along the Norrland coast down to the Gulf of Gävle and another along the Finnish coast southwards to the Åland archipelago and the Gulf of Finland. It can be suspected that the Stockholm archipelago was influenced from the Åland archipelago. From the Stockholm archipelago, the idea of coast labyrinths may have spread southwards to the coast of Småland.

From the Gulf of Bothnia, the labyrinths may have spread eastwards to the White Sea, as suggested by Vyacheslav Mizin. Mizin shows several possible routes along the major waterways. I favour the southernmost option because it connects the area around Uleåborg on the Gulf of Bothnia with Kem on the White Sea, where a remarkable concentration of labyrinths can be found on the islands in the sea. This labyrinth zone at Kem, on Oleshin Island and on the Solovetsky Islands could be the core area from which the idea of coast labyrinths spread further along the Arctic coast.

Not much is known about communications in the old principality of Novgorod, but it is likely that people relied heavily on winter roads. In summer, the vast forests were almost impassable, with vast marshlands and difficult-to-traverse vegetation. But in winter, the frozen waterways were easy to travel on. There, natural "roads" were formed without significant obstacles for those travelling on skis or by horse and sleigh. Winter roads allowed for heavy transport and long day trips, but it was of course an advantage if they went through areas that were not completely uninhabited. The horses needed fodder and the drivers probably wanted a roof over their heads at night. This indicates that the most favourable connection between the Gulf of Bothnia and the White Sea was the southern route along Oulujoki towards Kem.

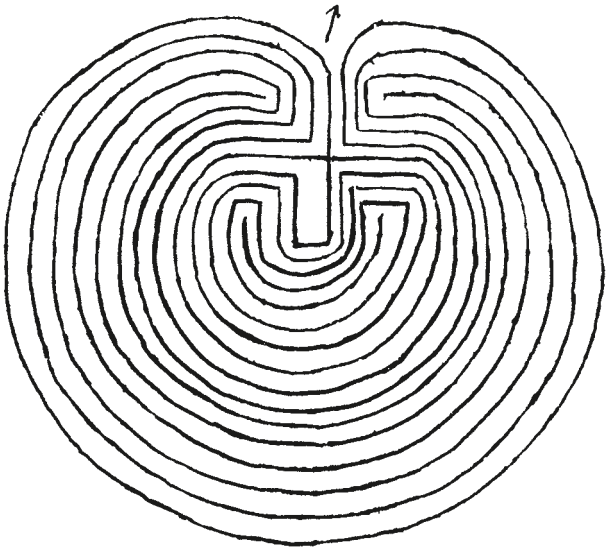
39. A Strangely Built City

The labyrinth names' references to cities or fortresses are so clear and obvious that there is little to discuss. But there are some records that explain in more detail how labyrinths were conceived as cities. They show that the figures were perceived as fortified cities, with the walls representing ramparts and the paths corresponding to streets. In some cases, it is clearly stated that the city or 'square' was in the centre of the figure, while the system of paths represented the difficult route into the city.

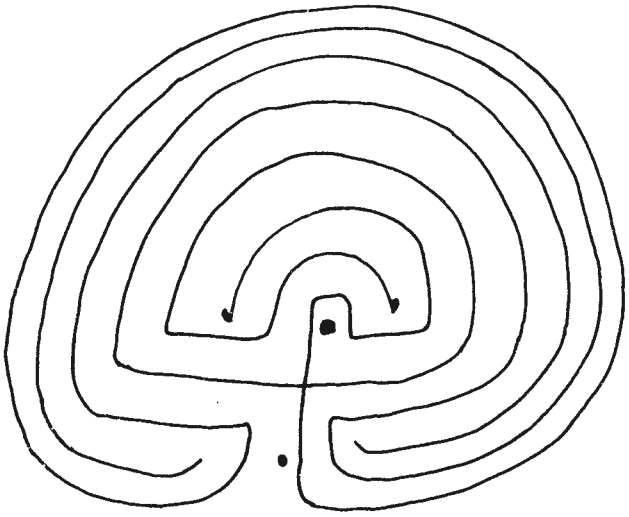
● There are no stone labyrinths in the parish of Västra Tunhem in Västergötland, but apparently people there still had a clear idea of the meaning of the labyrinth figures. A drawing from 1940 shows an angle-type figure with 16 walls. It is accompanied by the following story:

"My father called this town Trojeborg. The town existed, sometime in the grey antiquity, but the informant has forgotten where it was located. As the sketch shows, there was only one street leading to it. This street was made in circles and labyrinths. The lines that appear were high stone walls or wooden barriers, which meant that no enemy could climb over them. The city itself is marked in the centre of the sketch in black ink. The arrow shows the entrance to the city, where there was a strong wooden gate, probably made of oak. Where the street enters the town there is also a gate. The streets in the city were similar to other city streets of the time. According to contemporary war science, this city was not easily accessible to the enemy."[1]

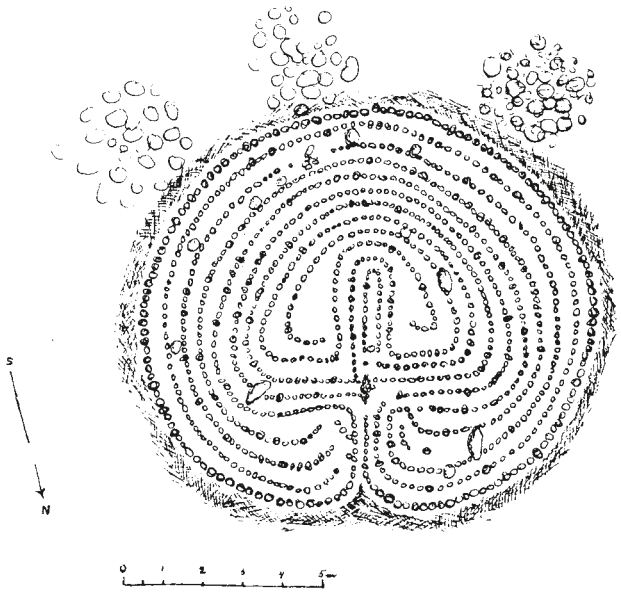
● From Nösslinge parish in northern Halland, it is said that in the 1880s and 1890s, at guilds and gatherings and at school, people amused themselves by drawing an image of "streets." The 'town' was a point roughly in the centre of the image. The figure was drawn with a pencil on a piece of paper. Someone else was asked to enter the city and leave it again. The person asked then took a stick and followed the 'streets' to get into the city – and out again. But he was not allowed to skip any line because then he would have lost.[2]



39:1 Labyrinth drawing, 1940, Västra Tunhem parish, Västergötland.



39:2 Labyrinth drawing from Nösslinge parish, Halland.



39:3 The labyrinth on Sörgården's outfield, Ornunga parish, Västergötland.

● In Ornunga parish in Västergötland, there is a stone labyrinth which, according to a local tradition, represented a town where the paths were streets, and the larger stones of the outer ring formed the ramparts around the town. It was said that "One could easily enter the town, but it should be impossible to find the right way, and no one can enter the square."[3]

● At Påtorp in Fristad parish in Västergötland, there was a stone labyrinth that was destroyed sometime in the early 1900s. In 1865, a legend about the labyrinth was published: "during a time of overpopulation in the area, eight boys from the neighbouring farm Asklanda went out to a foreign country, where they saw many strange things, including a strangely built city. Returning home, they tried to describe this, but could not make the description comprehensible to those at home, unless they made a stone figure, which clearly showed how the city in question was built."[4]

● The labyrinth near Vänga church in Västergötland was, according to folk tradition, built by "some servants, returning from war, ... to illustrate how a city, which they had conquered far away in the enemy's country, looked like." A somewhat more detailed version of the story was reproduced in a newspaper article in 1930: "Three knights came home from a great war far abroad. They set up the Trojeborg at Vänga to show the people how the streets went in a large city, the one they had conquered. The city was to be called Trôjenbôrg or Trôdenbôrg."[5]

● The island of Hogland in the Gulf of Finland has no known stone labyrinths. However, around 1870 it was still common among boys on the island to construct labyrinths. They were called *Ranskan Pariisi* 'the Paris of France.' It was said that in France there is a city called Paris and its streets were built in an intricate pattern to deceive enemies and facilitate the city's defence. The innermost open space where you turn to get out is called the *square*. The Hoglanders also referred to labyrinths as *Pariisin linnoitus* 'the fortress of Paris.'[6]

● In a series of interviews in 1934 in Nordingrå parish in Ångermanland, Emil Nordmark got a good insight into the local people's ideas about the stone labyrinths there. One person said that the *Rundborgadestaden* represented the walls of a city and once you entered it, it was almost impossible to get out. One view was that the stone figures were built during a war to prevent the enemy from entering the bay. Another person said that to enter the fortress you had to walk many times and turn round. But when you got to the big stone in the centre, you were at the fortress. A fisherman remembered that as a child he used to conquer the *Ringborgadestaden* for fun. When you had gone around all the fortresses, you came into the heart of the city, then you had captured it. At school, the boys would stand up and draw the *Rundborgadestaden* on the blackboard.[7]

● In 1887 a stone labyrinth on the island of St. Agnes in the Isles of Scilly, off Cornwall, was described as *The Town of Troy.* The name was derived from ancient Troy, where the streets were designed so that

an enemy once within the gates, could not find their way out again. "This enclosure is composed of an outer circle of stones with an opening at one point, the whole supposed to represent the walls and gate of Troy. Within this there are several rows of stones, generally circular in form; the space between these represents the streets."[8]

● A book on Wales from 1815 has a drawing of an angle-type figure. It tells us that shepherd boys in Wales used to cut such figures in the turf "whilst they are tending their flocks." Associated with the figure was a tradition that "the *City of Troy* was defended by seven walls, represented by the seven exterior lines, and the entrance… made so intricate for its greater security, as the enemy is supposed to have been under the necessity of going through all of the winding interval of the walls before he could arrive at the citadel."[9]

● Another book from Wales 1865 illustrates shepherds' turf labyrinths with a drawing of simple angle-type where the letter A in the centre of the figure is said to show the 'centre of the town' while the letter B at the entrance to the labyrinth marks the 'entrance to the town.'[10]

● In Norfolk in eastern England there was a folk tradition, referring to garden or turf labyrinths, that *The city of Troy* had only one gate and it was necessary to go through every street to get to the market place.[11]

● According to a report from 1898 there was game in the UK in which a plan of a labyrinth is drawn on a slate and presented as a puzzle by boys to their schoolfellows for them to find a way into the "central citadel."[12]

● In Norway, in 1784, three "so-called *Troyborge"* are mentioned in Bragnæs (Drammen), Hougsund (Hokksund) and Kongsberg: "They are said to have been named after the city of Troy, and were actually stone-fenced iron corridors, arranged in such a way that when you had walked around in a circle 12 times, and had often been close to the perimeter, you finally reached the centre, from which you had to return the same way to escape."[13]

● At Skaagan near Tönsberg in Norway there has been a labyrinth called *Truber Slot*. According to a local tradition, the people of the "Lady of the woods" (huldrefolket) had their castle there. You had to walk in many twists and turns before entering the innermost courtyard.[14]

In the record from Västra Tunhem it is explicitly stated that "the city itself" was in the centre of the labyrinth; the path system was perceived as a street leading into the city. In Nösslinge, too, the "city" was apparently imagined to be at the centre of the labyrinth, while the path system represented the street leading to the city. In Nordingrå, the "fortress" was considered to correspond to a large stone at the centre of the labyrinth. To enter the 'fortress' you had to go through all the passages. The Welsh shepherds also seem to have thought that the 'citadel' was at the centre of the figure.

But the records from Nordingrå indicate that the people there also had the idea that the entire labyrinth was a fortified city, where the walls represented the walls of "a city" that was difficult to get out of once you had entered. It is said that once you had gone around all the 'fortresses' you entered 'the heart of the city.' In Ornunga, too, the entire labyrinth was apparently perceived as a city, where the paths were streets and the outer ring formed the ramparts around the city. In nearby Påtorp, the entire labyrinth seems to have been perceived as a city. At Hogland, the paths of the labyrinth were apparently considered to be the streets of the town, while the open space in the centre was a square.

These differences are also found outside the Nordic countries. Hermann Kern, who has examined in particular the images in manuscripts referring to Jericho, points out that the Jewish images place the city of Jericho in the centre of the labyrinth, while the Christian images suggest that the entire labyrinth was perceived as an image of Jericho.[15]

In India, Cassiano da Macerata's travel account shows that the ruined city of Scimangada was depicted as an angle-type figure, with the city in the centre of the labyrinth. al-Bīrūnī's drawing of the demon Ravana's castle, in the form of a labyrinth, is inscribed in the centre with the text *al-qal'a,* meaning 'castle.' This should mean that the castle was in the centre of the figure. At the entrance of the labyrinth is the text 'the gateway to the road to the castle,' which indicates that the paths of the labyrinth were perceived as the road to the castle, not part of the castle. But in India there are also several examples of labyrinths being called *kótē*, i.e. 'fortress,' without a clear reference to the centre of the figures.[16]

The labyrinth figure on the Tragliatella jug (650-600 BC) has the word *truia* inscribed in the outermost path, not in the centre of the figure. This suggests that the Etruscans perceived the entire labyrinth figure as an image of the city of Troy.

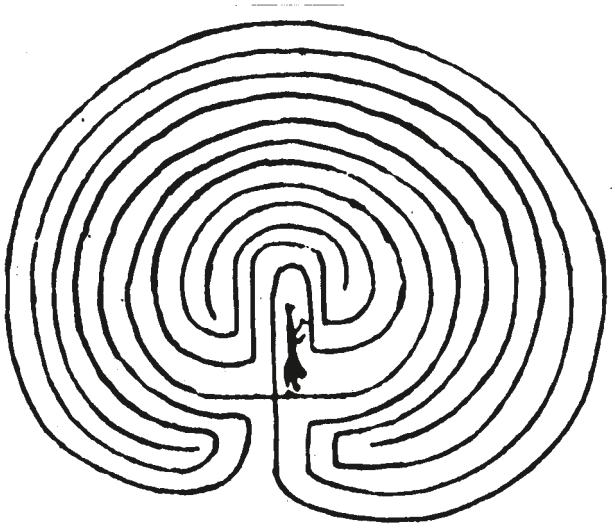
Moriah Kennedy has pointed out a difference between the north and south of England. In the south, labyrinth names such as Troy Town and variants of Maze or Mizmaze dominate, while in the north the turf mazes are called Walls of Troy, Troy's Walls or Julian's Bower. Thus, in the south the turf figures are associated with the *city* of Troy*,* but in the north they are perceived as the *walls* of Troy.[17]

It is probably not possible to clarify which was the more original view: that the 'city' was identical with the whole labyrinth or that it was in its centre. However, it is obvious that the labyrinths were in some sense considered to represent a city or fortress. Both labyrinth names and legends point in the same direction. Much else in labyrinth research can feel shaky and uncertain, but this motif has a broad and solid basis.

The idea that labyrinths represent a city appears in the Troy names of British labyrinths (Caerdroia, City

of Troy, Walls of Troy, Troy's walls), in the Jerusalem names in Prussia and in French cathedrals, in the Troy names of labyrinths at Basque churches and in Roman mosaic labyrinths, often with walls, towers and battlements. One can sense the same idea behind the Etruscan jug from Tragliatella where the word *truia is* written inside a labyrinthine figure. Obviously, this is a widespread, very old motif, which was strongly represented in the Nordic countries until late times.

In India too, labyrinths were imagined as cities or fortresses. There the names of the labyrinths are different, but the labyrinth lore points in the same direction as in the northern Europe. India could not have got these ideas from Scandinavia and the North-Europeans could not have got them from India. The similarities must be due to the common origin of the labyrinth traditions of India and northern Europe. Suspicions inevitably turn to the Mediterranean region, particularly Greece.



40:1 Labyrinth painting with a woman in the centre, Sibbo Old Church.

40. A Maiden in the Centre

An exciting motif in labyrinth lore involves games and legends where a young woman finds herself in the centre of the labyrinth while one or two young men try to get her out. Let's start in Finland, where many labyrinths have been called *Jungfrudans* 'maiden dance,' probably in reference to such games.

● A.O. Freudenthal wrote in 1874 that in eastern Nyland it was said that the labyrinths "were formerly playgrounds for the youth. At the centre of the labyrinth, a maiden is said to have had her place, to which the others danced, following the paths of the stone figure: hence the name *Jungfrudans* 'maiden dance.'"[1]

40:2 The labyrinth at Köpmanholm at Furusund. A girl was to stand in the centre (1) while two boys (2 and 3) ran in opposite directions through the path system, competing to reach her first.

● In 1877 J.R. Aspelin published two essays on labyrinths, a longer one in Finnish and a shorter summary in German. The Finnish version states that a common belief was that the labyrinths were playgrounds: "In Eastern Nyland it is said that a 'maiden' (jungfru) was in the centre of the labyrinth and that the 'suitors' walked through the passages to reach her." The German version states that a maiden took her place in the centre and the young men tried to reach her by running through the path.[2]

● A similar statement, from the parish of Malax 20 kilometres south of Vasa in western Finland, was published in 1930 by Johannes Klockars: "Its most famous name (Jungfrudans) is said to have come from the fact that a maiden took her place in the innermost part of the labyrinth and a young man would run through the stone figure in order to dance with her."[3]

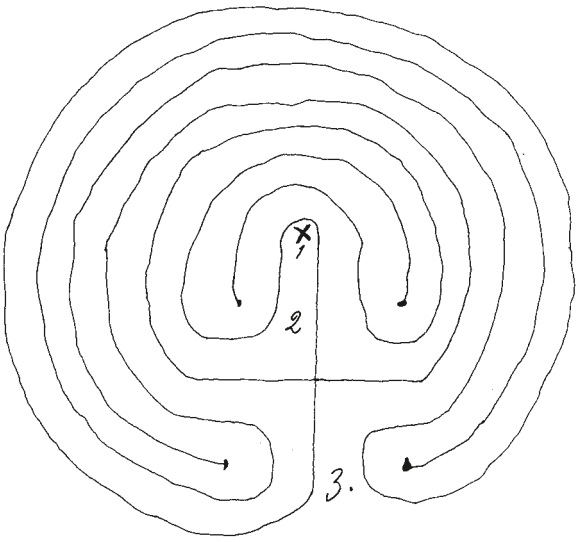
● A.M. Tallgren briefly mentioned the labyrinths of Eastern Karelia in an article in 1938. He says that there were more than 20 labyrinths on the Solovetsky Islands and on the Kola Peninsula there were five at the mouth of the river Varzuga. Tallgren also states that "According to old oral tradition, these 'labyrinths' were a kind of training ground where one could demonstrate one's skill in games and other skills. In the centre, a girl who wanted to participate placed herself inside the 'besieged castle.' The boy who wanted to free her would ride in through the gate and along the paths to the girl, without the horse touching the stones along the paths."[4]

● A report to the Department of Folklore at Åbo Akademi in 1984 comes from Munsala parish 55 km north-east of Vasa. The first part is a summary of conversations with several elderly people, followed by a story told by an 80-year-old wife of a pilot:

A girl was placed in the centre of the stone labyrinth and the boy had to make his way to her through all the wild labyrinths. If he managed this without mishap, he would carry her out the same way. If this also went well, the girl was his. All this would be done to the singing and hand-clapping of the rest of the company. The whole thing would be done somewhat secretly from parents and older people. Perhaps it was a sin to "dance." Perhaps it was a courtship game of the time.

The 80-year-old woman tells us that as a child she was allowed to join the older youngsters when they danced the Jungfrudans, but she had to promise not to talk about it at home. She remembers that different objects with a specific meaning were placed in different places in the labyrinth. For example, an old horseshoe meant good luck. Different pieces of clothing had their own significance and thus the future of the young man and the maiden, who stood waiting in the centre of the labyrinth, could be predicted. The pilot's wife repeatedly emphasised that the elders should not know about these activities of the youngsters.[5]

● In the old church of Sibbo in Nyland there is a labyrinth painting, probably from the 15th century, with a female figure at the centre.[6] Researchers early associated the painting with the local labyrinth name *Jungfrudans* and the stories of games involving the retrieval of a maiden from the centre of the labyrinth.



40:3 Labyrinth drawing, 1933, from Otterstads parish, Västergötland, clarified by John Kraft. The cross at 1 shows the "castle" itself. At 2 stood the castle's guard and at 3 Grimborg started his way to the Jungfruborgen 'Maiden castle.'

40:4 Danish textbook for young children with the following verse:
Many, many, many
Long, long, long
winding paths
to the princess.
If you find her
you will win her.
But if you hesitate
I think you will fail.

In Finland, there are thus five records of games in labyrinths and a labyrinth image in a church, all of which testify to a young woman being taken out of the centre of the labyrinth. The question, however, is whether there may be a certain amount of confusion in these accounts. In my opinion three of them are probably independent of each other, but I have some doubts over Aspelin's and Tallgren's information (see Appendix 22).

Christer Westerdahl, who believes that labyrinths first reached the Nordic countries with the Christianisation, i.e. hardly earlier than the 11th century, dismisses the many games and folk traditions in the Nordic countries about young women being taken out of labyrinths by one or more men, as "a late reinterpretation of something completely different."[7] However, this gives him problems with the rather early labyrinth painting in Sibbo. Westerdahl's way out of this dilemma is to argue that the female figure was probably painted later than the labyrinth figure.[8]

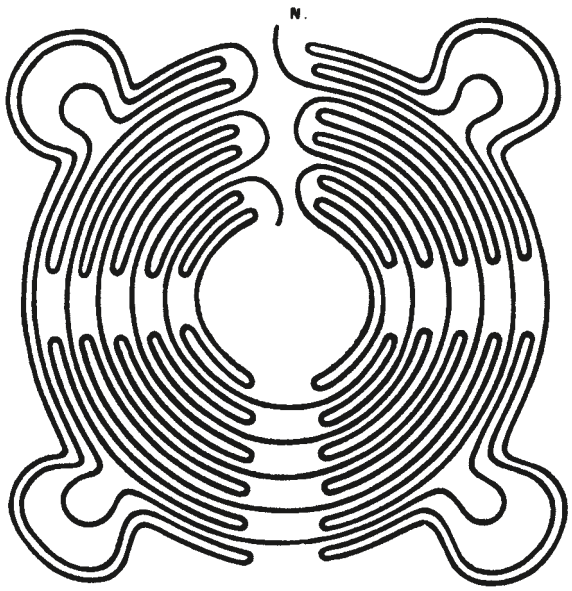
I don't believe it. There is nothing to suggest that the labyrinth painting in Sibbo was created in two stages. On the contrary, this figure is somewhat special in that the angles above the centre cross are slightly extended, which may have been due to the extra space required for the female figure. The shape of the labyrinth thus suggests that the female figure and the path system were painted at the same time.

● The motif of a girl being taken out of the labyrinth is also found in Sweden. In 1979, a person from the fishing village of Skäran in Nysätra parish in Västerbotten related a tradition about a labyrinth on Stor-Vindskäret: The prettiest girl in the village should stand in the centre of the labyrinth. The men would try to get hold of her or come in to her.[9]

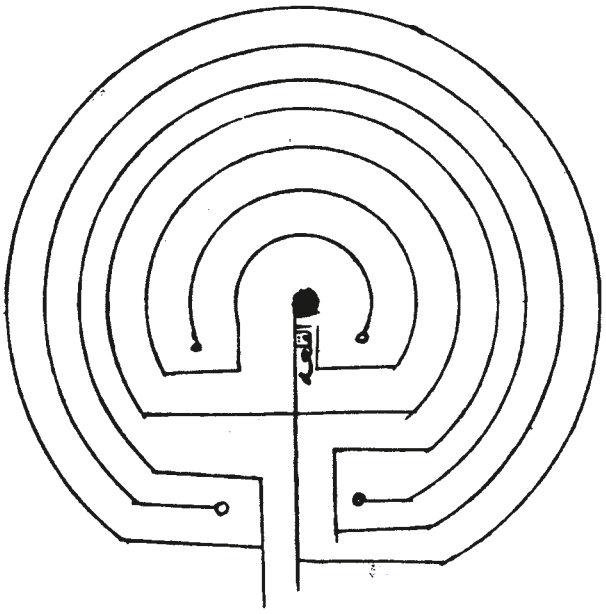
● There is a story from Nordingrå parish in Ångermanland that describes the *Ringborgastaden* as a "troll home." The trolls had taken a girl and hidden her in the labyrinth. All the people in the village gathered and they knew there was a troll cave in the mountain. They went back and forth seven times before they got in. And once inside, they had to keep watch until the old troll fell asleep. Then they rescued the crying girl.[10]

● It is possible that similar ideas can be traced in a report from Sunne in Värmland, where it is said that in the 1870s children used to draw labyrinths during breaks at school and at home. Anyone who could walk through the paths without encountering obstacles could redeem someone who had been spirited away.[11]

● One of the records is my own work. At Köpmanholm in the northern archipelago of Stockholm, there is a well-preserved labyrinth without a centre cross called *Jungfruringen* or *Mariaringen*. During some summer days in 1978 I made a drawing of the labyrinth. As usual, afterwards I knocked doors in the neighbourhood to find out if anyone could tell me anything about the labyrinth. That time I was lucky, I found Svante Wallentin, 71 years old and



40:5 Turf maze with 'bastions,' Saffron Walden, Essex.



40:6 Drawing of the Lanka castle in al-Bīrūnī's book on India, around 1045 AD.

the son of a chief pilot who came to Köpmanholm in 1905.

It didn't start well, because I woke him up in his midday slumber. But after I laid out my pencil drawings of the labyrinth on the kitchen floor, he warmed up. He told me that as a small child, in the early 1900s, he had heard old people tell "like a legend" about how the labyrinth was used.

A girl was placed in the centre. Then two boys started a race from both entrances to get first to the girl in the centre. In this way they had an equal distance to run and met each other somewhere along the way. Whoever got through all the paths and into the centre first got the girl.[12]

● A more detailed story was recorded in 1933 in the parish of Otterstad in Västergötland. Here, labyrinth figures were drawn in the snow on the ice during the winter. The paths were made so wide that you could

skate through them. The game was called 'going to Trojaborg' (åka till Trojaborg). It was like a game, but it was supposed to represent the story of the warrior Grimborg, when he was going to fetch his bride. One of the participants represented the warrior Grimborg. The bride was in the centre of the labyrinth and at the last turn there was a guard for the "castle." The guard would mislead Grimborg and prevent him from reaching the castle. During the game, Grimborg's song was sung.[13]

This old song was well known in Sweden. According to the song, the hero Grimborg made his way through iron and steel fences to reach a beautiful king's daughter. When the king heard that Grimborg was with his daughter, he put up a fierce fight. Grimborg killed 12,000 of the king's men and managed to escape with his bride. But when they were in his mother's house, they were again surrounded by the king's men. Once again, Grimborg killed 12,000 men and then rode alone to the king. At the end of the story, after another battle, Grimborg was reconciled with the king and allowed to marry the king's daughter.[14]

A folk tradition about Grimborg is linked to a mound (Grimshögen) on the border between Långjums parish and Larvs parish in Västergötland, where Grimborg is said to be buried. A "leaning stone" (Lutesten) in the parish of Larv, just one kilometre from Grimshögen, is identified as the place where Grimborg is said to have stayed after being mortally wounded.[15]

● A Danish reading-book for young children, first published in 1907, features a labyrinth drawing with a princess in the centre and a boy at the entrance. A short verse explains that the boy can have the princess if only he can find his way to her through the winding paths of the labyrinth.[16]

Johannes Munch-Petersen in Copenhagen says in an article that he came across this labyrinth image when he was at school in the 1930s. But he preferred the labyrinth game his grandmother taught him when he was eight years old. She also told him about a princess, but what interested Johannes most was that there was a golden treasure in the centre of the labyrinth. He wanted to retrieve it, but then a troll could come out of hiding and he had to escape. To save himself, he was allowed to jump over the walls, but only once.[17]

● When my book was published in 2022 I gave a copy to a labyrinth friend in Denmark, Eigil Nikolajsen. When he thanked me for it, he mentioned that he had long ago seen a page in a Danish family magazine from the 1930s with a labyrinth verse, somewhat longer than that just mentioned in the reading-book from 1907. A year later he finally found it in an archive. Five drawings demonstrate the simple method of constructing angle-type figures from a cross, angles and dots. An "x" in the centre marked the place of "an imprisoned princess." The reader is asked to enter the labyrinth and try to save the princess. The last drawing shows a figure with five sets of angles (24 walls), a variant never found among other known labyrinth images or field labyrinths.

Together with the drawings is a poem of three verses under the headline *Troldborg Slot* 'Troll's Castle.' Eigils wife Lucy Bergström has kindly translated the verses to English in the following way:

Troll's Castle
A sorcerer lives at Troll's Castle.
I think it is on Funen.
On his head, he wears a red fez
Like no one else in town.
He has a cape so wide and large
That all of his evil it conceals.
A lovely princess lives with him
And must share his horrible cave.

By a thousand passages, the path does twist,
So intense it is to wander.
And in its midst, the wizard lives,
Where no one ever ventures.
There the princess is bound to stay
By his magic power.
Here the poor girl imprisoned lies,
And must in darkness hide.

But if you are clever and brave,
You can win the princess.
When along the passage you creep foot by foot,
The lovely maid you'll find.
But if you try, and it should happen
That you misstep across a line,
You'll go straight ahead to the sorcerer's laugh
While the princess weeps.

Under the poem, within brackets, it is written that this is "partly after an old rhyme."[18] This could mean that the verses from 1938 have been elaborated to some extent from an older and shorter poem, maybe the one published in the reading-book from 1907. But the headline *Troldborg Slot* is not from the reading-book, it fits into the pattern of labyrinth lore on Zealand, with the name *Fru Trolleborgs Slot* and *trække til Trolleborg* at Korsör, mentioned in appendix 12. The most probable interpretation might be that both poems (1907 and 1938) have been inspired by an older Danish variant that has not been preserved.

There is also some other information from the Nordic countries that is not as clear but may reflect the same motif. The famous labyrinth at Visby on Gotland has been associated with several legends (see Appendix 23), four of which were recorded in the 19th century by the Gotland researcher P.A. Säve. Although the legends differ greatly, they have in common that the main character is a young woman who is in trouble and eventually becomes free.[19]

A man who grew up at Bromarf near Hangö in Finland wrote in 1984 that when he was young there was a Jungfrudans at Bolax village in the parish of

Hitis, just west of Hangö. “It was a great pleasure for young people. They competed to find their way out of the labyrinth. It was also important when proposing marriage.”[20] It is possible that the reference to “courtship” is related to the stories about games involving getting a girl out of the labyrinth.

A person from Persborg in Fridlevstad parish in Blekinge has told me that as a small boy in the 1930s he was told that labyrinths were used for occult purposes at midsummer and in connection with weddings.[21]

Perhaps games of the same kind were behind a local tradition in the 17th century whereby the Norwegian king Olaf Haraldsson (St Olaf) was said to have played with “his woman” in an elaborate Trojaborg by the old church in Sundsvall.[22]

The games and legends about a girl in the labyrinth who is to be freed or delivered show great variety and are found in a wide area. Added to this are the names of the Jungfrudans type and the labyrinth painting in Sibbo Church with a female figure in the centre. The time span is considerable, from the 15th century when Sibbo church probably got its labyrinth painting to beginning of the 20th century. The major differences between the legends may be because the underlying motif is old.

Perhaps this is the same motif that appears in Saffron Walden in England, where, according to a 19th century record, a large turf labyrinth had once been used for a game where a young woman stood in the centre, called “home”, while a boy tried to get to her as quickly as possible without tripping.[23]

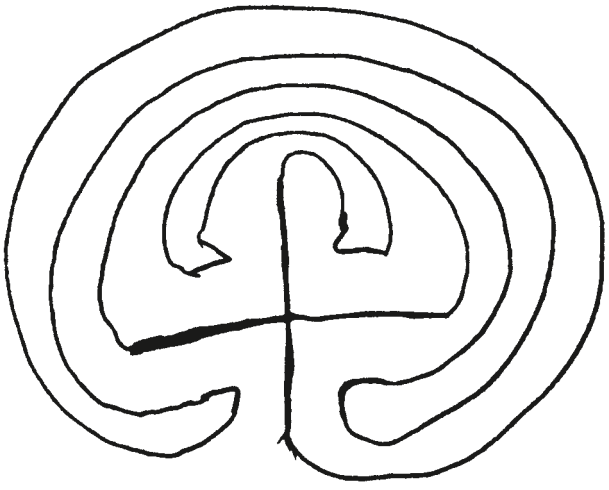
It is conceivable that the enigmatic labyrinth names such as *Julian’s Bower* were part of the same traditional motif. Michael Behrend’s analysis suggests that the female name Julian was so common that it came to mean ‘woman’ in general. Eventually it took on the meaning of ‘flirt’ (Jilt = jillot) or a ‘loose woman.’ Behrend believes that Julian’s Bower was a love nest, a place where one placed one’s ‘gillian’ or mistress (see chapter 18).

Far away from Northern Europe, in Ethiopia, Afghanistan and India, there are also stories of a woman being pulled out of a labyrinth. It is possible that these stories are an outgrowth of the same traditional motifs as in the Nordic countries and England.

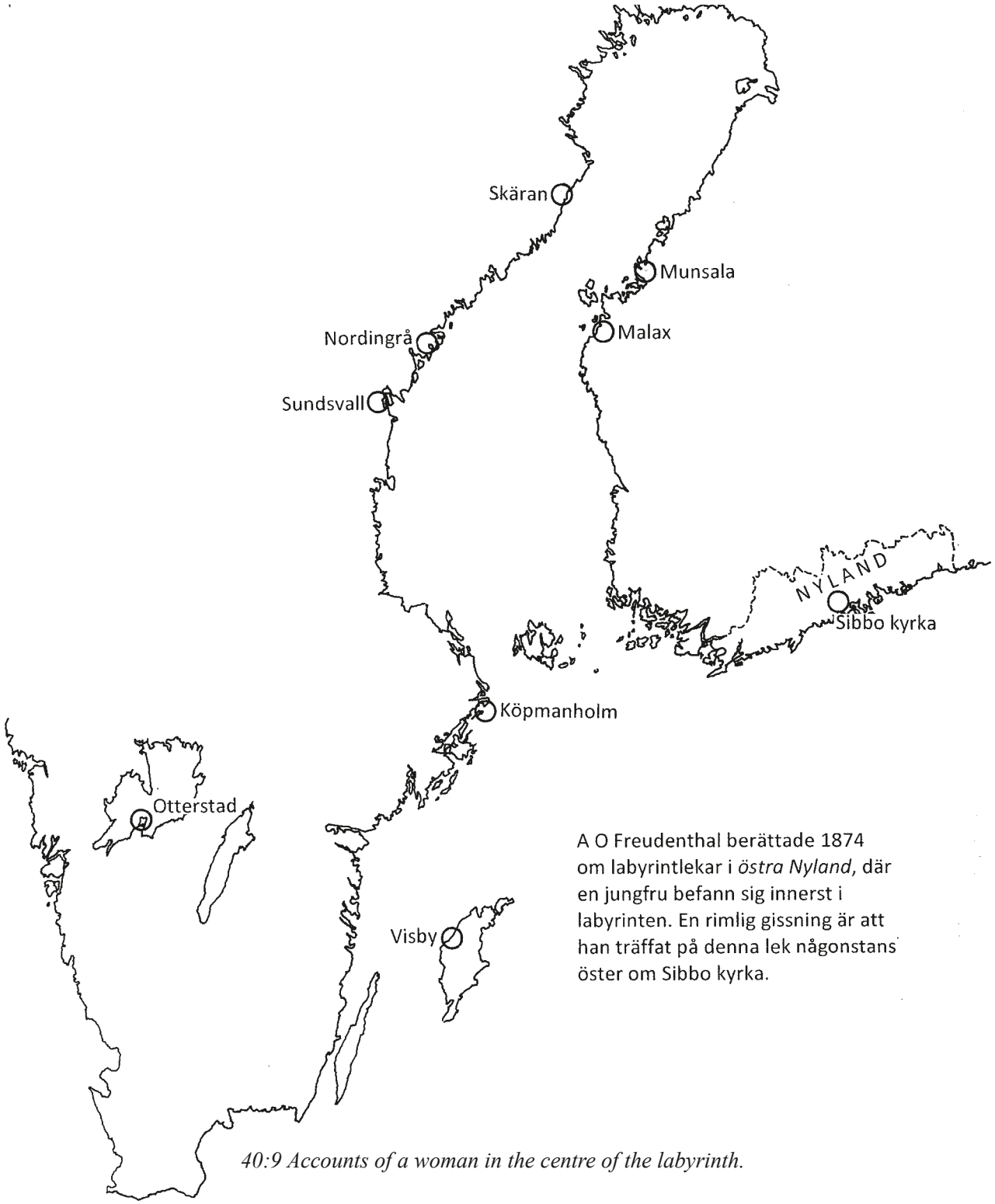
● One such story is the Indian national epic the Rāmāyana. To cut a long story short, the 24,000-43,000 stanza poem (the length varies between versions) is about how a demon, Ravana, abducts Sita, the wife of the poem’s hero Rama. Ravana takes Sita to his castle in Lanka (that has given name to the modern-day state of Sri Lanka). Rama and his brother Lakshmana then chase Ravana with an army of monkeys, attack the castle, kill Ravana and free Sita.

Around 1045, the Iranian geographer al-Bīrūnī describes the *Rāmāyana* in a book on India. He depicts Ravana’s castle in the form of an angle-type

40:7 Solomon’s Palace. Image on an Ethiopian magic scroll made for Sergutä Sellasé in the 19th century in Amhara. King Solomon is flanked by two guards above the somewhat misrepresented labyrinth figure with seven walls.



40:8 Shamaili’s house. Drawing by Said Agha from Sutan, eastern Afghanistan.



40:9 Accounts of a woman in the centre of the labyrinth.

labyrinth figure. This is interesting because the story of the abduction and liberation of Sita is reminiscent of the labyrinth tales and labyrinth games of northern Europe. Both in the *Rāmāyana* and in the North, the story is about a woman being taken out of a labyrinth.

But al-Bīrūnī seems to be the only one to depict Ravana's castle in this way. This means that one should be cautious in conjecture. However, it is unlikely that al-Bīrūnī, one of the giants of scholarship of his time, would have imagined the connection with a labyrinthine figure. In his native Chorezm in Central Asia, there is no trace of the angle-type. In all likelihood, therefore, one of al-Bīrūnī's informants in India told him this and drew the labyrinth figure.

There is also another record linking Rama and Sita to labyrinths. In Sitimani in western India, there was a large stone labyrinth that was unfortunately flooded by a large reservoir in 1996. It was called *Lakshmana-mandal* 'Lakshmana's mandala' and the local priest, who often walked in it, has retold the tradition that it was built by Rama and Sita when they passed through these parts thousands of years ago.[24]

There is a detail in the *Rāmāyana* which suggests that the labyrinth figure had an original connection with the story. After the victory over Ravana, Rama and Sita left in Ravana's chariot. But first they circled the magic castle *seven times*.[25] If one dares to believe

that the content of the *Rāmāyana* was influenced by an older labyrinth myth, which provided the framework for the story, then the labyrinth myth must have existed in India before the poem was written down. This does not give a precise dating, but a common view is that the *Rāmāyana* was written down in the 3rd century BC. According to tradition, the poem was written by Valmiki in the 4th century BC. It is thus conceivable, but impossible to prove, that *Rāmāyana's* story was inspired by an older labyrinth myth.

Attempts have been made to determine the cultic background of the main characters in the story. The god Rama, who was a popular hero in India, comparable to Achilles in Greece, has been interpreted as an incarnation of the god Vishnu. The same applies to Rama's brother Lakshmana. It is easy to compare the two brothers to the Greek mythological twins Kastor and Polydeuces. Rama's wife Sita has been interpreted as an incarnation of the goddess Sri, who was Vishnu's consort. She was the daughter of the earth, born from a plough furrow.[26]

Rama's attack on Ravana's castle may have represented the liberation of the earth goddess by the sky god, a seasonal myth linked to the beginning of the vegetation period. During the time when nothing grew, due to cold or drought, the earth goddess was thought to be absent. Each year, when the sky god liberated her and brought her out of her underground captivity, the forces of vegetation were released. By imitating the sky god's liberation of the earth goddess, people hoped to ensure good vegetation and breeding. This is a theme that religious scholars have encountered in many contexts, including ancient Greece. More on this in chapter 48.

Rama and Sita still play important roles in Indian mythology. In late October or early November, Hindus all over the world celebrate the festival of lights, Diwali, to commemorate Rama's reunion with Sita and their return to the holy city of Ayodhya with Lakshmana. This is a major festival that lasts for five days around the new moon day of the Hindu month of Karttika. Lamps are lit to welcome Rama home to Ayodhya. Diwali has many more aspects and is largely centred around the four-armed goddess Lakshmi, who is associated with happiness and wealth. The theme throughout the festival is the victory of good over evil.

● Many labyrinth images in manuscripts have been associated with the city of Jericho. The Bible tells how the Israelites, led by Joshua, used magic to conquer Jericho. The Lord told Joshua to march the army around the city every day for six days. On the seventh day, they walked seven laps and the priests blew their trumpets. When Joshua's people finally gave up a cry, the walls of the city collapsed.

But before the siege began, Joshua sent a couple of spies to Jericho. There they were protected by the harlot Rahab. She lived by the city wall and helped the spies to escape by lowering themselves over the wall with a rope, promising that the attackers would spare Rahab and her family when the city fell. She hung a red ribbon prominently in her window so that Joshua's soldiers could recognise the house when they took Jericho. As a result, everyone living in Rahab's house was spared and guided out of the burning city after the walls fell.

The account of how the walls were destroyed by magic has, of course, no basis in reality. Moreover, it is doubtful whether Joshua was a historical person at all. And there are no archaeological findings indicating that Jericho was even inhabited at the time described in the Bible.

The story of Rahab the harlot seems strange. Why has such a tale been woven in, about a woman who becomes one of the protagonists in the showdown between defenders and attackers? Even though the Israelites had already been promised success by their god! One possible explanation is that Rahab is yet another variant of the idea of a woman who must be retrieved or helped out of a fortified labyrinthine city whose defences can only be breached by magic.

In Hebrew sources other than the Bible, Rahab is portrayed as an exceptionally beautiful woman who converted to Judaism late in life. It is said that after the fall of Jericho she married Joshua. According to other accounts, she married Salmon, who was one of the two spies she sheltered in Jericho.[27]

A conservative guess is that the labyrinth figures were associated with Jericho quite late, by people who read the Bible and let their imagination run wild. But the curious inclusion of a woman in the city and the siege method of a ritual march around the city seven times suggests that the biblical text may have been inspired by a labyrinth myth. This suspicion is reinforced by the information that the woman subsequently marries one of the men who captured Jericho. This means that the labyrinth myth could be older than the biblical text. It is not possible to date the book of Joshua with certainty, but various estimates point to the 5th century BC or the period 1000-500 BC.

Hermann Kern has pointed out the similarities between the labyrinths and the description of Jericho: seven laps, the idea of a walled city, a protective function and the influence of magic. The impregnable walls of Troy could not ward off the Greeks' stratagem and the walls of Jericho could not withstand the magic of the Israelites.[28]

The orientalist Cyrus Gordon has also pointed out that the conquest of Jericho is in many ways reminiscent of the conquest of Troy. He considered it possible that the narrative in the Book of Joshua is based on one or more epics that occupied an important place in the culture of Israel.[29]

● A 19th century scroll from Amhara, Ethiopia, contains a square, slightly corrupted, angle-type drawing with eight walls and an image of King Solomon with two guards. The text indicates that Solomon had a labyrinthine palace built. But a person called Sirak dug a tunnel to its centre and abducted one of Solomon's wives.[30]

● A drawing from Sutan, in eastern Afghanistan, shows a labyrinthine figure of distorted angle-type, where the artist has forgotten the dots, giving the figure six walls and making it impossible to get through. But the interesting thing is the story. The figure is said to represent the *house of Shamaili*. According to a legend, the entrance to the house was hidden and only Princess Shamaili knew how to get in. Shamaili was the daughter of King Khunkhar (the bloodthirsty). He promised his daughter to the first suitor who managed to find her. But those who failed were hanged.

King Namazlum had seven sons. They all wanted to marry princess Shamaili. But six of them failed to find their way to her and were executed. The seventh, Jallad Khan, decided to be more careful. Disguised, he managed to get work as an assistant to King Khunkhar's sculptor. He persuaded the sculptor to make a hollow sculpture where Jallad Khan was hiding. The sculpture was brought to the king where it came to life and began to dance for the king. This wonder made the princess curious, and she took the sculpture to her room. At midnight, when the princess was asleep, Jallad Khan stepped out of the sculpture and exchanged rings with Shamaili. When she woke up and saw the new ring on her finger, she was scared. The next night she told the sculpture that whoever you are, hairdresser, weaver or anyone else, come out and be my husband. Jallad Khan then came out and spent the next ten nights with Shamaili.

Jallad Khan then went to the king and asked to marry Shamaili. The princess helped him find the way to her house and then the king agreed to their marriage. Later, when Jallad Khan had his own kingdom, he took revenge on King Khunkhar for his dead brothers by destroying the king's eyes.[31]

The motif of a woman being liberated from a labyrinth is hardly a migrating legend associated with labyrinths in later times. There are large variations in the narratives and many of the records describe games; in some cases, the stories come from people who themselves participated in the games. The same motif appears in geographically diverse contexts, and in some cases, the *Rāmāyana* and the biblical account of the fall of Jericho, the traces go far back in time. I therefore believe that this is a very old motif that may be related to the oldest use of labyrinths.

The interpretation of the *Rāmāyana* as a seasonal myth, in which the hero must free a young woman from the labyrinth to ensure good harvests, can be compared with the images of lovers on the Etruscan jug from Tragliatella, which also suggest that labyrinths were once associated with fertility rites.

The plot of the *Iliad*, where a woman, Helen, is brought out of Troy, fits well into this pattern. Could this mean that all the legends and games about a woman in the labyrinth were inspired by Homer? Or, conversely, could it be that the plot of the Troy legend was inspired by an old seasonal myth?

41. Horses

The images on the Etruscan jug from Tragliatella show two riders on horseback who appear to be on their way out of a labyrinth. They have given rise to much speculation. One common guess is that it was an early edition of the famous Roman equestrian game *Lusus Troiae*. But as already noted in Chapter 7, there are objections to such an interpretation. Even if we drop the idea of Lusus Troiae, the possibility remains that the two riders are on their way out of the labyrinth. And if so, they should have ridden through the passages or crossed the labyrinth's walls. The question is whether there is more evidence pointing in the same direction.

An intriguing reference is the 'Trojan horse' in the Odyssey. The Greeks could not defeat Troy's defences, so after ten years of siege they gave up and sailed home. But that was just a ruse. They left behind a large wooden horse containing a band of brave warriors. The Trojans took the horse as booty and dragged it into Troy. The following night, the warriors slipped out and opened the city gates from the inside. The stratagem succeeded and the city was captured and ravaged by the Greeks.

Such a story could hardly have had a basis in reality. But if the framework of the Troy legend was borrowed from an old myth about getting Helen out of Troy/Trojeborg, one can imagine that a magic horse was used to overcome the virtually impregnable defence. This could mean that the oldest use of labyrinths included elements where one or more riders on horseback made their way through the labyrinth's paths or simply jumped over its walls to retrieve a woman in the centre of the labyrinth.

The British Virgil expert W.F. Jackson Knight (1895-1964) believed that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* may have been based on memories of a real city conquered in a historical war, but that this historical core had been augmented by mythical elements. The latter included the story of the wooden horse. In some versions it is said to have contained a completely unreasonable number of soldiers, in one version it is completely missing and, in another example, the wooden horse is massive.[1]

Knight believed that these data reflect a myth of a magical horse that had the power to break the defences of the enchanted walls. The city of Troy was protected by walls that could not be breached without magic. In one version of the story, the breach is made by a dance of weapons performed by Achilles' son Pyrrhos. In another version, the walls of Troy are breached by trumpet blasts,[2] in a manner reminiscent of the conquest of Jericho.

In the Troy legend, Knight sees a labyrinthine myth with a captive woman who is to be freed, which is done with the help of a magic horse, by dancing with weapons or other tricks such as blowing trumpets. The hero and the freed maiden eventually enter into a union, a sacred wedding, which Knight associates

with the cult of fertility. The horse has several aspects. It is the horse of death, but also a symbol of fertility and sexual power.[3]

Knight believes that death cults and fertility rites are different aspects of labyrinth representations. The primary function of the labyrinth has been to impede or prevent access.

Knight interprets the images on the jug from Tragliatella not as mythological motifs but as a representation of labyrinth rites. He believes that the images depict a dance of arms with a labyrinth, a form of 'Trojan play.' He does not believe that the riders could have ridden through all the passages of the labyrinth.[4]

Knight's conclusions are speculative, but he cannot be ignored when discussing the 'Trojan horse' and its possible connection with the images from Tragliatella.

There are some records from Sweden where horses appear in connection with labyrinths, but they are not many, and it is not enough to support a theory. At the meeting of the Swedish Ancient Monuments Society in Strängnäs in 1877, the two labyrinths at Horn church in Västergötland were mentioned. One of the participants stated that he had seen the labyrinths 20 years ago. He then heard 'that the sons of the previous vicar had gone through them on horseback.'[5]

The labyrinth at Påtorp manor at Fristad parish, Västergötland, is said to have been used by the knights of Påtorp to "train their horses."[6]

A labyrinth on Jägaråsen near Kungsör has been associated in folk tradition with Queen Christina, who is said to have ridden a horse through the stone figure's paths. The archaeologist Olof Hermelin writes in the 1860s that, according to a folk tale, Kristina "amused herself by galloping on her well-trained horse through all the bends in the stone figure."[7] According to Arvid Hamrin, Kristina was 13 years old when she first came to the royal manor at Kungsör in 1639 and stayed there for five months with her mother, the widowed queen Maria Eleonora.[8]

Some of the names of the labyrinth point in the same direction: Drottning Kristinas ridbana 'Queen Kristina's Riding Course' and Drottning Kristinas ridstig 'Queen Kristina's Riding Path.' But one wonders whether the 13-year-old Christina could really have mastered the art of riding through the labyrinth's system of paths. This must have been a demanding task, if indeed it was possible.

There are also names that give a hint that Christina may have played in the labyrinth without riding through the paths*: Drottning Kristinas gångborg* 'Queen Christina's walking castle,' *Drottning Kristinas Trögborg* 'Queen Christina's Trögborg' and *Drottning Kristinas labyrint* 'Queen Christina's labyrinth.' And there are circumstances that indicate that the labyrinth was not built until after Christina's time.[9]

The Finnish archaeologist A.M. Tallgren stated in 1938 in an article on Eastern Karelia that in the centre of the labyrinth "a girl who wanted to participate was placed inside the 'besieged castle.' The boy who wanted to free her would ride through the gate and along the paths to the girl, without the horse touching the stones along the paths."[10] This is an interesting but enigmatic record. Nowhere else in the Nordic countries is there any record of the game of fetching a girl from the centre of the labyrinth being played on horseback. And Tallgren gives no indication of where he got the information, although he should have been aware of how sensational this description was. It is therefore difficult to regard this as a reliable account.

The idea of riding in labyrinths has fascinated many people. The Danish archaeologist Sören Nancke-Krogh has experimented with riding Icelandic horses in a labyrinth figure on Langeland in Denmark. He says it was reasonably successful, but it was not without difficulties in the sharp turns. However, the horses were not specially trained, which according to him would probably be necessary if you want to ride in a labyrinth.[11]

The evidence from the north is thus weak, bordering on non-existent. And it is a question of interpretation how much one dares to build on the equestrian images from Tragliatella and the legend of the wooden horse in the Troy legend. It is conceivable that one or more riders on horseback played key roles in connection with the earliest use of the labyrinths, but there is little to support this.

42. Labyrinth Dances?

No instructions are needed for labyrinths. Everyone who sees them realises that it's all about getting from the entrance to the centre. Small children who see a field labyrinth gets the idea and spontaneously starts running through the paths. The purpose of the figures is too obvious to be mistaken. But those of us who are a little older want to understand more and ask the question: how did they move through the labyrinth's paths?

A close guess is that they were dancing in the labyrinths. Many people have considered this idea. But what is the evidence for dancing in labyrinths?

Most people who have discussed the dance motif start with the Theseus legend. After Theseus had killed the Minotaur and freed the Athenian youths who were being held hostage, he sailed with them and Ariadne to the island of Delos. There they performed a dance called the 'crane dance' (*geranos*) which, according to Plutarch, imitated the path Theseus had taken through the labyrinth.

Another idea is found in Homer. The *Iliad* tells us that the god Hephaestos forged a shield for Achilles. It depicted the *choros* that Daedalus had once built in Crete for the beautiful Ariadne. The shield also had images of boys and girls dancing ring dances to lyre music. Homer writes that the dances on Achilles' shield were reminiscent of a potter testing the wheel back and forth. A common interpretation is that choros meant 'dancing place.'

These two depictions have given rise to much speculation. It is not surprising that many have associated them with the angle-type figures, which have thus been drawn into the vortex of dance theories. But with my working hypothesis that the labyrinth of the Theseus legend on Crete was associated with the angle-type figures rather late, only around 300 BC, these two pieces of information do not support the assumption that the original meaning and use of the angle-type was related to dance.

The wide-ranging debate that has linked the angle-type to the Roman equestrian game *Lusus Trojae* and related weapon dances does not provide any solid support for the idea that the angle-type figures were originally used for dances. Many scholars have become stuck in their own wishful thinking about this. The evidence is as thin as night-old ice.

The Etruscan jug from Tragliatella shows a clear angle-type labyrinth and a procession of seven warriors who seem to lift one foot slightly at the same time. This could be interpreted as a kind of dance, but perhaps it just shows the warriors marching. My guess is that the images on the jug represent rites of some kind, involving a procession of warriors moving forward. But there is no evidence that they are dancing or that they are on their way out of the labyrinth. The two horsemen appear to be coming out of the labyrinth, but the seven warriors are further away.

This means that the traces from antiquity are exhausted. You have to take a big leap through history to find new evidence. In some French cathedrals in the 14th century and up to the end of the 17th century, there were apparently Easter dances on the floor labyrinths. From Auxerre, it is reported in 1396 that the dean, while singing a hymn, took a ball in his hand and performed a three-step dance (tripudium) through the labyrinth. There is no reason to disbelieve this account.

However, as noted in Chapter 13, this was probably a secondary use of the floor labyrinths in French cathedrals. When these labyrinths were built, the intention was probably to honour the builders of the cathedrals by comparing them to Daedalos. One can suspect that the Easter dances were borrowed into the cathedrals somewhat later. Incidentally, the floor labyrinths in French cathedrals are never of the angle-type, which argues against the Easter dances being related to the history of the angle-type.

Another dance tradition, possibly dating back to the Middle Ages, existed at Stolp in what is now Poland. At a feast at Pentecost, a May Count elected for the occasion would give a speech from the centre of the labyrinth, after which he danced out of the turf figure to music. The dance has been described as the 'Schwäbischen Pas' or 'Kiebitzschritt.'

The dance in Stolp was part of a May Count celebration. If there had been more examples of labyrinths being associated with May Counts and used for dancing in this context, the labyrinth dance in Stolp would have weighed heavily in the evidence. But now this is a single isolated example, which may not give a representative picture of how the other German turf labyrinths were used.

This is all that clearly indicates that people danced in labyrinths on the continent. There are many accounts from the Nordic countries, England and Germany-Poland showing that people met at labyrinths in the spring and played and sometimes danced there, but the reports are often vague and almost never explicit about dancing *in* labyrinths.

Waltraud Hunke draws attention to a chronicle from 1721 that mentions a labyrinth at Wischered Castle in Prague, most likely a garden labyrinth. It is called *Lybustae Dantz-Creyss,* which suggests dancing. The same chronicle tells of a *Wunderburg*, probably a turf labyrinth, at Sondershausen in Thuringia, where there was a labyrinthine *Rasen-Creysse* 'grass cross' where young people used to practise dances.[1]

But the famous turf labyrinth on the Hausberg in Eberswalde, Brandenburg, has not been associated with dancing. There, schoolchildren used to amuse themselves by racing in pairs through the turf figure, which had two entrances.[2] According to another report, from 1877, the children of Eberswalde used to run or jump through the labyrinth at Easter time. Anyone who made it through without getting lost or stepping wrong was rewarded with an egg.[3]

Edward Trollope mentions some examples from England. However, none of them provide a clear picture of dances in labyrinths. There are several indications that people walked or ran through the labyrinths. At Comberton in Cambridgeshire there was a turf labyrinth, *the Mazles,* where the villagers held a festival at Easter time every three years since ancient times.[4] C.W. Barkley says of that labyrinth that "the fun consists in running along this twisting path, gaining the centre, and, of course, going back the same way."[5]

Trollope cites information by John Aubrey from 1719 "that there were many mazes in England before the civil wars (1642-49), and that the young people used on festivals to dance upon them, or as the term was, to tread on them."[6]

Stukeley writes in 1724 about playing in labyrinths that "the boys to this day divert themselves with the running in it one after another, which leads them by many windings quite thro' and back again."[7]

John T. Page recounts an account from an 1860 novel that features the Boughton Green labyrinth**.** It tells of a person who had just *tread* the labyrinth and boasted of his skill, how he managed to get through the passages without a single misstep and that with a little more practice he could probably 'go' through it blindfolded.[8]

In 1908, *the Faries Hill* turf labyrinth at Asenby in Yorkshire was in a ruinous condition, "although persons still living (in 1908) relate that they have often trodden it on summer's evening and knelt at the centre 'to hear the fairies singing.'[9]

A late 18th century manuscript describes the games in the famous labyrinth at Saffron Walden "in connection with walking the maze."[10]

Some Shakespearean quotations point in the same direction. In The Tempest, the word *tread* is used twice to describe the use of a turf labyrinth (Act 3, scene 3 and Act 5, scene 1). The same word is used in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Act 2, scene 2). So, there are a number of records from England of walking, treading or running in labyrinths, but almost no evidence of dancing in them.

In Finland, labyrinths have been called *Jungfrudans* 'Maiden dances.' The name indicates that people danced in the stone figures.

A.O. Freudenthal stated in 1874 that "in the centre of the labyrinth a maiden had her place, to which the others danced, following the paths of the stone figure"[11] But Aspelin wrote in 1877 that the young men tried to reach her by "running through the paths."[12] Johannes Klockars claimed in 1930 that the young man had to run round and round to dance with the maiden.[13] A record from Munsala in 1984 says that the boy would carry the girl out of the labyrinth, but it also says that they 'danced the maiden dance.'[14] So there are hints of dancing in labyrinths, but the information is vague.

I have found a couple of examples in northern Norway. At Repvåg, 45 kilometres south of the North Cape, there are three labyrinths. A local man, who was born in 1889, has said that the Russian crews used to dance and play there when they had reason to do so.[15] At Mikkelbergsodden at Steinvig, 90 kilometres east of the North Cape, there is a labyrinth that has been associated with a local tradition: "In Gamvik, some claim that the labyrinth is a 'Russian game,' which Russian traders built to dance a specific Russian dance."[16]

It is hard to believe that labyrinth dances were a Russian speciality. It is more likely that popular imagination is behind these reports from the Arctic coast. There are no records of labyrinth dancing in Russia.

In Sweden and Denmark, the evidence is even thinner. None of the folk traditions about retrieving a maiden from the labyrinth suggest dancing through the passages. Nor does the magic on the fishing sites seem to have been associated with dancing. On the contrary, a number of records indicate that people simply walked through the labyrinths.

Several records show that young people met at the labyrinths and enjoyed themselves there, but it is difficult to find clear evidence of dancing *in* the stone figures.

Let me give an early example that is difficult to interpet. Johannes Arenius, whose father was a vicar in the parishes of Låssa and Bro in Uppland, describes the site of the famous Rösaring labyrinth in a 1717 treatise as follows: "In Låssa parish, one notices an immense hill rising in the forest, which is called *Röraring* because in ancient times this hill was adorned with paved and winding paths, where in summer the young people still to this day usually come together to play (or dance)." The thesis is written in Latin and it is unclear whether the last words (*ludendi*) refer to dancing or games.[17]

In 1678, the archaeologist Johan Hadorph describes a labyrinth at Skänninge as being visited sometimes in the summer by the town's children which 'run in and out according to the old custom.'[18] This may have been witnessed by Hadorph who came from this area and whose sister was married to the dean of Skänninge.

About the labyrinths on Kyrkbacken in Horn, Västergötland, it is stated that it was a popular pleasure for young and old to run *Trajenborg*. However, there is no mention of dancing.[19]

From northern Halland, a man born in 1853 reports that he was visiting an island between the parishes of Ölmevalla, Onsala and Gottskär, i.e. somewhere in the Kungsbacka Fjord. There were large and small stones in rings and circles. Young people used to gather there and compete to go in and out. Whoever went in and didn't find the right way out would have to stay there.[20]

A labyrinth in Bolax village in the municipality of Hitis in southern Finland has been mentioned in several reports. It "was a gathering place for young people in the evenings."[21] According to another report, this was a great pleasure for young people. They competed to find their way out of the labyrinth. "It was important even when proposing marriage."[22] However, there is no mention of dancing.

Among the coast labyrinths of Norrland, there are remarkably few traces of dance traditions. The name Jungfrudans has only been linked to one labyrinth, on Tennudden south of Stubbsandsviken in Grundsunda parish, Ångermanland.[23] At Holma fishing village in the same parish, there were two labyrinths, one of which, however, was said to have been destroyed in 1927 because it was located on a flat rock on which dancing had taken place.[24] But even this tradition does not explicitly state that people danced *in* the labyrinth.

So there is evidence that suggests that people danced in angle-type labyrinths, but it is rather scarce and does not provide a solid basis for conclusions. I do not exclude the possibility that people danced in angle-type labyrinths in the Nordic countries, but it cannot be taken for granted, at least not on the basis of what we know today. Nevertheless, the idea is often put forward that the stone figures were used as arenas for dancing.

The most famous example in the Nordic countries is Lars-Ivar Ringbom in Finland, who in a 1938 paper developed the idea that angle-type labyrinths were used for dancing. He made comparisons with traditional 'ribbon dances' in Bavaria, where the dancers each held a ribbon attached to a pole in the centre. Some nice drawings illustrating this rather daring guess immortalised the idea.[25] Ringbom's drawings have since been published in a number of articles and

books on labyrinths. Even Hermann Kern gives them a lot of space although he distances himself from Ringbom's idea.

The tireless reuse of Ringbom's images may have an interesting message after all. It says something about how we want to perceive the labyrinths. Most people who come into contact with the enigmatic figures would like to believe that they were used for something more sophisticated and exciting than simply running through the pathways. Even though it is difficult to prove dances, and many have pointed this out, it cannot be ignored that the dance motif has its appeal and that Ringbom's images easily take over the readers' imagination. Who doesn't want to believe that people danced in the labyrinths?

43. Shepherds

There are indications from the British Isles, Germany and Sweden that labyrinths were built by shepherds. The question is whether the similarities are coincidental or whether these examples have something to say about the earliest use and significance of labyrinths.

At Hedared in Västergötland there is a small spiral-shaped 'labyrinth' which, according to one account, was built by shepherd boys. An old local man told me that his grandfather said to him a long time ago that shepherds built it as protection against the wolf, that would have been confused by the system of paths.[1]

Just 18 kilometres away, at Ornunga parish, there is a labyrinth that, according to local tradition, was also built by 'a shepherd boy.'[2] It is possible that this labyrinth too was considered to provide protection against predators, but there is nothing in the preserved folk traditions to suggest this.

A stone labyrinth at Perstorp at Fridlevstad parish in Blekinge is also traditionally said to have been laid by a shepherd boy.[3]

I suspect that the labyrinth magic in Hedared had counterparts in Lapland. A poem from the last half of the 18th century tells us that the Sami used labyrinths as protection against the wolverine. A later record from Juotsarova in Gällivare suggests that among the Sami labyrinth magic could be used for divination and to move other people's reindeers.[4]

So, in Sweden there are some traditions that suggest that shepherds and the Sami built labyrinths in the belief that they had magical powers, including protection from predators. But these are only a few records. Many more records of this kind should have been found if the use of labyrinths by shepherds and the Sami was a major theme in the history of labyrinths.

In England, there were two turf labyrinths with names referring to shepherds: the Shepherd's Maze at Heath and a labyrinth called Shepherd's Ring or Shepherd's Race at Boughton Green.[5]

It also says that shepherds in Wales and Cumberland in northern England carved turf labyrinths in the ground. However, there is no mention of magical intentions. There were hardly any dangerous predators, so perhaps the labyrinths were simply built as a pastime.

From Teicha, eight kilometres north of Halle in Germany, there is a record from 1750 of a labyrinth or Wunderburg. In 1850 it is referred to as Irrgarten. It was located on a terraced hill north of the church. No traces remain, but the turf figure is said to have been created by a shepherd cutting it into the ground with his shepherd's crook.[6]

A turf labyrinth on the Hausberg at Eberswalde in Brandenburg is said to have been built in 1843 by a shepherd who saved his life. He had been promised his life if he could build a labyrinth. According to another tradition, a shepherd was sentenced to death but asked to enjoy the view from the Hausberg as his last wish. This was granted and as he walked around the hill his shepherd's crook dragged on the ground and drew the labyrinth pattern.[7]

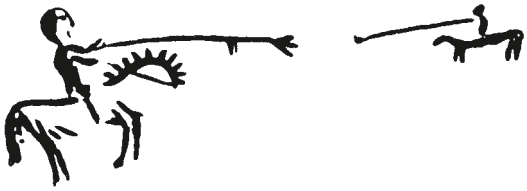
Shepherds appear in several contexts, in the Nordic countries, in the British Isles and in Germany. But the examples are relatively few, and it is difficult to see any similarities other than that the labyrinths were associated with shepherds. In Sweden, shepherds may have built labyrinths in the belief that the stone figures provided magical protection against the ravages of predators. In the British Isles and Germany, however, there is no indication of magic. The information from Germany can hardly have any basis in reality. In Wales and Cumberland, shepherds seem to have built labyrinths, but probably only as a pastime.

44. Springtime Games

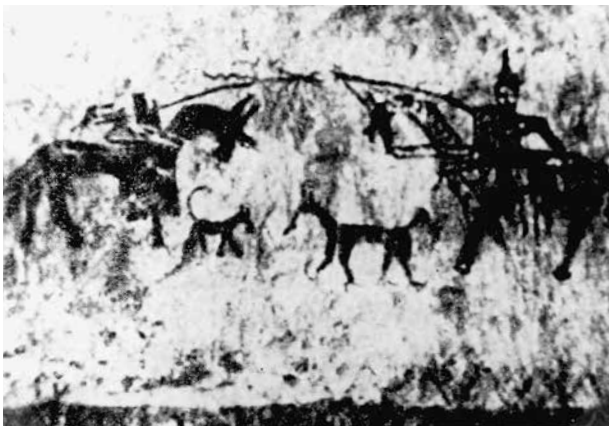
Many records indicate that people played in labyrinths in the spring. At the same time they also used to repair the turf labyrinths.

The turf labyrinth in Eilenriede near Hannover, which is said to have been built in 1642, received its annual overhaul at Pentecost. The labyrinth in Graitschen was located next to an open-air dancing place used mainly at Pentecost. The labyrinth in Steigra was repaired by the newly confirmed students

44:1 Woodcut from Olaus Magnus in 1555, showing the battle between the chieftains of winter and summer.



44:2 Tourney image in S. Marie church.



44:3 Tourney image in Nousis church.

on the third day of Pentecost. The labyrinth festival in Stolp in eastern Pomerania took place at Pentecost.

But not everything points to Pentecost. The labyrinth at Hausberg in Eberswalde, said to have been built or renovated in 1609, was repaired by schoolchildren every year on the Monday before Ascension Day. On the Dransberg hill at Dransfeld near Göttingen there was a turf labyrinth which was visited in a procession on Ascension Day in 1614.[1]

Likewise, in Scandinavia and England, labyrinths were often repaired and used for games in the spring or early summer. For example, it is said that the turf labyrinth at Asige in Halland was repaired on Midsummer's Eve.[2]

In a labyrinth at Hillbury, near Guilford in England, it is said "that the youths and maidens of the town used to congregate here on Good Friday and indulge in boisterous celebrations."[3] At a turf labyrinth in Comberton, England, people used to hold a party every three years around Easter time. At Alkborough, in the early 19th century, people enjoyed running in and out of a turf labyrinth where the villagers had their 'May-eve games.' Boughton Green held a three-day market in June each year, and a major feature of the market was walking in a turf labyrinth.

W.F. Waller states in 1893 that games or plays were usually organised in English labyrinths in connection with midsummer celebrations. The same information is repeated five years later by A.B. Gomme in her survey of games in the British Isles.[4]

John Goulstone gives a few more examples: a turf labyrinth at Horncastle was situated in a field called May-Banks. That name came from a May Day flower ceremony held before going up to May-pole hill where a bonfire was lit after dark. Less than 20 kilometres away, at Louth there was another labyrinth where May-eve games were played and participants ran in and out of the turf figure.[5]

One can easily imagine that there were practical reasons for repairing turf labyrinths in the spring, after they had lain unused and exposed to the elements during the winter. But even stone labyrinths in the north, which were maintenance-free, have been used for gatherings in spring or early summer. At Högaryd, one kilometre from Vallda church in northern Halland, there was a stone labyrinth to which the locals used to go on Easter Sunday morning to "walk treddenborg."[6] The labyrinth at Visby on Gotland was widely used in the 19th century by old and young alike to run and walk in. In particular, the labyrinth was visited on the 1st of May and Midsummer's Eve (see Appendix 23).

At Orrskär, in Norrfjärden parish in Norrbotten, there is a labyrinth where young people used to spend their midsummer wakes.[7] It seems that the use of labyrinths was linked to the arrival of summer.

In some cases, a connection between labyrinths and May fires is suspected, but the examples are few and the connection may be coincidental. There is a labyrinth at Lindbacke near Nyköping, where people gathered for Walpurgis night fire. A labyrinth at Svenska högarna in the Stockholm archipelago is said to have had May fires. The labyrinth at Köpmanholm in Stockholm's northern archipelago is located in a place called Kasberget 'Beacon rock.'

It has been reported that May fires were lit in the labyrinth at Koski in Övertorneå parish in Norrbotten. And Gunnar Westin mentions that during the ancient monument inventory in Ångermanland, labyrinths were noted at two of the three known old beacon sites.[8]

Old plans of the turf labyrinths at Eilenriede near Hannover and Stolp in Poland and Saffron Walden in England show that they had a tree in the centre. Among the stone labyrinths there is no known example of this. However, there are several pictures of garden labyrinths with a tree in the centre.[9]

The trees in the centre of garden labyrinths sometimes make an artificial impression by having a long bare trunk and a rather small leafy bush at the top. They are reminiscent of the largely bare trees that were traditionally brought into German villages in the spring.

Could this be another sign that turf labyrinths were associated with spring celebrations? It cannot be ruled out, but the examples of turf mazes with trees in the centre are too few to invite conjecture.

If the springtime gatherings at labyrinths consistently had taken place on a particular day in the Christian calendar, one might suspect that the church played a role in the creation and use of field labyrinths. However, this is not the case. The dates vary, but they are usually not before Easter or after Midsummer. This indicates that the gatherings in labyrinths had a pre-Christian background.

Moriah Kennedy has discussed the old English Easter traditions and compared them to the use of la-

byrinths. She rejects the idea that labyrinths were associated with the old Catholic faith. She finds it more likely that pre-Reformation English turf labyrinths in the 16th century played a role in the post-Easter celebrations that took place to make up for what was missed during the Easter mourning period.[10]

This can be compared to the frescoes in the church of Tåning in Jutland. There was a labyrinth figure together with scenes interpreted as a Lenten procession. If the paintings in Tåning formed a whole, they may have illustrated the arrival of spring and the victory of life over death.[11]

Anna-Lisa Stigell's interpretation of the paintings in some churches in southern Finland points in the same direction. They hardly belong to the world of Christian symbols but are rather taken from secular folk beliefs. Her interpretation is that these folk-art paintings, including labyrinth images, illustrated the course of the year and the festivals associated with the changing seasons.[12]

It is tempting to compare the games, where a girl is retrieved from the centre of the labyrinth, with different variants of the old peasant society's spring and midsummer celebrations. A number of examples indicate that labyrinths of turf or stone in Sweden, England, Germany and Poland were used for gatherings in spring or early summer.

The turf labyrinth at Stolp in eastern Pomerania was used in a May Count procession. However, the May Count in Stolp has no equivalent among other labyrinths, neither on the continent, nor in Scandinavia or the British Isles. The labyrinth festival at Stolp is thus hardly typical of the use of labyrinths. Sarnicius's description of the games of the Teutonic Knights in turf labyrinths in Prussia gives a completely different picture.

In the Nordic countries, the May Count tradition was probably introduced in the Middle Ages through the Hanseatic cities. The origin is considered to be the inspections and weapons training introduced in Gaul during the Merovingian period.[13]

But there are interesting traces of other spring traditions. In the 16th century Olaus Magnus vividly describes a Nordic tradition, called "the battle between summer and winter", in which winter, in the form of a rider followed by a mounted troop, is defeated by the representative of summer in a fierce duel. John Granlund has examined Olaus Magnus' account and compared it with four other examples from Denmark and Germany.[14]

That could be the kind of spring equestrian games depicted in some churches in southern Finland, some of them accompanied by labyrinths. But this can only be speculation, there is no tangible evidence linking the labyrinths to spring games where the victory of summer over winter is represented in the form of an equestrian battle.

The Nordic countries also have a number of examples of spring traditions involving Whitsuntide brides. Particularly from Östergötland, there are many accounts of how a young girl was dressed as a bride at Whitsuntide. Sometimes a boy was also decorated with flowers as a groom and the two of them walked around with a wedding party of other children. They could collect 'dance money' for a wedding feast. The same tradition existed in Skåne, where the main characters were called 'kransapiga' and 'kransadräng.'

A tempting idea is that the Whitsuntide bride and her groom may have been connected to the labyrinth games where the aim was to retrieve a young girl from the centre of the labyrinth. But there is no evidence of such a connection. I have found only one piece of information that vaguely points in that direction, and it does not make a reliable impression.[15]

It is thus difficult to generally associate labyrinths with May Counts, May fires, May trees, Pentecostal weddings or the equestrian games that symbolised the victory of summer over winter. Links cannot be ruled out, but the evidence is too weak to allow any firm conclusions.

However, there seems to be a connection between labyrinths and spring. Both turf labyrinths and stone figures have been used in the spring. This has been the case in the British Isles, Germany and Poland and in Scandinavia. The large area of distribution suggests that the link to spring is an old phenomenon that can say something important about the oldest use of labyrinths.

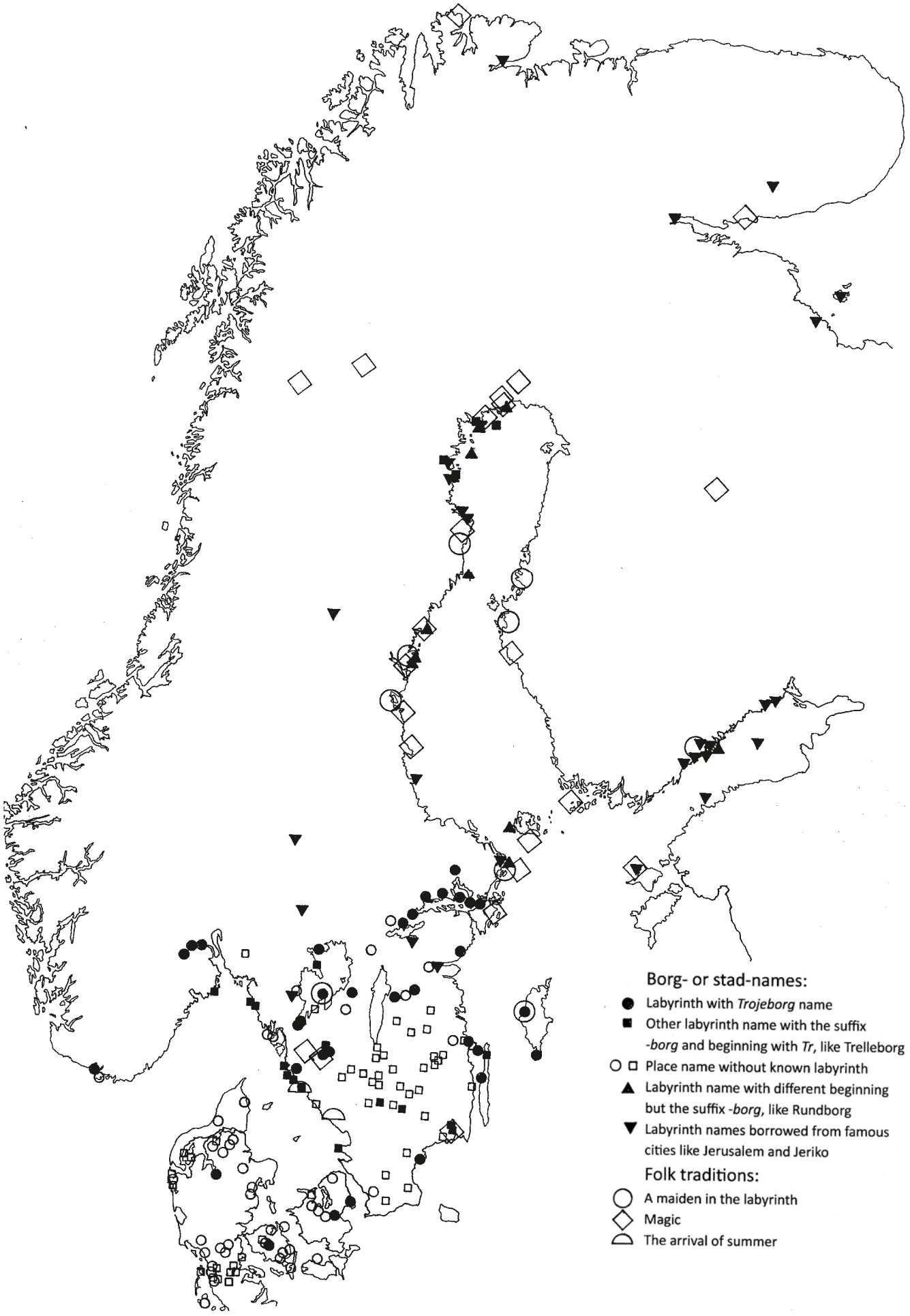
45. The Oldest Traces

It's time to summarise. It is difficult to grasp how old folk traditions, legends and games can be. Many labyrinth traditions have been preserved in the Nordic countries, but many are probably migrating lore with no basis in reality. They obscure the view for us who are looking for the oldest use and meaning of labyrinths.

The legends and labyrinth names suggesting that labyrinths were used as *domarringar*, where the accused could prove their innocence by walking through the passages in the right way, can be dismissed as pure fantasy. This is hardly the way justice was administered in ancient times.

The reports of strangers building labyrinths are probably also generally ex post facto constructions. Claims that famous historical figures were behind labyrinths should be viewed with scepticism.

It is a little more difficult to assess the reliability of the information that coast labyrinths were built by shipwrecked people or by sailors waiting for a favourable wind. One can read possible magical purposes into both of these traditions, but this is a bit of a stretch since no records of such traditions suggest magic. The most reasonable conclusion is probably that these stories are also migratory legends with no basis in reality. A common feature is that strangers are pointed out as labyrinth builders. But the location pattern suggests that the coast labyrinths played a role in connection with fishing and that most were built by the local population.



45:1 Five motifs which may provide clues to the earliest significance of the angle-type.

What remains is a collection of information about coast labyrinths being used for magic. Many have dubious circumstantial value, but there is a core of records that provide a reliable impression. There are several eyewitness accounts of people actually walking in labyrinths to influence the weather or improve their fishing luck. These accounts of magic are less stereotypical than the tales of castaways and sailors waiting for wind. And they fit well with the location pattern of the labyrinths. The coast labyrinths are usually located at old fishing sites and the magic that has been described has been aimed at influencing the weather or getting lucky in fishing. So, there is much to suggest that a dominant purpose of the coast labyrinths was magic. People believed they could improve their fishing luck or the weather or both by building labyrinths and walking through their paths.

There was also labyrinth magic in the hinterland. A couple of records show that the Sami used labyrinths to protect their animals from wolverine attacks and to 'move other people's reindeer.' In Västergötland it was believed that a labyrinth could protect grazing animals from the wolf and another account suggests that they provided protection from 'evil.' In Blekinge, a labyrinth was thought to provide protection against disease. There are also isolated examples from the British Isles, Germany and the USA. The magic described or implied is so multifaceted that it is difficult to pinpoint a specific purpose. My conclusion is therefore that labyrinth magic could probably have different purposes and took different forms. Labyrinths were thus *a universal instrument in the service of magic*.

Coast labyrinths are only found in the Nordic countries and Russia. They are probably no older than the early Middle Ages. It is therefore not certain that traces of the older and more original use of labyrinths can be found among them. Even the evidence for labyrinth magic in inland Sweden, as well as in Germany, the British Isles and the USA, is relatively late. Can such late traditions help us understand the use of the oldest labyrinths?

The magic of coast labyrinths was probably an outgrowth of older inland magic. When the construction of coast labyrinths began, the inland labyrinth magic was simply adapted to the environment of the fishing sites.

The games with a woman in the centre of the labyrinth probably also travelled from inland to the archipelago when the first coast labyrinths were built in the Middle Ages. The labyrinth painting in Sibbo church, with a woman in the centre of the figure, shows that this motif was known as far east as southern Finland at the end of the 15th century.

Labyrinth magic and the stories about a woman who is to be taken out of the labyrinth are two traditional motifs in the Nordic countries that could have roots in the time before the creation of coast labyrinths. As Staffan Lundén has shown, there are indications that the angle-type was associated with protective magic in antiquity too. It is also clear that labyrinths in India, Dagestan and Sumatra were used for magical purposes.

The motif of a woman being taken out of the labyrinth is widespread in the Nordic countries and can be recognised in the British Isles. It is also found in India (*Rāmāyana*) and the same idea seems to be repeated in Afghanistan and Ethiopia. Perhaps it is the same story that appears in the biblical account of Joshua's conquest of Jericho.

India is helpful in assessing the Nordic traditional material. In cases where the same motifs are recognised in both India and the Nordic countries, this may indicate a high age and that traces of the oldest use of the labyrinths may have been found.

There are five motifs that are so strongly represented in Northern Europe, India and the Mediterranean in antiquity that they can be suspected to be related to the earliest use of the angle type.

1. A city or a fortress: The most obvious idea is that the labyrinth represents a city or a fortress. This is well documented in the Nordic countries through folk traditions and a large number of labyrinth names. The same idea is evident in the British Isles and is recognised in Roman mosaic labyrinths and is also well established in India. The motif is so special and so clear that it is obviously a connection between the labyrinths of northern Europe, the Mediterranean countries and India. And the traces lead far back in time. Many other clues can be questioned, but not these. They show that it makes sense to look for more similarities between the labyrinths of Northern Europe, the Mediterranean and India.

2. The City of Troy: Labyrinth names in the Nordic countries allude to many famous cities, and there are no similarities with labyrinth names in India, other than that the labyrinths have consistently been perceived as cities or fortresses. In Europe, however, Troy is strikingly dominant among labyrinth names. Troy appears with the Etruscans around 650-600 BC and is found in France in the 15th century, in the Basque Country in the 17th and 18th centuries, and in a large number of Troy-type labyrinth names in the British Isles. In Scandinavia, Trojeborg was long the established word for labyrinths. The special position of the Trojan names is so clear that they may be related to the oldest meaning and use of the angle-type.

3. Magic: A third motif that has become widespread and seems to reach far back in time is labyrinth magic, the belief that one can work magic in labyrinths, that the labyrinth figure can provide protection or luck and success in general. This motif can be found widely in the North, with a few examples in Germany and the British Isles, and it can be glimpsed in some ancient labyrinth images. In India, the evidence flows convincingly.

4. A maiden in the labyrinth: The idea of a woman being taken out of the labyrinth is also widespread. It is well documented in the Nordic countries, but the traces found in the British Isles, India, Afghanistan and Ethiopia are not enough to provide a solid overall picture. The fragments that do exist, however, are fascinating. The Bible's account of the fall of Jericho goes back a long way. India's national epic *Rāmāyana* is also old and offers an interpretation of the labyrinths as arenas for a seasonal drama in which a woman is retrieved from a labyrinthine city or fortress. No less fascinatingly, the Troy legend, which deals with a protracted war to retrieve Helen from Troy, has similarities with this motif.
5. The arrival of summer: In addition, a pattern of labyrinth use in northern Europe can be discerned in spring, which could be related to a seasonal drama. Several turf labyrinths in Germany and Poland have been repaired and used around Whitsun or Ascension Day. In England there are also examples of labyrinths being repaired or used in the spring. In Sweden, the turf labyrinth in Asige was repaired every Midsummer's Eve. The stone labyrinth at Högaryd used to be 'walked' on Easter Sunday morning. The labyrinth at Visby was visited especially on May Day and Midsummer's Eve.
This can be compared with the church paintings in southern Finland, where labyrinth images appear in several cases alongside images that seem to illustrate the course of the year and the festivals associated with the changing seasons. The paintings in Tåning Church in Jutland also seem to be associated with the arrival of spring and the victory of life over death.

If the accounts of these five motifs are marked on a map of the Nordic region, an interesting pattern emerges. A fairly clear zone of distribution can be seen in Västergötland, where many of these probably very old images have been preserved into late times. But the coast labyrinths of Kattegat and Skagerack do not belong there, the oldest traditions there had probably died out before records began to be kept.

The area where old labyrinth traditions have been well preserved includes most of the coastline around the Gulf of Bothnia, the Bothnian Sea, the outer part of the Gulf of Finland and the Stockholm archipelago. The labyrinths on the coast of Småland, however, do not have such old traditions. The labyrinths by the Arctic Ocean also have remarkably few examples of what are probably the oldest traditional motifs.

In three small zones, Fridlevstad parish in Blekinge, Rösaring in Uppland and the area around the Visby labyrinth on Gotland, one can also sense old traditions. But nothing is found in connection with Gotland's other labyrinths.

My interpretation is that the map shows an *inner relict area* where old labyrinth ideas were more persistent than elsewhere. This can be compared with the spread of the angle-type, which defines an *outer relict area* in northern Europe consisting of the British Isles, the Nordic countries, Estonia, and the Arctic coast.

The traditional motifs which can be discarded as plausible migratory legends are common also outside the inner relict area. This is of course expected. It is in the nature of things that migratory legends may have gained a foothold wherever there are labyrinths, they do not reflect really old folk memories.

This is where the book could have ended. My main purpose, to give as complete a picture as possible of the Nordic folk traditions about labyrinths, is now fulfilled. No one should have to repeat my laborious inventory of folk memories that can shed light on the history of the angle-type. For here is now everything I have been able to find, presented in an easily accessible form.

Some old mysteries have hopefully been solved, but other questions remain. The question of the oldest meaning and use of the labyrinths is still shrouded in mystery. Another mystery that remains to be solved is the connection between the Troy names of the labyrinths and the mythical city of Troy.

Almost all labyrinth research sooner or later reaches a point where one is forced to resort to freer guesses. That is where we are now. Anyone who doesn't like treading on uncertain ground can get off here. The rest of you are invited to come along to Troy.