Aspects of Royal Power in Medieval Scandinavia

Edited by
Jakub Morawiec, Rafał Borysławski



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Aspects of Royal Power in Medieval Scandinavia



To Professor Ásdís Egilsdóttir, with gratitude for her continuous support and friendship

Prace Naukowe



Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
w Katowicach
nr 3760



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Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego • Katowice 2018

Editor of the Series: Historia
Sylwester Fertacz

Referee:
Anna Waśko

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Introduction: Royal Power Reconsidered

References to the deeds and lives of the past monarchs and their commemorations are ubiquitous in the earliest extant Scandinavian literary sources. Their authors found relating to the narratives of royal power and the identification with the bygone kings and queens essential for the legendary and historical stories of national and personal origins, and for the ways of formulating and expressing the political and cultural significance of their own work. In the wealth of the material offered by Old Norse and Icelandic literature, we may find numerous examples of the texts either abounding in such connotations or drawing directly upon royal histories. Although the originals of the lists of kings (*konungatal*) did not survive beyond the early medieval era, they provided later medieval authors with fundamental inspiration especially for the kings' sagas (*konungasǫgur*). Similarly, the vividness with which the past rulers were remembered is attested by the poems like *Ynglingatal* and *Haleygjatal* originating in the tenth century. Both of them legitimize the power and aspirations of subsequent monarchs by referring to the heritage and legacy left by the previous generations of kings. Their charisma and achievements contributed to their mythical and historical status as rulers, which, in turn, determined the development of what may be called the ideology of royal power. Understood as a set of features considered decisive for prosperous and memorable kingship, such ideology was advocated and praised by the skaldic poets and saga authors who emphasised the importance of royal bravery and generosity, the mercilessness that kings should display towards their enemies and the graciousness they should show to their followers. Likewise, the unfailing luck in war and the ability to surpass others in various skills were deemed important not only to impress one's royal retinue and subjects, but, predominantly, also to legitimize royal claims.

As attested in historical writings as well as by archaeological finds, recipients of royal power, in accordance with the long tradition dating back at least to the Roman era, attempted at centralizing their control which required both undertaking adequate actions and employing adequate means of propaganda. In these respects, the ambitious Scandinavian elites were eager to emulate their continental counterparts. Such modes of thinking could be seen as early as in the Merovingian era. Later, in the Viking Age, they underwent a gradual

conceptualisation into a set of virtues and skills that an ideal monarch was expected to possess and exhibit. The royal ideology manifested itself not only in the already mentioned displays of bravery and generosity, but also in other methods important to legitimize royal undertakings, such as in the contacts with the sphere of the divine, in law-giving, and in its execution, to list but a few.

The Christianisation of Scandinavia understandably affected the ideological expression of the royal power. A model Christian monarch was henceforth expected to imbue his deeds and decisions with the aura of religious belief and practice. The royal generosity, previously reserved for the king's retinue and followers, began to embrace the Church and its institutions, while the royal charisma and wisdom were supposed to demonstrate piety and operate in full compliance with what was assumed to be God's will. In medieval Scandinavia the figuration of an exemplary monarch found its fullest expression in the characters of the two Norwegian missionary kings, Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson, who, with the particular emphasis on the saintly status of the latter, evolved into royal ideals to be followed.

The history of medieval Scandinavia provides numerous instances of the manifestation of the royal ideology which invite and enable modern historiographical studies on the various phenomena related to its rise and development. The current state of research, although too vast to be satisfactorily recapitulated here, includes enquiries into the relationship between power and religion (both pagan and Christian), analyses of the relation between the mythicization of royal power and identity-formation, discussions of royal legitimacy, and of the commemorations of royal deeds.

With the present volume we intend to contribute to the ongoing examinations of this crucially important subject. The papers it consists of resulted from a seminar entitled "Aspects of Royal Power in the Medieval North" which was held at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, in February 2016. The volume has drawn together an international group of scholars representing various disciplines (history, literary studies, legal, and religious studies), who approach the problem of royal power from the specific angles pertaining to their subject areas, and who investigate a number of individual issues and cases related to it.

Anne Irene Riisøy (University College of South-Eastern Norway), in her article entitled "Conversion, *Things*, and Viking Kings," discusses the role of regional things in the missionary enterprises of three Norwegian kings, Hákon góði, Óláfr Tryggvason, and Óláfr Haraldsson, basing her analysis on both the kings' sagas, and on older analogues, predominantly on the account of Rimbert's *Vita Anskarii*. Jakub Morawiec (University of Silesia in Katowice), in the article titled "Sveinn Haraldsson – The Captured King of Denmark," discusses the motif of Sveinn's capture and of the consequent ransom paid by his subjects, which is present in a series of Scandinavian and continental sources. Even if it is impossible to determine whether the motif in question holds any portion of the

truth and reliability, Morawiec claims that it may reflect the energetic propagandist activity directed towards the king of Denmark and undertaken at the time of his rebellion against his father. Łukasz Neubauer (University of Technology in Koszalin), in his article titled "Between History and Propaganda: Examining the Royal and Military Attributes of Knútr inn ríki in *Liðsmannaflokkr*," analyses how the anonymous author of the poem compares both the young king of England and Denmark and Jarl Þorkell the Tall as military leaders. Although the skald's intention was to underline Knútr's abilities, especially when compared to a much more experienced jarl, his vision of the royal prowess and bravery may be found reliable. Bjørn Bandlien (University College of South-Eastern Norway) discusses the ideological programme associated with a series of coins of Óláfr Haraldsson, minted ca. 1024 by an English moneyer, featuring the figure of a bird on their reverses. There are only three preserved examples of the series and it seems that their economic value was limited as their emission was mainly dictated by ideological means, related closely to the prestige of the monarch and to his tendency to follow foreign, chiefly Anglo-Saxon, patterns of royal ideology. Erin Michelle Goeres (University College London), in "The Dangers of Generosity. Money, Power and Politics in *Vestrfararvísur* and *Kálfsflokkr*," basing on two eleventh-century poems dedicated to Óláfr Haraldsson and Kálfr Árnason respectively, discusses the issue of royal generosity which may be interpreted as either a reward for the king's followers or a means of buying off and neutralizing his enemies. Rafał Borysławski (University of Silesia in Katowice), in "*Hlæfdige* and *Hlaford*. Gendered Power and Images of Continuity in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*," discusses the depiction of Emma as queen in the contexts of the continuity of power and of the division of gender-oriented roles contributing towards the mystical representation of the royal rule. Marion Poilvez (University of Iceland), in the article titled "A Wolf among Wolves. Kings, Outlaws, and Discourse in the Icelandic Sagas" analyses the antagonistic, one could say, relation between a monarch and an outlaw. The former symbolizes justice and law, the latter breaks the law and remains excluded from the society. Icelandic sagas, however, provide instances of much closer relations of both sides that one could imagine. In his article entitled "Ideals of Christian Kingship. The Implications of *Elucidarius*, *Konungs skuggsiá*, and *Eiríks saga víðfǫrla*," Arngrímur Vídalín (University of Iceland) analyses the subject matter of three narratives: *Elucidarius*, the Norwegian version of the *Speculum regale* and *Eiríks saga víðfǫrla*. All of them focus on various aspects of Christian kingship, strengthened by the postulate of royal education in order to gain knowledge of the world as God's creation. Finally, Leszek P. Słupecki (University of Rzeszów), whose article titled "A Crown on a King's Head: Royal Titles and Royal Sovereignty in the Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Poland and Scandinavia" closes the volume, discusses the differences in the way Scandinavian and Central European (Polish, Bohemian, and Hungarian)

rulers were depicted in historical sources. Nordic rulers are consequently styled as kings despite the lack of the rite of blessing and coronation. This could be explained as resulting from the adherence to their local, rooted in pagan times, royal tradition, which developed independently from the Carolingian system of hierarchy, that influenced the representation of the rulership in Central Europe.

The seminar which lay behind the creation of the present volume was made possible due to a fruitful and ongoing cooperation between the University of Silesia in Katowice and several partner institutions in Scandinavia, mainly the University of Iceland, the University of Oslo, and the University College of South-Eastern Norway. The cooperation, including the exchange of both the academic staff and the students, was financed by the EEA grants and provided numerous, both professional and personal, benefits and opportunities for all the parties involved. The volume we hereby present is, on the one hand, one of the results of this cooperation, on the other, it is a significant commitment and assurance to maintain and expand the professional relationships in the future, many of which, we are happy to say, have already also transformed into lasting friendships.

Several people contributed to making the contacts between the scholars in this collection possible, and, we dare say, to the success of the collaboration which ensued from them. Among these people, we would like to distinguish and honour Professor Ásdís Egilsdóttir from the University of Iceland, to whom we wish to dedicate this volume in recognition of her friendship and as a token of our gratitude. Her invaluable advice and expertise, her positive approach, support and commitment have been and still are crucial for the establishment and for further development of the cooperation that brought the authors of this volume together.

Jakub Morawiec
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Conversion, *Things*, and Viking Kings

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In late Viking Age Norway, two living religions confronted each other when conversion kings faced the adherents of the pagan faith. There is a considerable research literature on this subject, however, the fact that this confrontation often took place at assemblies (Old Norse sg. *þing*), deserves further attention. This paper will explore how and why Hákon góði Haraldsson (c. 934–961), Óláfr Tryggvason (995–1000) and Óláfr Haraldsson (1015–1028, d. 1030) used assemblies in their conversion efforts.

In order to answer these questions, the kings' sagas, particularly *Heimskringla*, written by Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) about 1230, will be examined. Skaldic poetry, often embedded in the sagas, and, in addition, hagiography and laws contain relevant information. These sources are preserved in thirteenth and fourteenth century manuscripts, and it is therefore pertinent to ask if they can offer a reliable glimpse into the past stretching back some few hundred years.[1] I will apply a comparative method combining sources, which are independent of each other, and in addition, draw on information from other parts of Scandinavia and Saxony. These cultures shared many important societal characteristics, including a similar polytheistic religion and a political structure where assemblies kept leaders in check. Taken together, the sources suggest that the conversion stories taking place at assemblies reflect a late Viking Age reality.

[1] Snorri may have based some of his stories on old traditions, which he may have learned when he journeyed in Norway around 1220. King's sagas older than Snorris, for example *Agrip* c. 1190, also indicate a confrontation between the people and chieftains of Trøndelag and King Hákon. For a discussion of this aspect, see O. Sundqvist, *An Arena for Higher Powers. Ceremonial Buildings and Religious Strategies for Rulership in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Leiden 2016). Studies that argue for the strength of oral traditions are, for example, G. Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition* (Cambridge 2004); S. Brink, "Verba Volant, scripta manent? Aspects of Early Scandinavian Oral Society," in *Literacy in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavian Culture*, ed. P. Hermann (Odense 2005), 77–135.

Three Kings Went to *Things*

Hákon góði (c. 934–961) was the first king to attempt to convert his subjects, which is probably due to his Christian upbringing at the court of King Æthelstan in Wessex. Anglo-Saxon sources do not witness this event; however, five sagas written in both Old Norse and Latin agree that Hákon, repeatedly referred to as Aðalsteinsfóstri, was fostered at King Æthelstan's court.[2] His father Haraldr hárfagri (Fairhair) must have known that the new religion would influence his youngest son, and it is therefore likely that, through this fostering arrangement, an alliance with mutual benefits was established. Æthelstan may have looked upon Haraldr as an ally against Danish Vikings in Northumbria, and besides, men who fled from Haraldr's rising powers used England as a base for attacking both kings.[3]

At that time, there was no unified kingdom of "Norway," but there were three distinct centres of power. The Danes controlled "Viken" in the south, "Norvegr" was the western kingdom, which Haraldr and his descendants sought to control in competition with the Danes, and the jarls of Hlaðir ruled the area to the north (Trøndelag and Hålogaland). The jarls accumulated wealth based on fish and fur in Hålogaland, before they moved southwards and established themselves in Trøndelag, with their central farm at Hlaðir. The jarldom covered a larger area than Haraldr's more southern kingdom, and it was probably equally powerful.[4]

When Haraldr died, Hákon was called back from England and Æthelstan may have given him military support along the way.[5] Hákon's goal was to convert his subjects, and because he was a popular king, some people stopped making sacrifices and others let themselves be baptised. Then, when Hákon had the support of some powerful men, he sent to England for a bishop and other priests, and had some churches built.[6] There is independent support for this information. William of Malmesbury's *De Antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesiae* contains a list of Glastonbury monks who had become bishops, and one of these, *Sigefridus Norwegensis episcopus*, probably served when Hákon was

[2] G. Williams, "Hákon Aðalsteins fóstri. Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Kingship in Tenth-Century Norway," in *The North Sea World in the Middle Ages. Studies in the Cultural History of North-Western Europe*, ed. T. R. Liszka and L. E. M. Walker (Dublin 2001), 108–26.

[3] Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Skandinavia i vikingtiden* (Oslo 2017). I would like to thank Professor Sigurðsson for giving me access to a manuscript of this book before its release by *Pax Forlag*.

[4] B. Solberg, *Jernalderen i Norge. 500 før Kristus til 1030 etter Kristus* (Oslo 2000), 286. For good overviews, see also Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Skandinavia*; B. Lincoln, *Between History and Myth. Stories of Harld Farihair and the Founding of the State* (Chicago 2014).

[5] S. Foot, *Athelstan. The First King of England* (New Haven and London 2011), 167–69.

[6] B. Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla I* (Íslenzk fornrit), Vol. 26, (Reykjavik 1941), 163–67.

king.[7] Some years ago, Brit Solli discovered two enclosures that were Christian churchyards on the island of Veøy in the Romsdalsfiord, close to the coastal areas of Trøndelag. The graves contained east-west oriented inhumations and remains of wooden coffins dating back to the mid-tenth century.[8] When the English clergy arrived, somewhere along the coast of Møre and Romsdal, Hákon wanted the gospel preached. *Heimskringla* informs that the matter was finally referred to the Frostathing assembly, where the king's demand that people be baptised and relinquish their pagan faith and rites was strongly opposed. Before the assembly dissolved, the king was told to show moderation, or another ruler would be chosen.[9] Jarl Sigurðr intervened and advised the king that he should try to accommodate his subjects, and he also told the assembly that the king intended to agree with them and let nothing come between their mutual friendships. The jarl's speech had a calming effect; the people expressed that they merely wanted the king to sacrifice so they could have good crops and peace, and thereupon the assembly ended.[10]

The following winter, a Yule feast was prepared at Mære in inner Trøndelag, and an assembly was also held on this occasion. In advance, the chieftains who controlled the cult at Mære, decided they would force the king to sacrifice. Again, jarl Sigurðr acted as a mediator. The king ate a few bits of horse liver, and he drank the toasts poured for him without making the sign of the cross.[11] On some important points *Fagrskinna*, another one (manuscript) of the kings' sagas, presents additional information not found in *Heimskringla*. It reports that, at the "great assembly" at Mære, King Hákon had two options: either sacrifice according to custom, or else be driven from his kingdom. King Hákon's friends persuaded him to partake in the sacrifice "so that the heathen worshippers would not consider him responsible for the downfall of the law." Threats of being chased away from the kingdom were probably more than empty words. According to the *Old Law of the Frostathing* (section IV, par. 50), the people had a right to depose unruly kings.[12] A king would hardly have initiated the codification of such a rule, and already in the early eleventh century, it was

[7] F. Birkeli, *Tolv vintre hadde kristendommen vært i Norge* (Oslo 1995).

[8] B. Solli, "Narratives of Encountering Religions. On the Christianization of the Norse around AD 900–1000," *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, vol. 29 (1996), 89–114.

[9] *Heimskringla I*, 169–70.

[10] Ibid., 170–71.

[11] Ibid., 172–73. Horses played a significant part in the pagan Scandinavian (and Germanic) cult rites; see A. Sanmark, *Power and Conversion – A Comparative Study of Christianization in Scandinavia* (Uppsala 2004), 218–27. Sanmark also notes that after the conversion of Norway, the eating of horse-meat was singled out as particularly reprehensible and it entailed severe punishments.

[12] R. Keyser and P. A. Munch, *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387*, vol. 1 (Christiania 1846), 172–73.

probably obsolete. Claus Krag suggested that this rule originated in the first half of the tenth century, when king and earl both penetrated Trøndelag.[13]

According to the sagas, Hákon did not quite perform the pagan rituals according to expectations; however, his memorial lay *Hákonarmál* composed by Eyvindr Finnsson skáldaspillir, presents him as a king who *þyrmt véum* "revered the sanctuaries."[14] When the king *þyrmt*, he honoured and showed respect, and the term *vé* could also have a more specific meaning as it occasionally overlaps with *thing*.[15] In order to be remembered as someone who *þyrmt véum* Hákon probably paid respect to the pagan sacred places, including the assemblies; he spent time and effort on re-organizing the provincial assemblies at the Gulathing and the Frostathing. He was also involved in making new laws for these two provinces. Hákon collaborated with the wisest and most powerful men; at the Gulathing with Þorleifr inn spaki (the Wise) the foremost legal expert at the time and who was also King Hákon's uncle and a son of the powerful *hersi* Hǫrða-Kári (see further below). At the Frostathing, Hákon collaborated with jarl Sigurðr.[16] There is a tendency to ascribe lawmaking to Christian kings, or, in the case of Hákon, to Anglo-Saxon influence, however, "law" was of paramount importance for pagan society too.[17]

King Hákon did not use violence or weapons at the assemblies, nor did he threaten to use the sword in his conversion efforts. Hákon tolerated heathens; his cooperation with them in making laws most likely also included elements of syncretism.[18] According to his posthumous reputation he upheld pagan sacred places (possibly including the assemblies), and he even partly participated in the pagan cult. Hákon may have lacked a sufficient body of chieftains to support his conversion efforts any further. Besides, when Hákon was fostered at King Æthelstan's court, he was in a country which religion-wise had been peaceful

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[13] C. Krag, *Motstandsbestemmelsene i Frostatingsloven* (Oslo 1969).

[14] R. D. Fulk, "Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson, Hákonarmál 18," in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1. From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley (Turnhout 2012), 191.

[15] In Norwegian medieval law, the *vébönd* (which literally means 'holy bands') enclosed the judges at the assemblies. See references in G. Storm and E. Hertzberg, *Norges Gamle Love indtil 1387*, vol. 5 (Christiania 1895), 695.

[16] J. Brendalsmo and A. I. Riisøy, "Reida. En diskusjon av dens karakter og opphav," in *En prisverdig historiker. Festskrift til Gunnar I. Pettersen*, ed. Å. Ommundsen, E. Opsahl, and J. R. Ugulen (Oslo 2014), 14–15.

[17] K. Helle, *Gulatinget og Gulatingslova* (Skald 2001), 34, argued that Hákon was influenced by the "royal pattern" of making laws as a result of being fostered at Athelstan's court. For the importance of various aspects of "law" in pagan society, see, for example, A. I. Riisøy, "Sacred Legal Places in Eddic Poetry. Reflected in Real Life?" *Journal of the North Atlantic*, vol. 5 (2013), 28–41; A. I. Riisøy, "Eddic Poetry. A Gateway to Late Iron Age Ladies of Law," *Journal of the North Atlantic*, vol. 8 (2016), 157–71; A. I. Riisøy, "Performing Oaths in Eddic Poetry: Viking Age Fact or Medieval Fiction?" *Journal of the North Atlantic*, vol. 8 (2016), 141–56.

[18] For a further discussion, see J. Brendalsmo and A. I. Riisøy, *Reida*, 15.

for a long time.[19] This setting may have influenced Hákon's attitude towards converting his own subjects.[20]

The years between Hákon's death c. 961 and the ascension of Óláfr Tryggvason on the throne in 995 was an intermezzo; it was a rather chaotic period, which sharpened the religious confrontation lines. Hákon's nephew, Haraldr gráfeldr (Greycloak) came to power c. 961. The sagas do not inform whether he used assemblies in order to further Christianity, but he set out to break down the pagan sanctuaries and destroy pagan cult places. Apparently, Haraldr had little success in his conversion efforts, and during jarl Hákon, the *de facto* ruler of Norway c. 970–995, the religious scene changed once more. Jarl Hákon's hostility towards Christianity appears in skaldic poetry, which attests to a pagan revival during his time.[21]

The next king to enter the conversion-scene is Óláfr Tryggvason (995–1000). Before he became king, he had raided as a successful Viking for several years.[22] Óláfr's father held his kingdom east in Viken, and Óláfr spoke to the closest of his relatives there and they supported his conversion plans. They came to an agreement with the chieftains who promised Óláfr backing at the assemblies, and, in return, two of the chieftains married Óláfr's sisters.[23] Next, Óláfr proceeded west to Agder (the southernmost tip of Norway), and wherever he met people at assemblies, he ordered baptisms and no one dared to rebel. Similarly, the king also called for an assembly at Rogaland.[24] North of Rogaland lay Hordaland, where many important men were descended from Hǫrða-Kári. This family was the largest and noblest in Hordaland, and when they learned about the king's potentially violent conversion tour along the coast, they decided to

[19] Barbara Yorke notes that in most Anglo-Saxon kingdoms there was a period of approximately 50 years when paganism coexisted with the Christian religion, and the last recorded Anglo-Saxon king who ascended the throne unbaptized was King Caedwalla of Wessex in 685. In some circumstances, the traditional picture of the peaceful conversion of the Anglo-Saxons may be toned down, because there came a point when pagan beliefs had to be repudiated if Christianity was to be established. Unfortunately the sources on Anglo-Saxon paganism are relatively few, and it is therefore difficult to assess to what extent this process was violent and destructive. B. Yorke, "From Pagan to Christian in Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World. Converting the Isles I.*, ed. R. Flechner and M. N. Mhaonaigh (Turnhout 2016), 237–57.

[20] Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Kristninga i norden 750–1200* (Oslo 2003), 39.

[21] F. Birkeli, *Tolv vintre*, 104. O. Sundqvist, "Custodian for the Sanctuary. Protecting Sacred Space as a Ritual Strategy for Gaining Legitimacy and Power in Pre-Christian Scandinavia," in *Rituals, Performatives, and Political Order in Northern Europe, c. 650–1350*, ed. W. Jezierski, L. Hermanson, H. J. Orning, and T. Smaberg (Turnhout 2015), 130–32.

[22] For Óláfr's career, see, for example, A. Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia. Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe* (New Haven 2012); Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Skandinavia.*

[23] *Heimskringla I*, 302–303.

[24] Ibid., 303–306.

proceed to the Gulathing with a large force.[25] They sent words to Óláfr that they would make a reply to his request for baptism there. When the king and his troops arrived at the assembly, Ǫlmóðr inn gamli (the Old), the most senior member of the Hǫrða-Kári dynasty, answered that if the king compelled them to break their laws and subdue them by force, they would resist. However, they were clearly open for an advantageous bargain. Yet again, Óláfr married off a sister, this time to Erlingr Skjálgsson, the most promising young scion descended from Hǫrða-Kári. In addition, Óláfr also granted Erlingr land.[26] Then it was time for Óláfr to move on. As he convened assemblies north along the coast, he presented an ultimatum: baptism or fighting it out with him. As the king came with a very large army, people were baptised.[27]

When Óláfr arrived north in Trøndelag, he was met with more heavy opposition. The people at the Frostathing assembly were all armed, and reminded King Óláfr that they had not given in to King Hákon's request that they accept Christianity, and neither did they intend to do so then. The king observed the large force, and he pretended to yield, so he invited the leaders from the inner Trondheim fiord to attend a big feast at Hlaðir.[28] An assembly convened on this occasion, and, probably somewhat surprisingly, the king made it clear that he would sacrifice. The intended sacrifice, however, turned out to be on a much grander scale than the king's opponents had anticipated: if people refused to give up the old religion, the king would choose "not thralls or evildoers, but the noblest of men as sacrifice to the gods." Faced with these terms, and the fact that the king also took hostages, the chieftains and farmers who opposed Óláfr backed down for the time being.[29] When the assembly met at Mære the king's opponents demanded that he "should not break the laws," and therefore he should "sacrifice as other kings have done here before." This episode ends with the king killing the spokesman of the assembly, hostages being given, and people being baptised.[30]

Óláfr convened assemblies where he tried to make people accept the new religion, through the visible means of baptism. In order to achieve his aim, Óláfr used both "trick" *and* "treats." For example, when he suggested to participate in the sacrifice, it came as a huge surprise that he would sacrifice the noblest men, and not slaves as the assembly clearly had expected. He also offered the chieftains "treats," that is, his sisters in marriage, in exchange for the support for his Christianization project. An advantageous marriage alliance was probably an effective way to convert a powerful pagan leader. When neither persuasion,

[25] Ibid., 303–306.
[26] Ibid., 304–309.
[27] Ibid., 303–309.
[28] Ibid., 314–315.
[29] *Heimskringla I*, 315–16.
[30] Ibid., 317.

nor trick or treats sufficed, Óláfrtook hostages, used violent threats, and even maimed or killed his opponents.

Óláfr Haraldsson (1015–1028), was posthumously known as St Óláfr because of his elevation to sainthood soon after his death at Stiklestad in 1030. Like his namesake on the throne before him, he had raided as a successful Viking before he was baptised abroad. St Óláfr encountered his biggest opposition in Trøndelag. He became aware that a regional sacrifice with participants from inner Trøndelag was still taking place at Mære. This included the drinking of toasts to the Æsir, and the slaughtering of horses and cattle in order to improve the harvest. Furthermore, everyone considered it clear that the gods were angry because the people of Hålogaland further north had let themselves be baptised. When Ǫlvír, the leading chieftain in the area responsible for the sacrifice, was summoned to the king, he denied that a sacrifice was taking place, saying that it was merely some drinking in good company and entertainment among friends.[31] This event repeated itself later in the winter when people assembled at Mære to participate in the big midwinter sacrifice.[32] However, when the king learned about a third sacrifice, this time for spring, he summoned troops and quickly sailed into the inner Trondheim fjord. Ǫlvír and many others were killed, some were mutilated or driven out of the country. In addition, the king confiscated all the provisions intended for the sacrifice. Because St Óláfr had made many powerful men prisoners, their kinsmen and friends swore obedience to him.[33] The king also met resistance in several inland areas of Norway, and the general drift was briefly as follows: he either captured the most prominent men and gave them the choice between baptism or death, and in addition, he took their sons as hostages. When the king summoned assemblies, he presented the same set of terms.[34]

St Óláfr is also famous for his legislative activities. In the *Old Law of the Gulathing* St Óláfr issued new Christian provisions in collaboration with his Anglo-Saxon bishop Grímkell, and there are also traces of this legal activity in the *Old Law of the Frostathing*.[35]

It is now time to return to the questions raised in the introduction; how and why did the three Norwegian rulers use assemblies in their efforts to convert their subjects?

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[31] B. Aðalbjarnarson, *Heimskringla II* (Íslenzk fornrit, Vol. 27, (Reykjavik 1945), 177–78.

[32] Ibid., 178–79.

[33] Ibid., 179–81.

[34] *Heimskringla II*, 182–91.

[35] See, for example, F. Birkeli, *Tolv vintre*; J. Brendalsmo, A. I. Riisøy, *Reida*.

How Were Assemblies Used by the "Conversion Kings"?

Either the kings summoned assemblies *ad hoc*, or their opponents told them to attend a specific assembly, presumably at a set date. When the kings met at assemblies, they above all, advocated baptism. Acceptance of baptism at the instigation of a Christian king also implied some element of submission. In the early Middle Ages, baptism itself formed the beginning of conversion, and this formal and highly visible act was the primary goal for missionaries.[36] All three kings followed the same method; first they gained support from the chieftains in various regions, and preferably, got them to receive baptism. After kings and chieftains had received baptism, the rest of the population would comply more easily. There is a similar pattern traceable all over Western Europe. People did not start to believe in the new religion after the conversion. In this context, "conversion" does not entail an inner change of faith, but a social phenomenon whereby people adapted their religious outlook. As Sverre Bagge has stated, this was a society where the conversion was referred to as a "change in customs" (*siðaskipti*).[37] In practice, this means that what people did (henceforth baptism) and did not do (various customs and rites connected to the pagan religion) was adapted to the behaviour of their family, friends, and social networks.[38]

Christian ideology presented a pagan king with a hierarchical top-down model for authority and rulership. As there was only one God, there was one king as the utmost protector and head of the church.[39] The conversion took place within this model, whereby chieftains followed the king, farmers followed the chieftains, and households followed the farmers. The chieftains may have changed religion in order to create bonds of friendship with the king, but in the case of the two later kings, it was also a question of the king being the strongest party, and prepared to use violence. By accepting the new religion, the chieftains entered into a clearly subordinate relationship with the king, as with Christianity, there was only one God, who had one protector, the king. For the king, it was therefore imperative that chieftains accepted the new faith, if not; it could mean an act of resistance. This was in clear contrast to the pagan societal model, which was less hierarchical. The old religion was polytheistic, and as there were many gods and goddesses, and there were many regional and locally powerful men and women who were connected to the pagan pantheon and its cult practices.[40]

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[36] A. Sanmark, *Power*, 259–77.

[37] S. Bagge, "Christianization and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 30 (2005), 107–34.

[38] R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity. A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton 1996), 20.

[39] N. J. Higham, *The Convert Kings. Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester 1997).

[40] Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Skandinavia*.

Not everyone changed religion easily, and, as Jón Viðar Sigurðsson notes, there is reason to believe that at home, concealed from the rest of the community, some people continued to adhere to the old faith for a very long time. Besides, a huge majority of the population had probably no idea what it meant to be a Christian and receive baptism.[41] Archaeology also supports this view, and Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide highlights some areas of southern Norway where pagan burials took place some decades after the death of St Óláfr.[42] It is relevant to cast a brief glance at Iceland. When Christianity was accepted there as the official religion in 999/1000 there were three important exceptions. People were still allowed to eat horsemeat, to abandon unwanted children, and to sacrifice, although sacrifices were not allowed in public.[43] Clearly public appearances mattered, because this showed one's loyalty and willingness to cooperate.

In several ways, King Hákon's conversion approach differs from the two latter kings, which may be due to their markedly different backgrounds. Being brought up in England, Hákon was immersed in Christianity from childhood and he returned home with a peaceful conversion strategy. Hákon based his rule on agreements with jarl Sigurðr, the chieftains and the farmers in Trøndelag, and to a certain extent, he also participated in the sacrifices. There is no evidence that Hákon killed, maimed or drove the opposing party away, whether in Trøndelag or anywhere else, nor did he threaten to do so. Neither is there any evidence that he destroyed pagan cult places, on the contrary, he is posthumously known to have protected them. The two latter kings, on the other hand, were pagan Viking raiders before they received baptism abroad. When it came to violence, whether real or perceived, the two Óláfr's were clearly not averse to using such methods. In addition, they took hostages, and destroyed pagan cult places. A non-violent conversion strategy may not have appealed to them at all. St Óláfr was apparently a great admirer of Charlemagne, who was renowned for his forceful and violent conversion of Saxony. Óláfr named his ship *Charlemagne's Head* (*Karlhǫfði*) and his son Karla-Magnús.[44]

Posterity has bestowed upon both Hákon and St Óláfr a reputation for making and amending laws, but whereas Hákon worked together with the most powerful and wisest men in the legal province, who were both pagan, St Óláfr above all cooperated with bishop Grímkell. The latter is known as the "law of

[41] Ibid.

[42] S. Walaker Nordeide, *The Viking Age as a Period of Religious Transformation. The Christianization of Norway from AD 560–1150/1200* (Turnhout 2011), 279–80. For example, in Valle in Setesdal, a rich Norse grave included coins struck as late as 1065/80, in Ullensaker two barrows were dated very late, one with a sword normally dated to 990/1000–1060/90 and one with a "medieval" sword, dating between c. 1050–1536.

[43] S. E. Grønlie, *Íslendingabók. Kristni saga. The Book of the Icelanders. The Story of the Conversion* (London 2006), 7.

[44] *Heimskringla II*, 59, 210.

St Óláfr" but as Fridtjof Birkeli suggested, a better name would probably have been "bishop Grimkjell's law."[45]

All three kings faced heavy opposition in Trøndelag, particularly at Mære, which may have been a communal centre. Archaeology corroborates Mære's unique status. Underneath the Mære church were the remains of a cult building and gold-foil figures dating to c. 550–800 AD. Bracteates of gold were discovered in the vicinity and there are several "sacred" names, for instance, a meadow called *Helgin or Helgvin* "the sacred meadow" and *Óðinssalr*.[46] Olof Sundqvist has recently made an intriguing proposal, namely, the cult there may have been part of the resistance movement.[47] Paganism may have lasted there until the end of the eleventh century, and Walaker Nordeide argues for a very short interval before the pagan cult place ceased to function and the construction of a wooden church began.[48]

Why Assemblies?

Assemblies were important avenues for conversion, probably for several reasons. In pagan times, the assembly was the most important public place, as it emulated the mythological model where the assembly was the "chief centre" of the world. In the world of myth as in the real world, questions of paramount importance for the whole community were discussed, and here, it was possible to reach out to the pagan gods.[49] Because of this sacred association, assemblies conferred the highest legitimization and authority on decisions. Moreover, tradition was created and upheld at assemblies, and the core values of the society were transmitted to the wider community. The most important and powerful people in the province met at assemblies, and if they agreed to a proposal, there is a good chance that the rest of the population would follow suit. Neither should we forget that at large representational assemblies such as the Frostathing and the Gulathing, representatives bound the people who stayed at home. Politics, religion, law, and the building of collective identities went hand in hand at such sites.

Assemblies were important for North-Germanic pagan societies, irrespective of the existence of kings. For example, in Iceland, during the time of its conver-

[45] F. Birkeli, *Tolv vintre*.

[46] H. E. Lidén, "From Pagan Sanctuary to Christian Church. The Excavation of Mære Church in Trøndelag," *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, vol. 2 (1969), 3–32; S. Walaker Nordeide, *The Viking Age*, 107–13.

[47] O. Sundqvist, *An arena*.

[48] S. Walaker Nordeide, *The Viking Age*, 107–13.

[49] N. Løkka, "þing goða – The Mythological Assembly Site," *Journal of the North Atlantic*, vol. 5 (2013), 18–28; A. I. Riisøy, *Sacred Legal*, 28–41.

sion, questions concerning a change of religion were deliberated and decided at the Althing at Þingvellir in 999/1000.[50] In Saxony, it is intriguing to note, the only record, which exists of a pagan assembly, is set in a similar context. The *Vita Lebvini Antiqua* tells about the missionary Lebuin who spoke at the main Saxon assembly in the early 770s, promising great benefits from God if they accept God's commands; however, if they refused, Charlemagne would invade their lands and exile, enslave, or kill the populace.[51]

The best way to secure a state of relative peacefulness in society was to achieve consensus at the assembly. As we have seen above, the Norwegian conversion kings occasionally tried to secure the support of powerful men before they raised the issue of baptism and Christianization at assemblies. The method was simple, if the powerful agreed; there is a decent chance that the rest of the assembly participants would abide too. In the earliest record of a Scandinavian assembly, a similar approach was applied in a comparable context. Rimbert's *Vita Ansgarii*, tells that 829 or 830, and again, two decades later, a missionary sent from Hamburg-Bremen, came to preach for the Svear, at the merchant settlement Birka. On Anskar's second journey, the king submitted the missionary's request to the assembly, having previously discussed the case with the chieftains. Although the people consented, the king withheld his final permission to Anskar, because he had to communicate with a second assembly in another part of his realm.[52]

The pagans who confronted the Norwegian conversion kings at assemblies had one main concern. If they took on a new religion, this was tantamount to breaking their laws, and if the law was broken, the society would fall apart. They connected sacrifice (ON *blót*), law and the upkeep of society *til árs ok friðar* "for abundance and peace/protection." The term "law" (*lǫg*) originally may have denoted a collection of fixed rules.[53] The pagan religion was often referred to as *forn siðr*, ancient custom, because religion was "done" more than "thought." In a society that was predominantly oral, we should bear in mind that "law" also involved "acting it out" because this was the way for people to remember rules of "law."

The close connection between law and religion may have been widespread among the pagans of Northern Europe, and yet again, also in societies

[50] J. H. Aðalsteinsson, *A Piece of Horse Liver. Myth, Ritual and Folklore in Old Icelandic Sources* (Reykjavik 1998), 65–68; J. H. Aðalsteinsson, *Under the Cloak. A Pagan Ritual Turning Point in the Conversion of Iceland* (Reykjavik 1999), 124.

[51] C. H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (London 1954), 231–32. This *Vita* was written down between c. 840 and 900, probably by a monk of Werden or Deventer; see more in R. M. Karras, "Pagan Survivals and Syncretism in the Conversion of Saxony," *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 72(4) (1986), 555.

[52] C. H. Robinson, *Ankar. The Apostle of the North 801-865. Translated from the Vita Anskarii by Bishop Rimbert his fellow missionary and successor* (London 1921).

[53] E. Wessén, *Svenskt Lagspråk* (Lund 1965), 10.

without kings. When the Icelandic Althing was deliberating the acceptance of Christianity, each side, Christian and heathen respectively, "declared itself under separate laws from the other." In the end, they agreed to have "the same law and the same religion. It will prove true that if we tear apart the law, we will also tear apart the peace."[54] An excellent analogy appears in reports from the so-called Stellinga ("restorers" or "comrades") rebellion in Saxony that followed in the wake of Louis the Pious's death in 840.[55] The Carolingians found it hard to subjugate the Saxons, and this pagan resurgence demonstrates that a connection between "their" religion and "their" law was of paramount importance. One of Louis' sons, Lothar, who was at war with his brothers, appealed directly to the Stellinga for support. Lothar promised them "he would let them have the same law in the future which their ancestors had observed when they were still worshipping idols." The rebels "desired this law above all," and when they had some initial success, "each lived as their ancestors had done according to the law of his choice."[56]

Law and religion was connected with sacrifice, which was a form of communion, where people were joined with the gods and goddesses. As the king's sagas show, this could include the consumption of both horse-meat and alcohol. An example from eastern Scandinavia, the *Guta Saga*: *The History of the Gotlanders* (written between 1220 and 1330) is of particular interest in our context, as it tells about similar practices. The main sacrifice was held for the whole island of Gotland, where in addition to cattle, food, and ale, they also "sacrificed" (*Blotaþu*) humans. The "smaller assemblies" (*smeri þing*) held lesser sacrifice where cattle, food, and drink sufficed. Those involved were called "boiling-companions" (*suþnautar*), because they all cooked their sacrificial meals together."[57] This passage probably reflects an ancient cult practice, which aimed at creating and confirming group-solidarity between the participants.[58] When sacrifices of meat, food, and alcohol took place at the assembly, people emulated the behaviour of the gods.[59] Besides, the gods too were

[54] S. E. Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, 8–9.

[55] R. M. Karras, *Pagan Survivals*.

[56] Ibid., 558; E. J. Goldberg, "Popular Revolt, Dynastic Poltics, and Aristocratic Factionalism in the Early Middle Ages. The Saxon Stellinga Reconsidered," *Speculum*, vol. 70 (1995), 467–93. Four independent sources tell about this revolt, which in terms of both numbers and geography was extensive.

[57] C. Peel, *Guta Saga. The History of the Gotlanders* (London 1999), 5–6.

[58] T. Oestigaard, "Sacrifices of Raw, Cooked, and Burnt Humans," *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, vol. 33 (1) (2000), 53. D. Skre, "The Skiringssal Thing Site Thjodalyng," in *Kaupang in Skiringssal*, ed. D. Skre (Aarhus 2007), 399.

[59] The Old Norse mythology is interesting as in *Hymiskviða*, stanza 15, three oxen were brought to the cooking-pit to be "boiled up" (*á seyði*) and in stanza 39 a huge kettle in which to brew beer was brought to the assembly of the gods. G. Neckel and H. Kuhn, *Edda. Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern. I. Text. 5. Verbesserte Auflage* (Heidelberg 1983),

probably considered to be among the so-called boiling-companions, and hence people were symbolically joined with the gods. There is little dispute among scholars that the Scandinavian Viking age kings were divine to some extent, and kings as well as the jarls of Hlaðir were descended from the gods, while the chieftains stated that they were "best friends" with the deities.[60] Because the ruler, whether king, jarl or chieftain, were connected to the deities, the common people expected that the ruler should take care of the sacrifices. Unless the highest authority sacrificed, the law was not ratified or confirmed. If a king was present, he just happened to be the best man suited for the job, acting as an intermediary between the world of men and the Other World. As a descendant of the gods, he was in the best position to bring *ár ok friðr* to his people.[61]

Concluding Remarks

In Norway, Christianity arrived with the conversion kings, and it caused a confrontation with the pagan religion. This confrontation often took place at assemblies. Christianization was not just about religion. It was also linked to the implementation of a new law, based on Christian principles, and a social structure promoting a single man's rule of the country, as he was the one and only God's representative on earth. This top-down model for authority and rulership was in clear contrast to the pagan societal model, which was less hierarchical. Baptism was the visible sign of conversion, and if chieftains followed the king, there was a fairly good chance that the rest of the population would follow suit.

The assembly was a place where legal cases were solved, but also where various issues with relevance for the whole community were discussed. The assembly had sacred associations in pagan times, and therefore it conferred legitimacy to the decisions made there. Moreover, delegates who participated at assemblies bound the rest of the population who stayed at home, and in this way, decisions at assemblies' secured consensus in the society as a whole. The assembly was therefore the one and only place to raise the issue of whether the society should change its religious adherence.

Sacrifices took place at assemblies, and from the pagan point of view, it was imperative that the ruler, who had the best connection to the otherworld presided over them in order to ratify their law, that is, the set of rules which bound the society together. If the law was not ratified properly, through sacri-

90, 95; C. Larrington, *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford 1996), 80–83. See further in A. I. Riisø, *Sacred Legal*; A. Sanmark, "At the Assembly. A Study of Ritual Space," in *Rituals, Performatives, and Political Order in Northern Europe, c. 650–1350*, ed. W. Jezierski, L. Hermanson, H. J. Orning, and T. Smaberg (Brepols 2015), 79–112.

[60] Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Skandinavia*; O. Sundqvist, *An arena*.

[61] Ibid.

fice, the society would fall apart. If the king was present this was simply his job, and therefore, the conversion kings were faced with demands that they participated in the sacrifices.

If the assembly allowed a new religion to be introduced, either through the baptism of the assembly participants, or, finally, when St Óláfr had new Christian laws ratified at assemblies, this was the most public way of showing that the old gods were finally beaten and a new society was in the making.

Sveinn Haraldsson – The Captured King of Denmark

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There is rather no doubt that Sveinn Haraldsson, known also as tjúguskegg (Forkbeard), the king of Denmark (ca. 986–1014) belongs to the most significant figures of the Viking Age Scandinavia. His military and political achievements, with taking over the English throne in 1013 as their peak, fully justify scholarly interest in his life and reign. This interest is determined by a variety of accessible sources that cast light on particular aspects of the king and his time.[1]

One can say that his reign is relatively well recognized and described. It seems to be true only to a certain extent. The successive stages of Sveinn's domination in Scandinavia and his activity in England create quite a vivid picture. There also seems to remain less and less controversy concerning his attitude towards Christianity and the development of the Church in Denmark. Despite the rebellion against his father that marked the dawn of his reign, Sveinn seems to have aimed at a continuation of Haraldr Gormsson's policy, both in Denmark and beyond. Still, the beginnings of his career contain a substantial portion of mysteries and uncertainties that puzzle scholars until today. Among such issues particularly perplexing is the incident or incidents of the king's capture by either Slavs or Northmen and the ransom his subjects were forced to pay for his freedom. This story is noted by several accounts, both contemporary to Sveinn and those written much later. Although of marginal role and questionable historicity, it had significantly supplemented the rather negative image of the Danish king and became a symbol of his political and military incompetence, cowardice, apostasy, and failure.

With this study I am not going to decide whether the story of the capture and ransom is reliable or not and, consequently, whether medieval authors were right using it in their reviews of the Danish king and his reign. Rather, I will

[1] See, for example, K. Randsborg, *The Viking Age in Danemark. The Formation of State* (London 1980); N. Lund, "The Armies of Swein Forkbeard and Cnut. Leding or lið?," *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 15 (1986), 105–18; N. Lund, *De hærger og de brænder. Danmark og England i Vikingatiden* (Copenhagen 1993); I. Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions and the Danish Conquest of England 991–1017* (Woodbridge 2003); M. H. Gelting, "The Kingdom of Denmark," in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200*, ed. N. Berend (Cambridge 2007).

focus on various circumstances that potentially could have influenced the rise and development of the motif. Firstly, its analysis should provide an interesting link between the complexities of the royal power both in Sveinn's times and in the twelfth–thirteenth-century Scandinavia. Secondly, it would give us another intriguing insight into the modes of progress of medieval historiography.

The fully developed although slightly rearranged story of Sveinn's capture and ransom features in a relatively young account, namely in *Jómsvíkinga saga*, composed in late twelfth/ early thirteenth century. One of its redactions, preserved in mid-fourteenth century manuscript Codex Holmianus 7 4to, contains comparatively the most condensed version of the story:

> Búrisleifr konungr átti þrjár dœtr. Hét in ellzta Ástriðr; ok var hon hin vænsta kona ok hin vitrasta. Qnnur het Gunnhildr, priðja Geira; hennar fekk Óláfr Tryggvason. Sigvaldi ferr nú á konungs fund ok býðr honum tvá kosti at hann muni eigi vera í borginni ella gefi hann honum Ástriði, dóttur sína. "Þat hafða ek ætlat," segir konungr, "at hon mundi þeim manni vera gipt er tignari væri fyrir nafns sakir en þú ert. En þó væri mér nauðsyn at þú værir í borginni; ok skulu vér ráða um ǫll saman." Konungr hittir nú Ástriði, dóttur sína, ok spyrr hversu henni væri at skapi sá ráðahagr at hon sé gipt Sigvalda. Ástriðr segir: "Þér satt at segja þá vilda ek Sigvalda aldrigi eiga. Ok þat skal hann til vinna at koma af ǫllum skǫttum af landinu þeim er vér hǫfum áðr goldit Danakonungi áðr hann komi í mína sæng. Hinn er annarr kostr at hann komi Sveini konungi hingat svá at þú eigir hans vald." Konungr berr þetta nú upp fyrir Sigvalda. En hann er fúss til ráðahags við Ástriði. Kømr þar at Sigvaldi játar þessu; ok binda þetta fastmælum. Skal þetta komit fram fyrir hin fyrstu jól elligar eru ǫll mál þeira laus. Sigvaldi ferr nú heim til Jomsborgar.
>
> Ok litlu siðarr býr hann þrjú skip ok þrjú hundruð manna ór borginni ok ferr nú þar til er hann kømr við Sjálǫnd. Hann hittir menn at máli ok spyrr at Sveinn konungr tekr veizlu skamt þaðan. Þá leggr hann skip sín við eitt nes. Þar váru hvergi skip í nánd. Þat var skamt frá bœ þeim er konungr drakk með sex hundruð manna. Þeir Sigvaldi snúa skipum sínum ok láta framstafna horfa frá landi. Þeir tengja skipit hvert af stafni annars. Siðan sendir Sigvaldi tuttugu menn á fund Sveins konungs "ok segið honum svá at ek sé sjúkr ok at bana kominn ok ek vilja fyrir eins finna hann ok líf hans liggi við."
>
> Nú finna þeir konung ok bera upp þessi ørendi. Konungr bregzk við skjótt ok ferr þegar með þau sex hundruð manna. En er Sigvaldi verðr varr at konungr er kominn þá lá hann á því skipi er first var landi. Hann mælti við sína menn: "Þá er þrír tigir manna eru komnir á it skip er næst er landi, þá skulu þér kippa bryggju af landi ok mæla at menn troði eigi skipit svá at søkkvi. Ok get ek at konungr gangi í fyrra lagi. En þá er tuttugu menn eru komnir á miðskipit þá skulu þér þar kippa bryggju."

Nú er konungr kominn á skipit. Þá gøra þeir sem mælt var. Nú er konungr kominn á skip Sigvalda við tíunda mann. Þá spurði konungr hvárt Sigvaldi hefði mál sitt. Honum var sagt at máttr hans var sem minstr. Konungr gengr þá at rekkju Sigvalda ok spurði hvárt hann mætti mæla. Sigvaldi svarar: "Lúttu at mér nú." En er konungr laut at honum þá tók Sigvaldi annarri hendi um þverar herðar honum en annarri undir høgnd honum. Ok þá kallaði Sigvaldi at ǫllum skipum skyli í braut róa sem skjótast; ok svá gøra þeir. En menn konungs stóðu eptir á landi ok sá á. Þá mæIti konungr: "Hvat er nú, Sigvaldi, viltu svíkja mik eða hvat ætlask þúi fyrir?" Sigvaldi segir: "`Eigi mun ek svíkja yðr en fara skulu þér til Jómsborgar, ok skulu þér vera þar velkomnir. Ok vér skulum veita yðr alla virðing." Konungr segir: "Þat munum vér nú ok þekkjask."

Þeir fara nú til Jómsborgar, ok gøra Jómsvikingar veizlu mikla móti honum ok kallask hans menn. Þá sagði Sigvaldi konungi at hann hefði beðit til handa honum dóttur Búrisleifs konungs er Gunnhildr hét, "sú er vænst er; en mér er fǫstnuð systir hennar, er Ástriðr heitir. Nú mun ek fara á fund konungs ok vitja þessa mála fyrir þína høgnd." Konungr bað hann svá gøra. Sigvaldi ferr nú á fund Búrisleifs konungs með hundrað manna ok talask þeir við. Lézk Sigvaldi nú kominn til ráð við Ástriði. Gøra þeir nú Búrisleifr konungr ok Sigvaldi ráð sitt. Eptir þat ferr Sigvaldi heim. Sveinn konungr spurði hversu gengi málin. Sigvaldi kvað þat á hans valdi "ef þú, konungr, vilt gefa upp Búrisleifi konungi skatta áðr hann gipti þér dóttur sína. Ok er þat meiri sómi báðum ykkr at þú eigir þess konungs dóttur at eigi sé skattgildr." Svá kømr Sigvaldi nú sínum fortǫlum at konungr vill þenna kost.

King Búrisleifr had three daughters. The eldest was called Astriðr, who was the most beautiful and wisest of women. The second was called Gunnhildr and the third Geira, who was married to Óláfr Tryggvason. Sigvaldi went to the king and offered to him two alternatives: that either he should leave the city or else the king should give him Astriðr, his daughter, as his wife. "I thought," said the king, "that she should marry someone whose rank was more exalted than yours. But yet it is essential for me to keep you in the city. We shall all discuss the matter together." The king met Astriðr, his daughter, and asked her what she thought about being married to Sigvaldi. Astriðr said: "To tell you the truth I would rather never marry Sigvaldi. But before he shall call me his wife, let him first accomplish the liberation of these lands from all the tribute which we have previously paid to the king of Denmark. The alternative is that he brings King Sveinn here so that you have him in your power." The king told this to Sigvaldi who was still eager to marry Astriðr. It ended with Sigvaldi agreeing to the conditions, which they all then confirmed by oaths. Sigvaldi was to carry out his part of the agreement by the following Christmas or else they were all released from their obligations. Sigvaldi went home to Jomsborg. Not long after he made ready three ships and three hundred and sixty men and sailed from the city to Zeeland. He met some men from

whom he learned that King Sveinn was at a banquet not far from there. He anchored his ships by a headland, where there were no other ships in the neighbourhood and which was a short distance from the farm where King Sveinn was at the feast together with seven hundred and twenty men. Sigvaldi and his men turned their ships round letting the bows face the sea, and they tied the ships up alongside each other. Then Sigvaldi sent twenty men to find King Sveinn "and tell him that I am sick and at death's door, and that I want to see him desperately about something in which his life is at stake." They met the king and delivered their message. The king reacted quickly and set out immediately with seven hundred and twenty men. When Sigvaldi learned that the king had come he was lying on the ship which was furthest from the land. He said to his men: "When thirty men have come aboard the ship nearest the land, pull up the gangplank from the shore and tell them not to overcrowd the ship lest it sink. And I imagine that the king will be among the first. And when twenty men have come aboard the middle ship, pull up the gangplank."

The king arrived on the ship and Sigvaldi's men carried out his instructions. When the king had come aboard Sigvaldi's ship with nine men, he asked whether Sigvaldi could speak or not. He was told that he was very weak. The king went to Sigvaldi's bed and asked him whether he could speak. Sigvaldi replied: "Bend down to me." When the king bent down to him, Sigvaldi gripped him with one arm round his shoulders and the other under his arm and shouted to his men that they should row away as quickly as possible. They did so. But the king's men remained behind on the shore and looked on. Then the king said: "What is going on, Sigvaldi? Are you going to betray me or what are your plans?" Sigvaldi said: "I shall not betray you, but you must go to Jomsborg where you will be made welcome. We shall show you all the honour we can." The king said: "I shall have to accept that." They went to Jomsborg and the Jomsvikings prepared a great banquet for him and they called themselves his men. Then Sigvaldi said to the king that he had asked for the hand of King Búrisleifr's daughter, called Gunnhildr, on his behalf. She is the most beautiful one. And I am engaged to her sister Astriðr. Now I'll go to the king to settle the terms of the marriage for you." The king told him to do so. Sigvaldi went now with a hundred and twenty men to King Búrisleifr and they discussed the matter together. Sigvaldi claimed that he had now won Astriðr. King Búrisleifr and Sigvaldi made their plans, after which the latter went home. King Sveinn asked him how the suit was going. Sigvaldi said that it lay in his power "as Búrisleifr will not give you his daughter until you relinquish the tribute which Búrisleifr pays to you, your majesty. It will add to your honour and his if you marry the daughter of a king who does not pay tribute." Sigvaldi was so persuasive that the king accepted the terms.[2]

[2] *Jómsvíkinga saga efter skinnboken 7 4to*, ed. G. Cederschiöld (Lund 1874), 21–23; *Jómsvíkinga saga*, ed. N. F. Blake (Toronto–New York 1962), 25–27. Slightly broader although featuring

Scholars analysing the *Jómsvíkinga saga* narrative, stress the importance of its general antiroyal undertone.[3] Although the motif of the king's capture fully accords with the latter, it has not attracted more thorough attention. Moreover, it has not been studied in comparison with its analogues, found in older texts.[4] The story of the Jómsvikings, especially its first part, dedicated to the kings of Denmark,[5] provides quite a negative image of the monarchs, especially of Haraldr Gormsson and his son Sveinn. Their powers are relatively weak, their authority questioned by the tendency to avoid direct challenges, promote plots and intrigues, and, finally, their inability to interpret correctly current political conditions. In the case of Haraldr, it is best proven by the circumstances of his death, when he is forced to confront the rebellion of his own, formerly rejected, son and dies in a most unhonourable way. Sveinn, although seems to be growing into an energetic and successful ruler, quickly proves to follow the negative image of his father. It is fulfilled by both his disability or lack of will to confront personally jarl Hákon of Hlaðir in Norway and the necessity to use deceit in order to make Jómsvikings fight against the jarl on his behalf.[6]

The construction of the saga's narrative presents the story of Sveinn's capture as the first serious sign of his royal weakness. The king is not able to foresee and withstand the danger. His retinue, despite being numerous, remains entirely unable to prevent Sigvaldi and his men from action and effectively protect their lord. Finally, the king appears as ultimately naive and helpless when captured and forced to accept the conditions of a new peace, dictated by Búrisleifr. Nevertheless, the story is important for the whole narrative. Sveinn felt ashamed and dishonoured by Jómsvikings, which was the reason for his will to take revenge on them and for the plot that led to their final destiny.

The reader of *Jómsvíkinga saga* cannot ignore the potential entertainment factor of the narrative. Indeed, the circumstances of Sveinn's capture may have

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the same elements versions of this story are to be found in another two redactions of the saga: *Jómsvikinga saga efter Arnamagnæska handskriften N:o 291 4:to i diplomatariskt aftryck*, ed. C. af Petersens (København 1882), 85–89; *Jómsvíkinga saga (efter cod. AM 510 4:to)*, ed. C. af Petersens (Lund 1879), 46–51.

[3] J. Jesch, "History in 'Political Sagas,'" *Medium Aevum*, vol. 62, no. 2 (1993); Torfi Tulinius, *The Matter of the North. The rise of literary fiction in thirteenth-century Iceland* (Odense 2002), 191–216; S. Aalto, "Band of Brothers – The Case of the Jómsvíkings," *Średniowiecze Polskie i Powszechne*, t. 1(5) 2009; J. Morawiec, *Vikings among the Slavs. Jomsborg and the Jomsvikings in Old Norse Tradition* (Wien 2009); Þórðís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, *Jómsvíkinga saga. Sérstaða, varðveisla og viðtökur*, Ritgerð lögð fram til doktorsprófs, (Reykjavík 2016).

[4] See Torfi Tulinius, *The Matter of the North*, 193–97. Þórðís Edda Jóhannesdóttir, *Jómsvíkinga saga*, 144 refers to the story but does not provide any deeper considerations concerning its potential origin.

[5] Missing in one of the redactions of the saga, preserved in manuscript AM 510 4to.

[6] J. Morawiec, *Vikings among the Slavs*, 90–143.

sounded amusing as they still do. It refers especially to the scene of king's final approach to the supposedly-sick Sigvaldi, who orders the former to bow in front of him. It is followed by another image, that could have been seen as humorous, namely the king gripped by the jarl, unable to move and react. Last but not least, it is hard not to see the irony in the scene of the banquet for Sveinn, given by Jómsvikings, who called themselves king's men. Another distinguished factor of the story is a sophisticated interplay of numbers, directly pointing to the royal advantage over the jarl, indirectly leading to a rhetorical question: how many people one may need to capture a king?

A closer inspection of the available sources shows that the motif in question was not created exclusively for the saga. Contrary, since it was definitely older, it was used and rearranged as very suitable for the whole story. Its earlier circulation is proved by the account of Sveinn Aggesen's *Brevis Historia Regum Dacie*:

> Hic Haraldus multo post tempore regali sceptro regni gubernabat imperium. Is primus idolatriae respuens spurcitias, Christi crucem adoravit. Qui dum exercitum emitteret ad immanissimam petram protrahendam, quam matris tumulo ob memoriale insignium destinavit erigendam, intestina orta sedition, tum propter novae religionis ritum, tum propter servitutis iugum intolerabile popularis coepit effervere tumultus, adeo ut ipsum rehgem plebs insane regno expelleret. Qui cursu celeri fugam arripiens – pedibus enim timor addidit alas – ad Sclaviam profugus commeavit ibique, pace impetrate, primus urbem fundasse dicitur, quae nunc Hynnisburgh nuncupatur. Cuius menia ab archipraesule Absalone ego Sueno solo conspexi aequari. Quo exulante, filius in regno subrogatur Sueno cognomina Tycheskeg, qui sanctae Trinitatis fidem, quam profugus tamen pater abiecerat, verus Dei cultor amplexus est, sacrique baptismatis unda renatus, verbi divini semina per universam regionem propagari iussit. Successu temporum interveniunt legati, qui operam darent, ut discordia inter patrem et filum, regio regnantem solio, exorta ad concordiam revocaretur. Statuit igitur Sueno rex, ut pater cum Sclavis sibi in Gronesund de pace tractanda occurreret. Quo cum rex ad terminum constitutumcum Danorumexercitu advenisset, patris diu praestolatur adventum. Interea Haraldus profugus, cuisdam Palnonis Tokki, consiliarii sui, suggestione monitus, laburnum remis aptissimam sibi fabrefecit, quam nautis instruxit probatissimis; cui et gubernatorem praefecit praefatum Palnonem, qui regi festinanter accelerabat occurrere. Is cum ad Danorum pervenisset exercitum, ordinatis per foros remis, dolum commentatus, puppim suam puppi regis iussit applicari. Quibus sic ordinatis, prima illucescente aurora, regem in reclinario dormientem clam excitavit. Expergefactus autem rex sciscitatur, quidnam esset. "Nos," inquit, "patris tui legati sumus, ad te de pace tractanda transmissi." Quod cum didicisset, patris statum diligentius cupiens percunctari, paulo extra navis suggrundam caput exseruit. Quem illico praetaxatus Palno Toki per aures et capillos

corripiens, licet frustra renitentem, in suam navim tunc potentior attraxit invitum, et quamvis pauxillum clamore perstreperet, ceteris ignaris, valido remorum impulsu fugam vehementius accelerabat, nec prius laboris pertaesus destitit, antequam ad urbem praefatam pervenisset. Quem Sclavi contuentes, populari orta seditione, diversis captivatum mortibus exquisitisque tormentis adiudicabant. Verum pars electa primatum saniori praecellebat consilio. Consultius namque autumabant censu eum plurimo redimendum, unde Sclavia perenniter locuples exhaustis Danorum opibus gauderet, quam brevi morte trucidatus interiret. Modicum etenim communi cederet utilitati si captivus mortis dampnaretur exterminio. Delegantur itaque legati, qui Danis denuntiarent, ut regem suum trino auri et argenti pondere redimerent. Quod diu exequi non distulerunt. Nam universe ferme regni censu coadunato, occurrentibus in Winnigha cum rege captivato Sclavis, Dani Sueonem redimere non detrectabant. Ast ubi census eius solutioni non sufficeret, decreverunt matronae suis ornatibus summam redemptionis explere. Igitur anulos, armillas, inaures, monilia, torques et quicquid illis pretiosum erat regi liberando impendebant. Quo expleto, Dani a rege silvarum et nemorum tum primum communia impetrarunt.[7]

This Harald held sway over the kingdom with his royal sceptre for a long time afterwards. This was the first king to reject the filth of idolatry and worship the cross of Christ. However, he sent the army to haul the immense rock which he intended to have raised over his mother's mound in memory of her achievements, and disorder began to seethe among the people. It was caused both by the new religious observances and by the unbearable servile yoke. Then the commons broke out in rebellion against the king, and all together they drove him from the kingdom. He fled with speed, for "fear added wings to his fleet," and arrived in Slavia as a refugee. There he is said to have had a peaceful reception and to have founded the city which is now called Jomsborg; whose walls I, Sveinn, saw levelled to the ground by Archbishop Absalon.

During his exile, his son Sveinn was raised to the throne; he was surnamed Forkbeard. And he adopted as a true worshipper of God the faith which his fugitive father had in the end renounced. Reborn in the holy waters of baptism and made orthodox in faith, he ordered the seeds of God's word to be sown throughout the land.

In the course of time envoys arrived to repair the discord which had arisen between the fugitive father and the son who occupied the royal throne. The king therefore decided that his father and the Slavs meet him in the straits of Grønsund to make peace. The king arrived there first with the Danish fleet at the time appointed, and waited a long time for his father. The fugitive Harald meanwhile accepted the suggestion of one of his councillors, that is, of Palna-Toki, a man with two names, and constructed for himself

[7] *Sweni Aggonis Gesta Regum Danorum*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum, t. XXIX Hannowerae 1892, 32–33.

> a rapid vessel best suited for rowing. This he manned with most experienced sailors and put the above-mentioned Palna-Toki in charge, who set off with all speed to meet the king.
> When he reached the Danish fleet, he ranged his oarsmen on deck and, with treachery in mind, gave orders that his ship should make for the king's. With his crew in position, at the first light of dawn he quietly roused the king in his resting-place. When the king woke, he asked who it was. "It is us," he said, "the envoys of your father. We have been sent over to you to discuss peace-terms." When he gathered this, the king wanted to inquire more closely into how his father was, and he put his head a little way over the gunwale of the ship. Then Palna-Toki grabbed him by the ears and the hair, gave a more powerful heave against his unavailing resistance, and dragged him willy-nilly out of his own ship. Although he yelled and shouted just a little, they made their escape with furious oar-strokes while everyone else slumbered in ignorance. Nor did they heave to until they reached the city of Jómsborg.
> When the Slavs caught sight of him, the people rose up and condemned the prisoner to various forms of death and refined torture. However, the better sort of their leaders prevailed with wiser counsel. They decided that, rather than put an end to him by killing him forthwith, they would be better advised to have him ransomed for a large tribute; in that way the Danes would be impoverished and Slavia would perpetually rejoice in her wealth. It would yield but little profit to the community if they were to condemn their prisoner to death.
> So they charged their envoys to announce to the kingdom that they may buy back their king with three times his weight in gold and silver; and they did so without much delay. The Danes collected a levy from almost the entire kingdom, and when the Slavs arrived at Vindinge with the captive monarch, they were eager to redeem their king. But the levy proved insufficient to release him, and in order to ransom him the married women agreed to make up the shortfall in coin with their own jewellery. They topped up the king's levy by adding rings, bracelets, ear-rings, necklaces and all their chains. And when it was complete, the Danes obtained from the king their first common rights over woods and groves. […]

Sveinn's account seems to prove that particular motifs, known from the *Jómsvíkinga saga*, had been circulating separately and in different contexts already in the twelfth century, before the saga redactions were completed. Two skaldic poems, Þorkell Gíslason's *Búadrápa* and Bjarni Kolbeinsson's *Jómsvíkinga drápa*, both dated to approximately the same time, are the most visible evidence of that. The former dedicated to Búi digri, the latter, despite its title, to Vagn Ákason, indicate, that since its early stages of formation, the legend of Jómsvikings had been based on the fame of particular leaders, repre-

sentatives of Danish nobility.[8] Despite its rather antiroyal flavour, the narrative of the royal capture constitutes a very close analogy. The story lives its own life and, as Sveinn Aggesen's account shows, could be used in various contexts. The author of *Brevis Historia* uses it to complete the whole passage on the king's rebellion against his father and on the direct military confrontation between both sides. The account of Harald's friendly reception in Jómsborg reveals either the influence of Adam of Bremen's account (see below) or some, most likely located at the royal court, common source. On the other hand, the decisive role of Palna-Toki, one of the most prominent figures of the *Jómsvíkinga saga*, strongly suggests that already at the time Sveinn Aggesen was writing his account, the story was connected with the legend of Jómsborg. This connection is even stronger if one remembers that, according to the saga, it was the very same Palna-Toki who was responsible for the fall and death of Haraldr Gormsson. *Brevis Historia* provides a different arrangement of the tale. The jarl supports Sveinn's father and it is he, not Sigvaldi, who captures the king. Sveinn Aggesen's story contains some inconsistencies. First of all, the figure of Haraldr Gormsson disappears in the middle of the plot and one cannot learn how the capture and liberation of his son determined his own position. On the one hand, one learns that Haraldr tried to regain the lost power and the action against his son aimed at bringing peace between both sides. On the other hand, the story lacks a definite answer to the question whether Haraldr achieved his goal. The second inconsistency refers to the role of Slavs in the whole plot. First, we do not learn why Haraldr decided to seek shelter in Slavia and how it was possible for him, as the refugee, to have the necessary time and resources to found there a new city, that is, Jómsborg. In this case this probably results from an exclusive hybrid of two accounts, Adam's *Gesta* and *Jómsvíkinga saga*. The former underlines the hospitality of the citizens of Jumne,[9] the latter labels Harald the founder of Jómsborg.[10] Moreover, Sveinn Aggesen does not explain why the plot made up by both Haraldr and Palna-Toki abruptly turned into the initiative of the Slavs who, by ransoming Sveinn, wanted to impoverish the Danes and, thanks to this, rejoice in their own wealth, to cite the author

[8] One has to mention the tradition of family ties between Sveinn Aggesen and Vagn Ákason. The former's great-grandfather, called Þrugot, was said to marry Þorgunn, the latter's daughter. The tradition is preserved in *Knýtlinga saga*. See *Danakonunga sǫgur*, ed. Bjarni Guðnason, Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík 1982), 159. On the status of Danish nobility in the *Jómsvíkinga saga* tradition, see J. Morawiec, "Ekskluzywni wojownicy – elitarny wymiar legendy o Jomswikingach," in M. Rębkowski, ed. *Ekskluzywne życie – dostojny pochówek. W kręgu kultury elitarnej wieków średnich*, *Wolińskie Spotkania Mediewistyczne I* (Wolin 2011), 87–109.

[9] *Adami Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, MGH Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum, ed. B. Schmeidler (Hannoverae 1917), 87.

[10] Although it has to be noted that it refers only to a version of the saga preserved in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* and some of the kings' sagas (*Fagrskinna*, *Knýtlinga saga*). See J. Morawiec, *Vikings among the Slavs*, 41–48.

himself. A conclusion that both Haraldr and Slavs wanted literally the same sounds abstract and it is hard to assume that it was Sveinn's intention to make his readers believe it. The inconsistencies concerning the Slavs may again, be probably explained by the way Sveinn Aggesen used his sources, both literary and oral. In this very case it was due to the decision to adhere closely to Adam of Bremen's account where the Slavs are mentioned as responsible for capturing the Danish king. On the other hand, one cannot exclude the possibility that contemporary, twelfth-century Danish-Slavonic encounters also heavily influenced Sveinn Aggesen's account.[11] All in all, it looks like the story of the capture and ransom of the king was too intriguing and perhaps too important to be rejected by the author of *Brevis Historia* to be too much worried about the inconsistencies listed above.

As I have already mentioned, the author of *Brevis Historia* probably relied with his account of Sveinn's disturbances on other sources, including Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*:

> […] Quo tempore cum magnam Suein rex persecutionem christianorum exercuisset in Dania, fertur archiepiscopus supplicibus legatis et crebris muneribus laborasse, ut ferocis animum regis christianis mansuetum redderet. Quibus ille reiectis in sua crudelitate ac perfidia saevire cepit. Secuta est ultio divina in regem Deo rebellem. Nam cum bellum susciperet contra Sclavos, bis captus et in Sclavaniam ductus tociens a Danis ingenti pondere auri redemptus est.
>
> At that time, while king Sveinn was preparing a fierce persecution of the Christians in Denmark, the archbishop is said, through suppliant legates and by frequent gifts, to have endeavoured to mollify the king's ferocious spirit in regard to the Christians. But the king rejected these overtures and began to rage in his cruelty and perfidy. Divine vengeance pursued him in his rebellion against God for, when he undertook a war against the Slavs, he was twice captured and led off into Slavia and as many times ransomed by the Danes for an immense amount of gold.[12]

A short look at Adam's account shows that Sveinn Aggesen willingly used the motif of the king's capture by the Slavs, whereas ignored the former's rather negative opinion on the king's attitude towards Christianity. It was definitely the driving force of Adam's narrative on the Danish king. The capture and the ransom are put in the same category of God's punishment as the king's loss of power and subsequent exile.[13] The basic and general methodological problem with Adam's account is that a substantial part of the information he provides

[11] See Morawiec, *Vikings among the Slavs*, 51–89.

[12] *Adami Gesta*, 91.

[13] *Adami Gesta*, 94–95. See also J. Morawiec, *Knut Wielki. Król Anglii, Danii I Norwegii (ok. 995–1035)*, (Kraków 2013), 38–44.

cannot be verified elsewhere. This situation has been confusing for scholars for a long time, resulting in very radical views on the credibility of Adam's work. This time, however, the situation is different. The account of Sveinn's capture and ransom, that had to be paid to make him free, appears in bishop Thietmar's Chronicon:

> […] immundis canibus impositum sibi censum quotannis solverent et maximam regni suimet partem, capto ac interempto habitatore, tunc hosti fiducialiter inhabitandam invite reliquerent. Consetiente hoc Domino et ob castigandas quorundam suimet infidelium culpas hostes predictos ad hoc instigante, tantum insevit persecutor, qui nec suis parcere umquam didicit. Ille, inquam, supra memoratus, non rector sed destructor, post mortem patris sui a Northmannis insurgentibus captus, cum a populo sibi tunc subdito cum ingenti precio solveretur, quia ab occulta pessimorum susurracione se ob hoc servum nominari comperitet, quod salubriter in paucis ulcisci potuit, hoc impaciens communi dampno et, si voluisset scire, sibi maxime nocenti meditator vindicare. Potestatem namque suam hostibus extraneis tunc relinquens securitatem vagatione, pacem bello, regnum exilio, Deum caeli et terraediabolo mutavit et habitata quaeque vastando sic se suorum non empticium neque volentem dominum, sed spontaneum crebro se iactavit late, pro dolor! regnantem.
>
> […] Then he reluctantly handed over the greatest part of their kingdom to the enemy as a permanent place of residence, its inhabitants having been captured or killed. The Lord agreed to this and compelled the enemy to do it in order to punish the sins of certain non-believers. So much did the persecutor rage that he did not even know to spare his own people. Sven, whom I have mentioned above, not a ruler but destroyer, after the death of his father, was captured by the invading Northmen and redeemed by the people subject to him at great cost. He then learned that, because of this, rumours spread by the worst of people were secretly referring to him as a slave. The revenge which could profitably have been exacted from the few, he rashly inflicted on all. Had he wished to consider this, he might have realized that he inflicted the greatest damage on himself. For, by giving over his power to foreign enemies, he traded security for constant wandering, peace for war, a kingdom for exile, the God of heaven and earth for the Devil. He wasted a populous land and often boasted that he was not a lord who could be bought or influenced by other people, but rather one who, according to his whim, could rule far and wide as an enemy.[14]

Thietmar's account remains the oldest surviving instance of the narrative in question, featuring its two basic ingredients: the capture and the ransom. It is

[14] *Thietmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum Nova Series, t. IX, ed. R. Holtzmann (Berlin 1935), 442.

thus not surprising at all that the scholars interested in the turbulences of the early stages of Sveinn tjúguskegg's reign, have had to refer to the bishop's words. These considerations included attempts to answer two questions: whether the tale itself is reliable or rather it was Thietmar who made up the story himself or followed an account(s) of others. According to Svend Ellehoj, the narrative can be found reliable as it explains Sveinn's later activity in England and his will to gain as much English silver as possible just to compensate the costs of the ransom.[15] Also Ian Howard concluded in his study on the king's English campaigns that the story seems plausible, as mentioned by Adam of Bremen, despite the fact of its later legendary accretion.[16] On the contrary, Niels Lund, investigating the same problem, voiced his doubts whether there is any element of truth behind the tradition of Sveinn's capture.[17] It is, however, Peter Sawyer, who, in his study on the negative image of the Danish king in German sources (Thietmar, Adam), referred to the problem in the most thorough way so far.[18] According to Sawyer, the accounts of both authors are in total opposition to what can be deduced from other kinds of data, especially archaeology. The latter points at constant development in Denmark whose economic growth that could have happened only as a result of a strong and unshaken royal power.[19] Sawyer is right when he claims that Sveinn's successes were hard to stand for his enemies, especially the ecclesiastic circles in Germany whose claims to control the developments of Christianity in the North were challenged effectively by the king of Denmark. Envy, anger, and helplessness could have furnished the conditions where stories of this kind would be very easily and willingly created and put into further distribution. The special focus on the king's miseries and misfortunes could have served as a reflection of divine justice that eventually could have balanced any piece of painful news about Sveinn's following political and military achievements.

Sawyer seems to favour the idea that the story in question was a fruit of such an atmosphere giving up the effort to discuss its reliability. Consequently, he considers both options, Adam following Thietmar and the independent use of common source by both of them, equally possible.[20]

Generally, Sawyer's argument can be accepted.[21] Still, there is some room for its supplementation, that perhaps lets one place Thietmar's account in an

[15] S. Ellehoj, "Olav Tryggvesons fald og Venderne," *(Dansk) Historisk Tidskrift*, nr 11 b. 4–1 (1953), 39–40.

[16] I. Howard, *Svein's Forkbeard*, 8. The author ignores Thietmar's account in that matter.

[17] Lund, *The armies*, 115, note 43.

[18] P. Sawyer, "Swein Forkbeard and the Historians," in *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages*, ed. I. Wood and G. A. Loud (London 1991), 27–40.

[19] Sawyer, *Swein Forkbeard*, 30–31.

[20] Sawyer, *Swein Forkbeard*, 32–34.

[21] I do not, however, share his enthusiasm and trust towards the account of *Encomium Emmae Reginae* as evidence of Sveinn tjúguskegg's early reign. See Saywer, *Swein Forkbeard*, 30–31.

even more accurate context. I agree with Sawyer and Lund, that the question of reliability of the capture and ransom story remains today almost pointless. It cannot be either totally rejected or confirmed. Moreover, the way the story is used by Thietmar suggests that even the bishop of Merseburg himself did not care much about the truthfulness of the account, being just willing to use any piece of evidence that would accord with his totally negative and hostile attitude towards Sveinn tjúguskegg. This attitude was determined by both personal experiences of Thietmar, captured by some Northmenn in 994 and the Danish king's ecclesiastical policy that ignored the claims of the German Church. As we can see, Thietmar, as a man and a bishop, could hardly find any reason to like the Danish monarch.

It is the term *susurruses* (rumours) that seems to play a key role in this context. Let me repeat that, according to Thietmar, as a consequence of both the capture and the ransom, those rumours were spread by the worst of people that referred to king Sveinn as a slave ("quia ab occulta pessimorum susurracione se ob hoc servum nominari comperitet"). There are a few instances of using the term "susurrus" by the author of the *Chronicon*. Every case provides rather negative connotations pointing at bad intentions of some people willing, by bad words, to hurt the object of their malice. The case of Sveinn tjúguskegg seems to fit this very category. There is, however, one striking element in Thietmar's account. One can read that once the king heard about those rumours, he decided to inflict rash revenge ("quod salubriter in paucis ulcisci potuit") on his wrongdoers. Thietmar seems to both understand and criticise his reaction saying that the revenge could profitably have been taken on the few, not all. Had he wished to consider this, he might have realized that he inflicted the greatest damage on himself ("quod salubriter in paucis ulcisci potuit, hoc impaciens communi dampno et, si voluisset scire, sibi maxime nocenti meditator vindicare"). We do not learn from Thietmar directly who those the king took revenge on were and what exact means he employed to do it. The bishop is much more interested in the ultimate effect of the king's dealings that led to giving over his power to foreign enemies.

The motive of a king angered by the words of shame trying to save his honour by quick and stout reaction that led to an unfortunate end has its analogy in a very similar account on Sveinn's father, Haraldr Gormsson, provided by Snorri Sturluson in *Heimskringla* and one of the redactions of *Jómsvíkinga saga* (AM 291 4to). The story begins with Harald's decision to wage war against Norway, ruled at that time by jarl Hákon of Hlaðir. The latter not only rejected Christianity and returned to pagan beliefs, but also raided Danish lands. Haraldr invaded and savaged with fire some parts of Hákon's dominion making locals flee and look for shelter in the mountains and forests. Immediately afterwards Haraldr decided to attack Iceland. He wanted to avenge the insults all Icelanders spread about him, according to their own law, as a reaction to the

stealing of goods from a ship that belonged to Icelanders and was shipwrecked in Denmark. Icelanders accused the royal steward Birgir for this deed thus he was insulted alongside the king.[22]

Both versions of the story feature an anonymous stanza shown as an example of the insults directed towards Haraldr and Birgir. Its content leaves no doubt that a poet's intention was to show the king, formerly a great warrior, as an ultimate, sexually abused, coward.[23]

In Snorri's version of the story, Haraldr decided to send a magician to Iceland, whose task was to investigate how to invade the island. The magician was, however, confronted by great *landvættir*, spiritual guardians of Iceland, who effectively blocked any serious moves of the invader. The only thing he could report to the king was that Iceland was not available to his fleet.[24]

Thanks to the stanza cited in both versions of the story, we can learn that both Haraldr and Birgir[25] were insulted through the concept of *nið*, pointing at their ultimately dishonourable behaviour.[26] The poet suggests that the king deserved to be called a *nidding* as he proved to be a coward. Besides, quite a sophisticated interplay of mare-stallion imagery, used by the skald in the stanza, points at the tendency of Haraldr to play a passive role in homosexual relations (*ergi*), something equally as bad as cowardice.[27]

The stanza leaves no doubt that Haraldr was fully justified to seek revenge although the story focuses on the ineffectiveness of these efforts that proved weak the condition of the king's power as a man and a ruler.

This aspect allows, in my opinion, to link the stories of both Danish monarchs. Sveinn is insulted as a slave, an accusation that perfectly fits the *nið* format. He, and his father are put in a controversial situation that challenges their honour and demands a quick and stout reaction. Finally, both kings fail to get a positive result, turning into perfect candidates for examples of the failed royal power.

It is tempting to see in Thietmar's *susurruses* another instance of poetic lampoons, known as *niðvísur*. Analogies with the *nið* concept are too numerous to be rejected: the bad opinion on those who spread rumours in question, their content questioning the male honour, and the object of the rumours reacting

[22] *Heimskringla I*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Íslenzk fornrit 26, 4th edition (Reykjavík 2002), 270 (further cited as ÍF 26); *Jómsvikinga saga efter Arnamagnæska handskriften N:o 291*, 35–36.

[23] *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1. From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1* (Turnhout 2012), 1073.

[24] ÍF 26, 271.

[25] One cannot exclude a possibility though, that the name Birgir, mentioned in the second couplet of the stanza, referred in fact, contrary to the prose commentary, to Harald.

[26] B. Almqvist, *Norrön niddiktning. 1. Nid mot furstar* (Uppsala 1965); F. Ström, *Nid, ergi and Old Norse moral attitudes* (London 1973).

[27] See A. Finlay, "Monstrous Allegations. An Exchange of *ýki* in Bjarnar saga Hítdoelakappa," *alvíssmál* 10 (2001), 21–44.

very rapidly and trying to take a large-scale revenge. The potential thematic link between both stories does not make either of them more reliable. This is not the point. On the other hand, the situation when both Danish kings, ruling one after another, "deserved" such an antipraise, simply cannot be ignored. Consequently, the point is not about deciding authoritatively whether a situation such as a capture and a ransom happened to Sveinn (and potentially to Haraldr as well) or not. It is, rather, about considering the circumstances such stories could have originated and developed in, especially in reference to Thietmar's account, the contemporary of both kings.

One cannot reject the possibility of Thietmar making up the story of Sveinn's capture, ransom, and unsuccessful revenge by himself. However, the existence of a very similar motif, with Haraldr Gormsson as its protagonist, suggests a rather independent circulation of this kind of stories, strictly connected with these two monarchs. It is possible to define the factors likely responsible for this phenomenon. The most obvious one is the very turbulent political situation in Denmark in the times of rapid downfalls of both Haraldr Gormsson (ca. 987) and Sveinn tjúguskegg (ca. 991–994). It resulted in both the weakening of the royal prestige, and in creating a chance for local elites, whose status had previously suffered much during the reign of Haraldr aiming to unify the Danish land under his rule. The example of the local power centre in Lejre seems to be a good example of the latter. On the other hand, the status of Odinkar the Elder, the bishop of Ribe, points at a continuing existence and some prominence of the circles that, opposed to the Jelling dynasty, could have taken advantage because of royal misfortunes.[28] Moreover, those circles could have been in fact responsible for the creation and circulation of the stories that presented both kings in a very negative light. Odinkar the Elder is said to have cooperated closely with the archdiocese in Hamburg-Bremen. The archbishops in particular, and German Church in general, were doing their best to withstand Harald's and Sveinn's resistance to accept the ecclesiastical hegemony of the See in Denmark. It could explain how Thietmar could have got access to the material of this kind which must have been very attractive to him bearing in mind the purposes of his writing.

If one is to doubt the reliability of the stories of capture and ransom, the question about the reasons to make and distribute such rumours remains. Again, an answer seems to be found in the political turbulences that marked the reigns of both monarchs. The saga accounts make us believe that *niðvísur* were a controversial if attractive weapons that triggered various conflicts on different social levels. In the cases of insulted rulers, poetic lampoons were a serious threat towards their relations not only with the poet but also, if not first of all, with their subjects. The questioned honour had to be defended in the way clearly

[28] See Morawiec, *Knut Wielki*, 313.

visible not only for an insulter but also for the whole community. Interestingly, in the cases of both Haraldr and Sveinn, such a reaction is employed. Thietmar does not seem to understand it and his own opinion is perhaps a result of the lack of acquaintance with the concept of *nið*.

To conclude, it seems very probable that stories of this kind, in a form of *niðvísur*, distributed as insulting rumours, were used during the rebellion against Haraldr Gormsson and the Swedish attack on Denmark in 991/994 as an additional but spectacular tool of propaganda. Rapid and perhaps unexpected downfalls of both monarchs only stimulated the rise and distribution of such stories, especially as their situation meant a complete lack of means to react properly. The latter element is even more striking when confronted with the motive of a seemingly proper reaction that only led to a bitter end. The ambiguity of the written sources contributes to our rather limited knowledge of the circumstances and the course of both events. Perhaps the stories in question could be treated as an intriguing and exclusive insight into the political encounters in the late-tenth century Denmark. Paradoxically, the authors of those rumours could not have even dreamed of such long and spectacular careers of their accounts as the later narratives, especially the *Jómsvíkinga saga*, indicate.

Between History and Propaganda: Examining the Royal and Military Attributes of Knútr inn ríki in "Liðsmannaflokkr"

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It cannot be denied that one of the best documented royal lives in early medieval Europe is the astonishingly dynamic and efficacious career of Knútr inn ríki (ca. 995–1035), the ruler of England (1016–1035), Denmark (1018–1035) and Norway (1028–1035). The son of Sveinn tjúguskegg appears in a great number of texts that came to be written over the course of the first half of the eleventh century, including, amongst others, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, Osbern of Canterbury's *Translatio Sancti Ælfegi*, and numerous skaldic poems composed during the period of almost twenty years that Knútr spent on the throne of England. Despite the fact that many of them were evidently produced to boost the king's image, they do constitute valuable sources of information, both in terms of their historical validity and of their rather manifestly propagandistic style, particularly with regard to the poetic works of the skalds.[1] Behind these roughly contemporaneous records, however, there always lurks the intriguing duality of Knútr's royal imagery, namely that of, on the one hand, an unrelenting Viking leader who is known to have raided England from at least 1013 and, on the other, a near-exemplary Christian ruler who, following his coronation as king of England in 1017, is reported to have founded a number of churches[2] and, in 1027, travelled to Rome to meet Pope John XIX.

Perhaps some of the most famous and most often discussed of all the poetic works dealing with Knútr's conquest and ensuing reign in England

[1] According to *Skáldatal*, Knútr employed in his service no fewer than eight skalds: Sighvatr skáld, Óttarr svarti, Þórarinn loftunga, Hallvarðr Háreksblesi, Bersi Torfuson, Steinn Skaftason, Arnórr jarlaskáld, and Óðarkeftr. See J. Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką. Rozgrywki polityczne w Skandynawii XI wieku w świetle poezji ówczesnych skaldów* (Katowice 2016), 72–78.

[2] M. K. Lawson, *Cnut: England's Viking King* (Stroud 2011), 139–47. Knútr's well-known generosity to the Church (whether it was religiously- or politically-motivated is, of course, a matter of further debate) was so great that his poets sometimes called it "destroying treasure." See M. Trow, *Cnut. Emperor of the North* (Stroud 2005), 128.

are Þórarinn loftunga's "Tøgdrápa" ("Journey Poem")[3] and the three so-called "Knútsdrápur" ("Poems about Knútr") attributed to Sigvatr Þórðarson, Óttarr svarti, and Hallvarðr háreksblesi, and surviving in the compositions of later saga-writers. Just as interesting is the anonymous poem known as the "Liðsmannaflokkr" ("Poem about the Household Troops"), which came to be preserved in considerably later, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century, compilations: *Óláfs saga helga*, *Flateyarbók* and, in a somewhat shorter form, in *Knýtlinga saga* (mid-thirteenth century). Much of its modern appeal derives perhaps as much from the literary and historical value of the poem as from the fact that the work cannot be so easily classified or labelled. There is discordance, for instance, over its function and the audience to which the anonymous skald addressed his *flokkr*. Many scholars, such as Russell G. Poole,[4] think of "Liðsmannaflokkr" primarily (though not exclusively) in terms of its narrative structure and the point-of-view observations. Others, such as Matthew Townend[5] and Roberta Frank[6] consider it mainly in terms of a praise poem, a panegyric composed to celebrate the increasing prowess of the young ruler. Yet another interesting observation is offered by Jakub Morawiec who, keeping with the line of argument proposed by Russell G. Poole,[7] maintains that "Liðsmannaflokkr" was perhaps originally thought of as some sort of an apology (though, obviously, not an apology in the strict sense of that word) of the twenty-one-year-old Knútr in his corresponding "confrontation" with the much more experienced (and side-changing) military leader in the person of Þorkell hái,[8] who at the time of the 1015–1016 invasion would have been noticeably older than the future monarch.[9] Indeed, the stanzas relating to the younger man's military

[3] Unfortunately only two lines survive of the "Hǫfuðlausn" ("Head Ransom"), Þórarinn's other poem that focuses on Knútr.

[4] R. G. Poole, *Viking Poems on War and Peace. A Study in Skaldic Narrative* (Toronto 1991), 108–9.

[5] M. Townend, "Contextualising the Knútsdrápur: Skaldic Praise-Poetry at the Court of Cnut," in: G. Barnes and M. Clunies Ross (eds.), *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society. Proceedings of the 11th International Saga Conference* (Sydney 2000), 512.

[6] R. Frank, "King Knut in the Verse of His Skalds," in: A. R. Rumble (ed.), *The Reign of Cnut, King of England, Denmark and Norway* (Leicester 1999), 111.

[7] R. G. Poole, *Viking Poems*, 106–7.

[8] J. Morawiec, "Anonimowy poemat Liðsmannaflokkr i problem jego odbiorcy. Ślad pobytu córki Mieszka I, matki Knuta Wielkiego, w Anglii?," *Studia Źródłoznawcze*, 47 (2010), 18–19.

[9] In the *Jómsvíkinga saga*, Þorkell hái is listed amongst the participants of the naval battle of Hjǫrungavágr (ca. 986). If such had really been the case, he would have had to be around fifty at the time when Knútr laid siege(s) to London in 1016. It should, however, be noted that the *Jómsvíkinga saga* is not known to be a particularly reliable source and that his presence there is not otherwise confirmed. Nonetheless, judging by the high military status he certainly enjoyed in the campaigns of the early 1010s and the fact that he is also reported to have been active in England since at least 1009 (when Knútr was only in his mid-teens), it is almost certain that Þorkell was at least a decade or two older than his poetic "rival" in "Liðsmannaflokkr."

endeavours not only come second (5–10), and so, as if deliberately in reaction to Þorkell's own exploits (3–5), but they are also more than twice as numerous, which could possibly suggest that it was Knútr, rather than his veteran ally, that the poet had specifically in mind when composing his *flokkr*.[10]

There could be little (if any) doubt, however, that the events alluded to in the poem relate to the series of Danish campaigns in England between 1009 and 1016, in particular the still unspecified battle on some mysterious *heiðr* (4.5) "heath, moor," sometimes identified with Ringmere Heath in southern England[11] (stanzas 3–5), and the 1016 siege(s) of London[12] (stanzas 5–10). As has been observed, in the first of the two confrontations, the terror in England is brought about by *Þorkels liðar* (4.2) "Þorkell's troops," who, notwithstanding the *vápna skúrir* (4.7) "showers of weapons," swiftly managed to *br*[*egða*] *ara hlýra fǫstu* (5.1–4) "break the fast of the eagle's brother [raven]." The second major narrative thread of "Liðsmannaflokkr" shifts the focus to the son of Sveinn tjúguskegg who does not waste his time to match, or even outdo, Þorkell's exploits during the well-conducted although ultimately ineffective siege(s) of London.

Whether the two narrative threads of "Liðsmannaflokkr" were indeed originally thought of as being in any way complimentary is now obviously impossible to determine with absolute or even tolerable certainty. Nearly a century ago, Finnur Jónsson suggested that they were once two separate *flokkur*, each dealing with its respective protagonist, Þorkell and Knútr.[13] This somewhat controversial view, however, is now generally dismissed by modern scholarship.[14] After all, if such had really been the case, the assumed compiler would have had to make some vital alterations, stylistic as well as thematic, by dint of which the indisputable thematic parallelisms that exist between stanzas 3–5 (relating to Þorkell's exploits) and 5–10 (dealing with Knútr) could become easily discernible, even to the modern reader with only passing knowledge of skaldic poetry.

What is interesting, though, is that each of the two main threads of "Liðsmannaflokkr" contains a range of culturally-determined features which not

[10] On the other hand, though, we cannot rule out the possibility that the poem had originally been longer and that some of its stanzas were later removed to further boost Knut's military repute. See J. Morawiec, "Anonimowy poemat Liðsmannaflokkr," 18. In any case, though, the theory that, in its present form, "Liðsmannaflokkr" was meant to be a skaldic panegyric on the young monarch is rather hard to be contested.

[11] K. Briggs, "The Battle-site and Place-name Ringmere," *Notes and Queries*, 58 (4), (2011), 491–92; P. Marren, *Battles of the Dark Ages* (Barnsley 2006), 166–68.

[12] J. Morawiec, *Knut Wielki. Król Anglii, Danii i Norwegii (ok. 995–1035)* (Kraków 2013), 118–19.

[13] R. G. Poole, *Viking Poems*, 93.

[14] J. Morawiec, "'Liðsmannaflokkr': The Question of Its Poetical Function and the Audience of the Poem," in: L. P. Słupecki and J. Morawiec (eds.), *Between Paganism and Christianity in the North* (Rzeszów 2009), 95.

only testify to the idiomatic creativity of its author, but also exemplify some of the most substantial aspects of royal authority and ideology in early medieval England and Scandinavia. Their descriptive properties are, for the most part, highly conventional, drawing extensively on the immensely rich canon of North Germanic myths and legends (of which Old Norse poets are known to have made regular use in their craft). However, even this ostensibly fossilised stratum of lexical constraints might in effect reveal some genuinely historical elements (or at least their not-too-distant resonances) which the anonymous poet wished to accentuate (perhaps in a somewhat propagandistic manner) in his manifestly laudable depiction of the king.

Bearing that in mind, we shall now try to examine the poem's lexical content in search of those features which, exploiting the virtually inexhaustible mine of skaldic wealth, pertain to some of the most characteristic, and oft-referred-to, attributes of regal (or otherwise highborn) power in the early medieval world, namely, the leader's longing for recognition, effectiveness of his own military exploits and sagacity on the field of battle, all of which subsequently come to be reflected in the king's generosity, providing his men with the near-proverbial golden rings, horses and weapons of all kind. As has been observed, the preliminary assumptions here are similar with those of Russel G. Poole[15] and Jakub Morawiec,[16] namely, that the poet intended to confront Knútr's military accomplishments with the exemplary deeds of Þorkell or, in fact built the fame of the former upon the already well-established reputation of the latter.

We shall begin our investigation of the poem's propagandistic stratum with the author's focus on the protagonists' unquenchable thirst for fame, one of the most conventionalised and frequently used attributes, particularly in, though not exclusively, early medieval heroic literature, Germanic, Celtic or other. While it does not necessarily agree with the strictly conservative Christian world view – or, at least, not when the hero's eagerness to win (usually military) renown becomes an end in itself – it is vital, or, perhaps, even fundamental in the depiction of a successful ruler (or any kind of a noble-born hero) in the traditional Germanic mode.[17] Equally eager for worldly recognition are practically all of the greatest heroes of north-western Europe (and beyond): Beowulf,[18] Sigurd,[19]

[15] R. G. Poole, *Viking Poems*.

[16] J. Morawiec, "Anonimowy poemat Liðsmannaflokkr."

[17] B. Lapis, *Rex utilis. Kryteria oceny władców germańskich we wczesnym średniowieczu* (Poznań 1986), 52–53.

[18] Most famously, perhaps, the *Beowulf* poet calls his protagonist *lofgeornost* (3182) "most eager for fame."

[19] Even when he is trying to conceal his identity in the famous dialogue with Fáfnir, the son of Sigmund does not hesitate to call himself *gǫfugt* (*Vǫlsunga saga* ch. 18; "Fáfnismál" 2) "noble."

Roland,[20] and even, to a certain degree, the Saxonised incarnation of Christ and His apostolic retinue in *The Hêliand*.[21] Needless to say, the young, and therefore perhaps rather impulsive, son of Sveinn tjúguskegg is no exception. The adjective *sigrfíkinn* (8.5) "eager for victory" may not be entirely synonymous with the Old English expression *lofgearnost* (*Beowulf* 3182) "most eager for fame" or Old Norse *tilstýranda tírar* ("Plácitusdrápa" 15.7) "pursuer of renown," but it is evidently a variant (albeit a more cautious one) of the same literary tradition. The poetic Knútr, given the (near-) contemporality of his skaldic depiction in "Liðsmannaflokkr," is evidently to a certain degree a cultural construct of the anonymous poet. However, he is at the same time real enough not to seek unnecessary death in combat, even though his determination to seize London seems enormous and is visibly manifested in the future king's efforts to *snarla borgar karla* (8.6) "assault the city's garrison" and in this manner prove his claims to the throne of England. It is also significant to note that the anonymous author of "Liðsmannaflokkr" does not make Knútr, say, *hróðrfúss* "eager for praise." After all, his foremost objective is a clearly defined military triumph, not some elusive promise of eternal life amongst Odin's *einherjar*, and thus even his momentary lack of success (which the poet does not even allude to) cannot foreshadow the fact that it was no less than a victory that the young leader was after, storming the stone walls of *Lundúnum*.

That the twenty-one-year-old Knútr was genuinely determined in his military efforts in England is of course beyond any reasonable doubt. Had it not been for his enormous willpower and persistence, Sveinn's son would never have become king of England and, later, Denmark (1019) and Norway (1028). Being *sigrfíkinn*, Knútr thus seamlessly fits in the king/viking dichotomy which in some measure must have affected his subsequent image and legacy in the kingdom he won at the expense of Æthelred the Unready and Edmund Ironside.[22] In referring to him as a young hero who is eager for victory, therefore, the poet

[20] When he is implored by his closest friend Olivier to sound the horn, and thus call for help, Roland replies, *Jo fereie que fols! En dulce France en perdreie mun los* (*La Chanson de Roland*, 1053–4) "I would act like a fool! I would lose my good name in sweet France."

[21] Although neither Christ nor His disciples are ever explicitly referred to as being particularly eager for earthly renown, the Saxon poet often emphasises the significance of fame, as in the following passage, when we learn that people gathered around *mârion Crist* (*Hêliand* 1244) "famous Christ," because *is lof uuas sô uuîdo managun gemârid* (1247–8) "His fame was so widely spread."

[22] This seems to be perfectly accentuated in the frontispiece from the *Liber Vitae* (BL MS Stowe 944, f6r), in which Knútr is depicted, in the company of his wife Emma, as presenting a large altar cross to Hyde Abbey in Winchester. While the king's right hand is gently touching the said crucifix, the left one may be seen firmly holding the sword's hilt, thus reminding one that in the complex world of early medieval politics, kingdoms were conquered and held perhaps with just as much help from above as with the assistance of sheer military strength. For more information on the said frontispiece, see, for instance, Catherine E. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge 2004).

does not merely resort to a stock of formulaic expressions dictated by the strict requirements of the alliterative line – although *sigrfíkinn* (8.6) does alliterate with both *sækir* (8.6) and *snarla* (8.7) – that a dutiful skald would habitually use with reference to the monarch lavishly sponsoring his poetic efforts. He depicts the young ruler in the way that appears to fit in the rather consistent portrait that emerges from other written sources of the period and, doubtlessly, in the way that Knútr himself wished to be depicted.

Ultimately victorious or not, no military leader could ever hope for even a mere shadow of success without a large army of faithful and well-motivated warriors. This, in turn, would not be possible if the leader in question did not regularly provide for their needs – the basic as well as the higher ones – gradually building up a genuine emotional bond with his men. Not surprisingly, early medieval texts are abundant in the depictions of such generous rulers. In his "Eiríksdrápa" the eleventh-century lawspeaker Markús Skeggjason portrays Eiríkr góði (the Good) of Denmark (1095–1103) as a *hringvǫrpuðr* (32.4) "ring-thrower." Likewise, the anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet of "The Battle of Brunanburh" calls the English king Æthelstan (924–927) a *beorna beahgiefa* (2) "ring-giver to men," while the Saxon author of *The Hêliand*, perhaps a bit sarcastically, refers to Herod Antipas, the biblical Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, as a *bâggeþo* (2738) "ring-giver." Each of these epithets is obviously an example of the complex cultural construct which does not automatically have to serve as a faithful reflection of the historical reality. Instead, we should sometimes treat them as no more than metrically determined synonyms of the common substantives "king," "monarch," "ruler," etc., regardless of whether the sovereign in question was in point of fact lavish with his gifts or not.

There is of course always a possibility that the anonymous author of "Liðsmannaflokkr" did not have in mind any specific instances of Knútr's munificence during his military campaigns in England. However, given the fact that the poem was composed during Knútr's lifetime and, in all likelihood, at his own court, perhaps even after his consecration in London, it may be that the expression *elds Rennandi kennir* (7.7–8) "master/knower of the fire of the Rhône [i.e., gold]" was in the first place intended to please the sovereign, and so win his instantaneous gratitude objectively measured in certain material gifts and poetic reputation. In this way the poet might have been more inclined to focus on his own gain, which, nonetheless, even strengthens the argument that Knútr was indeed a generous ruler, one who did not spare his financial resources for both the service of the kingdom and his own personal reputation. His ultimate success in England, the fact that he regularly provided employment for no fewer than eight skalds and the well-documented lavish donations to the Church[23] clearly testify to the king's sagacity and foresight which helped him to build and maintain his Anglo-Scandinavian empire.

[23] See footnote 2.

Another crucial feature which reinforces Knútr's royal image in "Liðsmannaflokkr" is the fact that a similar expression is used in connection with his poetic "rival" Þorkell háfi. In the apparently ironic remark that a certain nameless warrior who does not seem to be in a hurry to sail to England and partake in the conquest whose ultimate reward is to be his share in the proverbial *glóða Rinar* (3.7) "embers of the Rhine [i.e., gold]" the poet actually says much about the riches that are believed to await the warriors across the North Sea and, somewhat indirectly, about the munificence of Knútr. It may seem to be a little cryptic at first, but leaving aside the dilemmas of the sluggish combatant (3.1–4), one can observe that, despite all the evident perils, the warriors do indeed have a very good (financial) reason to go and fight overseas. In this way, the aforesaid remark alluding to the largesse of Knútr, who is the *kennir* (7.8) "master/knower" of the treasure, a remark which also involves the traditional poetic image of the famous gold of the Rhône (or, rather, the Rhine), is strengthened by the fact that the revenue provided for his troops by the son of Sveinn tjúguskegg is, one can assume, in no way worse than that which could, at least potentially, be attained by Knútr's ally and subordinate Þorkell háfi.[24]

Another distinctive motif recurrently found in early Germanic verse is the appearance of the "beasts of battle"[25] – namely, the eagle, the raven, and the wolf (in various combinations and numbers) – who, in the immediate aftermath of some ferocious military campaign, regularly take part in gory feasts on the corpses of those who happened to fall in combat. Setting aside their obvious mythological connections (i.e., Odin's pet ravens Huginn and Muninn and wolves Geri and Freki), the three scavengers regularly appear in all sorts of battle poems, often as figurative determiners of the valiant deeds of some hero, historical as well as legendary. In this way, successful combatants may, for instance, be referred to as the *eyðendr arnar hungrs* ("Erlingsdrápa" 1.4–5) "destroyers of the eagle's hunger." Analogically, the bodies of the fallen warriors could be known as *verðr hrafns* ("Ingadrápa" 1.4) "raven's food," *verðr ulfs* ("Lausavísur" 2a.2) "wolf's food" or *ara barr* ("Sexstefja" 29.1–2) "eagle's barley." Similar expressions may in fact be found in the extant works of North

[24] It is worth noticing that of the two men, only Knútr – the *elds Rennandi kennir* (7.7–8) "master/knower of the fire of the Rhône" – is more or less directly referred to as being generous. His poetic "rival" Þorkell is, of course, mentioned in connection with the *Rínar glóða* (3.7) "embers of the Rhine," yet he is only depicted there as a pursuer, not distributor of the loot which, at the time of his preparations for the expedition, is, nonetheless, in England. Perhaps, as Jakub Morawiec observes, his duty as a jarl is, first and foremost, to lead his men in combat, while the role of a generous lord could only be assigned to the king. J. Morawiec, *Między poezją a polityką*, 418.

[25] The term itself was originally used by Francis P. Maguon Jr. in his article "The Theme of Beasts of Battle" published in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 56/1955. He was not, however, the first person to actually consider the three animals as a literary type-scene, as three years earlier, C. M. Bowra examined them in his book *The Heroic Poetry* (467).

as well as West Germanic poets, with numerous lexical variations, but usually to the same effect, that is, to intensify the sense of impending doom and accentuate the achievements of those who provide fodder for the sinister trio.

Needless to say, the abovementioned "beasts of battle" could not abstain from the corpses of the English warriors during the campaigns of 1009–1016. In fact, the bodies of the fallen seem to have been easily available and in plenty wherever the troops of Þorkell and Knútr fared. The first of the two leaders is said to command his forces with a motivating, visible presence, himself promptly *br*[*ugðið*] *ara hlýra fǫstu* (5.1–4) "breaking the fast of the eagle's brother [i.e., the raven]." The latter does not in the least fall behind, making sure that, as a result of the valiant deeds of his men, *sk*[*uli*] *Hanga má* [*ekki*] *hungra* (9.3) "the raven should not go hungry" from the battlefield. Here again, the military efforts of Þorkel's troops are matched or perhaps even surpassed – breaking the fast does not automatically mean that the raven should not remain hungry – by those of Knútr.

There is, however, an interesting aspect of Scandinavian warfare which might connote that the ominous birds are not merely some colouristic element in the poet's/poets' stock and trade. The anonymous author of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* reports that during the battle of Ashington (18 October 1016) Knútr's men bore a totemic flag usually referred to as the raven banner (ON *hrafnsmerki*):

> Enimuero dum esset simplissimo candidissimoque intextum serico, nulliusque figurae in eo inserta esset [i]mago, tempore belli semper in eo uidebatur coruus ac si intextus, in uictoria suorum quasi hians ore excutiensque alas, instabilisque pedibus, et suis deuictis quietissimus totoque corpore demissus. (II.9)
>
> It was woven of the plainest and whitest silk, and the representation of no figure was inserted into it, in time of war a raven was always seen as if embroidered on it, in the hour of its owners' victory opening its beak, flapping its wings, and restive on its feet, but very subdued and drooping with its whole body when they were defeated.[26] (trans. Alistair Campbell)

However, if the aforesaid references to the two famished ravens were, in point of fact, meant to be some veiled allusions to the banners that were carried by the Danish troops of Þorkell and Knútr, they would be very veiled indeed. It is obviously impossible to verify their presence in "Liðsmannaflokkr" with any degree of certainty. On the other hand, though, had the anonymous skald ever considered making even the slightest mention of the raven banner(s), it is more than probable that, acting in accordance with the lexical requisites of

[26] A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (Cambridge 1949), 24.

his poetic craft, he would not be thinking of them in terms of what they really were. Instead, he would almost certainly be inclined to visualise them in some figurative way, for instance in the form of some starving corvids feasting on the corpses of fallen warriors.[27]

All in all, whether it be on account of the banner(s) or not, the military reputation of the two men, Þorkell and Knútr, is not to be denied and the appearance of the ravens only enhances their poetic images of successful leaders. The most crucial determinants of their effectiveness as military commanders, however, should be presented in terms of some roughly measurable outcomes of their activity on the battlefield. The historical achievements of Þorkell are, of course, very difficult to judge against those of Knútr. On the one hand, the former is known to have successfully raided England in 1009–1011,[28] repeatedly defeating the English, burning down Canterbury Cathedral, taking Archbishop Ælfheah hostage and negotiating ever-escalating tribute payments.[29] Notwithstanding his young age, the latter, at least in the poetic sense, appears to have kept pace with Þorkell's exploits. After all, following more than a year-long campaign, during which he often met with fierce resistance led by Edmund Ironside,[30] the son of Sveinn tjúguskegg actually managed to secure his hold of England and was ultimately crowned *Anglorum rex*.[31]

As has been observed, the author of "Liðsmannaflokkr" clearly gives his preference to the young, perhaps newly-crowned monarch, juxtaposing the martial efforts of Þorkell with those of his sovereign. It would be too much, though, to propose that the poet's sole idea in composing his verses was to weigh the military achievements of the latter against the incontestable deeds of the former in an obviously futile attempt to determine which of the two men was more successful as a military leader. Instead, it appears that the stanzas relating to Þorkell's own exploits in England (3–5) were principally meant to provide a solid background for Knútr's own achievements. In other words, what the poet seems to be saying is that the more seasoned jarl is, on account of his years and experience, a highly competitive and thus efficient commander who is perfectly able to lead his men into battle, and, once in there, wreak terrible

[27] It is interesting to note that there is absolutely no mention of any wolves in "Liðsmannaflokkr" and the eagle is only referred to as a determiner of the "raven" kenning. However, while the "beasts of battle" are less likely to appear in isolation in the syntactically freer verses of the Anglo-Saxons, in the works of skaldic poets, where the use of vocabulary is far more dependent on the alliterative requirements of the metre, their reduction to merely one animal should not be in the least surprising.

[28] J. Morawiec, *Knut Wielki*, 67–83.

[29] In 1012, Þorkell is reported to have been paid 48,000 pounds of silver. S. Keynes, "The Vikings in England, c. 790–1016," in: P. Sawyer (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (Oxford 2001), 77.

[30] T. Bolton, *Cnut the Great* (New Haven: 2017), 53–91.

[31] S. E. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of St. Paul's, London* (Oxford 2004), 243.

havoc in the ranks of the opponents. Being at least a full generation his junior, Þorkell's poetic "competitor" is, however, in no way inferior. Hence, the whole "rivalry," so vividly depicted in "Liðsmannaflokkr," may be summarised in the following way: Þorkell did/achieved/conquered X, and so did Knútr.

Indeed, apart from the above-mentioned "breaking the fast of the brother of the eagle" (5.2–4), which may and perhaps should be attributed to Þorkell's men, rather than the jarl himself, the older man is never explicitly eulogised for his individual accomplishments on the field of battle. It is, for instance, one of his men who *gjarn* [...] *arna randar skóð at rjóða* (3.2–3) "glad[ly] [albeit *síðarla* (3.2) "in no hurry"] rushes to redden the harm of the shield [i.e., the sword]." Otherwise, however, Þorkell's followers do not seem to the poet to *dvelja í folk at ganga* (4.2–4) "delay [their] going into the engagement [i.e., the battle]," as they *sǫusk eigi þeir sverða song* (4.3–4) "do no fear the song of swords [i.e., the battle]." In fact, having gone into battle, they are reported by an enigmatic *mær* (5.3) "maiden" to have left behind them a *valkǫstr* (5.4) "heap of the fallen," evidently to the delight of the aforesaid raven.

Needless to say, the poetic Knútr does not stay far behind. Indeed, whatever he does, the younger man seems to provide just as much (if not more) food for the famished corvid. We are told, for instance, that *opt glóa vǫpn á lopti* (8.2) "weapons often glint in the air" and that both the warriors' swords (9.4) and shields (10.1–2) are being continuously *roðin rjóðask* (9.4/10.2) *blóði* "reddened with blood," presumably (though, of course, not exclusively) that of their English adversaries. This, however, does not mean that the battle – usually interpreted as the Danes' attempt to sack London in the spring or summer of 1016 – actually turns out to be gory shambles with no real tactics but an overall chaos and mayhem. The future king is there, competently forming his men into ranks and, if need be, ordering them to wait (7.1). Knútr may be young of age, of course, however he is not needlessly impulsive and seems to know perfectly well what it takes to be an efficacious leader, even when he is confronted with an older, and thus naturally more experienced opponent such as Ulfcetel (6.1–8),[32] whom he is reported to have fought against in the battle of Ashington.[33]

As for Knútr's own military achievements on the field of battle, the poet appears to be even more effusive with his words of praise than in the case of Þorkell. As we have seen, the jarl's deeds are usually referred to in a roundabout way, that is, through the prism of his warriors' achievements, and even his – apparently – own efforts ("breaking the fast of the eagle's brother") should not be automatically attributed to the jarl, but, rather, to the martial accomplishments of his men. The poetic Knútr, however, seems to be always present in the very

[32] The poet aptly summarised this tactically restrained confrontation with a short but much revealing comment: *tveir hugir runnu* (6.8) "two minds were competing."

[33] J. Morawiec, *Knut Wielki*, 119.

heat of combat. He not only *bí*[*ður*] (7.1) "commands" his men and successfully (or so it seems) *held*[*ur*] (7.7) "holds" the enemy within the stone walls of London, he is there himself, the *hjalmtǫmum hilmi* (8.3) "helmet-wearing ruler" and the *sigrfíkinn* [...] *Dana vísi* (8.5–8) "eager for victory leader of the Danes." Of course, much as in the case of Þorkell, the historical Knútr did not necessarily have to be there, in the first line of the battle. Nevertheless, by means of his clever semantic constructions, constantly centred on the then future monarch, the anonymous poet managed to create a compelling portrait of the Viking king-to-be, which in terms of its propagandistic aesthetics happens to be perfectly consistent with the aforementioned frontispiece in the Liber Vitae[34] where, as has been observed, his virtues as a model Christian ruler (holding the crucifix) are skilfully merged with the more militarily-oriented side of his identity (hand on the sword's hilt). In other words, despite the leading, and thus undeniably crucial, role that Knútr must have inevitably played in the siege(s) of London, where he appears to have been solely responsible for orchestrating the Danes, the younger man (or, rather, his poetic persona) does not stray from the combat, but, as befits the son of Sveinn tjúguskegg, boldly rushes into the mêlée,[35] where his *blóðíss* (8.8) "blood-ice [i.e., sword]" might effectively *dyn*[*ja*] *á brezkum brynjum* (8.7) "clang against the British byrnies."

From what we have seen in the above selection of various epithets and other poetic figures regularly employed by the anonymous author of "Liðsmannaflokkr" (particularly, of course, in stanzas 5.5–10), there emerges a surprisingly rich, if somewhat tendentious, portrait of Knútr as a daring warrior and, above all, an efficacious ruler. By placing him side by side with Þorkell háfi (in what could perhaps be described as a "versified correspondence duel"), the poet proved to have a really good understanding of the young monarch's political needs, which, especially after Knútr's ascension to the throne of England, were evidently directed at strengthening and protecting his position in the kingdom he had only just taken by force.[36] By building on the rather universal attributes that characterised many a good ruler (at least, of course, in the early Middle Ages) – political recognition, effectiveness and sagacity on the battlefield as well as post-combat generosity – he managed to successfully weave his own

[34] See footnote 22.

[35] Before he manages to secure his rule *í fǫgrum* [...] *Lundúnum* (107–8) "in beautiful London," we see Knútr either fight or lead his men (or both) *á Tempsar síðu* (5.8) "on the bank of the Thames," *við díki* (7.4) "by the moat" and somewhere near the walls of the *borg* (8.6) "city."

[36] Once he had been crowned, Knútr is known to have set up a strong-arm regime (especially in the early years of his rule) which, on the one hand, eliminated some of those who may have been negatively disposed towards his sovereignty, but on the other, provoked those that were in some way allied with them. After the initial period of strife, however, the son of Sveinn tjúguskegg somehow managed to alleviate the tensions. See: W. Lipoński, *Narodziny cywilizacji Wysp Brytyjskich* (Poznań 2001), 376; T. Bolton, *Cnut the Great*, 92–128; M. K. Lawson, *Cnut: England's Viking King*, 81–110.

narrative, perhaps not in the main dissimilar from what actually happened during the Danish campaigns of 1009–1016.

It may be, I think, rather safely assumed that "Liðsmannaflokkr" did fulfil its role and was therefore met with the king's satisfaction. It must be observed, however, that despite its evidently propagandistic style and content, the poem is quite consistent with what we know about Knútr's military operations from other roughly contemporaneous sources. In this way, the image of the young monarch was neither completely falsified nor in any noticeable way distorted, but rather dexterously colourised by the anonymous skald who, we can imagine, was in all likelihood lavishly rewarded for his panegyrical efforts by the probably newly-crowned *Anglorum rex*. In this way, history was once again "written" by the victors, in this case, one of only two rulers in the long line of English monarchs – male as well as female – to have been dubbed with the much revealing (and obliging) sobriquet the Great.[37]

[37] The other one is, of course, the famed Alfred, king of Wessex from 871 until 899.

Coinage and Kingship in the Late Viking Age
The *Facing Bird* Pennies of King Óláfr Haraldsson

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King Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway (*r.* 1015/1016–1028/1030) is arguably the most famous Scandinavian king of the Middle Ages, and has received much attention in scholarship. The reason is partly that he consolidated the Christianization of Norway and introduced a Christian law code during his reign, but primarily that he became the patron saint of Norway. Shortly after he was killed at the Battle of Stiklestad in 1030, he was seen as a martyr and his cult soon began spreading outside the Norwegian kingdom. His position as a saint led to an extensive literature about him in hagiography, chronicles, and sagas. For example, in the large work *Heimskringla* from ca. 1230, the life of Óláfr Haraldsson fills the middle third of the work. In the fourteenth century, the tradition about St Óláfr grew, and even larger works were compiled.

Even though the sagas narrate his life in a more detailed way than most other Viking Age kings, there are few contemporary sources to his life and rulership in Norway. To reconstruct his career and his kingship in early eleventh century, we need to piece together different kinds of sources that are often fragmented and difficult to interpret, such as the skaldic poems, insular and continental chronicles and annals, and not least the archaeological material, as well as critically consider the later saga tradition.

Recent studies on the reign of Óláfr Haraldsson have discussed several aspects of his kingship, such as his political strategies and building alliances and networks, both within the Norwegian realm and in the context of European politics.[1] The scholars who study the Christianization process of Norway have discussed whether it was during his rule that the church liturgy, rituals, and legislation made a deeper impact on Norwegian society, or whether he represented just a phase of a longer process.[2] Another line of inquiries has analyzed the skaldic poetry about Óláfr. This poetry has been used to discuss

[1] For the recent discussion of the political culture during the reign of King Óláfr, see S. Bagge, "Olav den Hellige som norsk konge (1015–28)," *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol. 94 (2015), 555–87. For Olafr Haraldsson in the political situation of Europe, see T. Bolton, *Cnut the Great* (New Haven 2017).

[2] O. Tveito, "Wulfstan av York og norrøne homilier," in *Vår eldste bok. Skrift, miljø og biletbruk i den norske homilieboka*, ed. O. E. Haugen, Å. Ommundsen (Oslo 2016), 187–215.

his involvement in English politics, the religiosity and the ideology of the king's skalds and retinue as well as the commemoration of him shortly after his death.[3]

It is not my intention here to reconstruct all aspects of Óláfr's politics, alliances, and events during his reign as king of Norway, but more modestly to discuss his use of symbols and images in a turbulent time. This will be done by focusing on an often neglected, but contemporary source, that is, the coins that were issued during his reign. Although these are few in numbers and did not make a huge impact on the economy of the Norwegian kingdom in the early eleventh century, they still are a potential source to the choice of images that the king invested in and thus to a part of his royal ideology.

Of Óláfr's coins, the pennies with the motive of a *Facing Bird* on the reverse are of special interest.[4] This motif has been interpreted as being modelled on the Anglo-Saxon *Agnus Dei* pennies issued by Æthelred II in 1009. These pennies, with the Lamb of God on the obverse, and what has conventionally been interpreted as a dove, representing the Holy Spirit, on the reverse, have been linked to the penitential programme of Archbishop Wulfstan of York and King Æthelred II of England to counter the attack of a large Scandinavian army on England that Óláfr himself was a part of.

The question posed here is whether King Óláfr and his circle not only imitated the motif of the facing bird, but also translated it into a new context, and thus how this motif may have related to ideas of kingship, power, and identities.[5] My argument is that the *Facing Bird* pennies of King Óláfr Haraldsson's coins are one piece in the puzzle concerning the ideology of his troubled reign and in the transition of Norway into a European kingship.

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[3] Among recent studies of skaldic poetry on Óláfr that also include the discussion of previous scholarship are: R. Poole, "Cyningas sigefæste þurh God. Contributions from Anglo-Saxon England to Early Advocacy for Óláfr Haraldsson," in *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, ed. M. Fox and M. Sharma (Toronto 2012), 266–91; J. Jesch, "The Once and Future King. History and Memory in Sigvatr's Poetry on Óláfr Haraldsson," in *Along the Oral-Written Continuum. Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications*, ed. S. Ranković (Turnhout 2010), 103–17; E. M. Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration: Skaldic Verse and Social Memory, c. 890–1070* (Oxford 2015), 111–45. In addition, there are substantial comments in the first volume of the new edition of skaldic poetry, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, vol. I, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1*, ed. D. Whaley (Turnhout 2012).

[4] Some scholars refer to these pennies as the *Holy Dove* type, but the *Facing Bird* is more neutral and is used by B. Malmer, *The Anglo-Scandinavian Coinage c. 995–1020* (Stockholm 1997), 281.

[5] On analyzing the symbolic meanings of Viking Age coins in their social and political contexts in Scandinavia, see G. Williams, "Kingship, Christianity and Coinage. Monetary and Political Perspectives on Silver Economy in the Viking Age," in *Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, ed. J. Graham-Campbell and G. Williams (Walnut Creek 2007), 177–207; I. H Garipzanov, "Coins as Symbols of Early Medieval 'Staatlichkeit,'" in *Der frühmittelalterliche Staat – europäische Perspektiven*, ed. W. Pohl and V. Wieser (Wien 2009), 411–22.

Early Norwegian Coinage and the Puzzle of the *Facing Bird* Pennies

Norwegian coinage in a proper sense was developed during the reign of Haraldr harðráði in the 1050s and 1060s.[6] Before this, Óláfr Tryggvason (*r.* 995–1000), Óláfr Haraldsson and his son Magnús góði Óláfsson (Magus the Good, *r.* 1035–1047) all struck coins (although only Danish pennies of King Magnús are known). These early Norwegian coins were primarily inspired by the English coinage. The coins of Óláfr Tryggvason were modelled from the *Crux* type of Æthelred II, current in England from ca. 991 to ca. 997. The *Crux* pennies were replaced in England with the heavier *Long Cross* pennies, probably at Michaelmas (29 September) in 997. They would have been known in Norway from the summer of 998, but it is only the *Crux* type that was coined in Norway.[7] Óláfr Tryggvason stayed in England for several years in the early 990s. He left England for Norway in 995, and probably brought an Anglo-Saxon moneyer with him, as the name Godwine is found on his pennies. The same name appears on the pennies of Óláfr Skötkonung in Sweden and Sveinn tjúguskegg (Svein Forkbeard) in Denmark, and might be identified as the same moneyer. However, among Godwine's coins, it is the Norwegian pennies that are closest, both in terms of style and silver content, to the English prototype.[8]

During his five-year long reign, the coinage of Óláfr Tryggvason must have remained on a very small scale, as only three of his coins survive. They would have had very little impact on economy, even though the earliest towns in Norway, such as Trondheim and Oslo, are conventionally considered to have been in existence during his reign. Still, the means of payment in these small towns would have been weighed in silver or in other commodities. In comparison, the several hundred coins of the Swedish king Óláfr Skötkonung's mint in Sigtuna (*r.* ca. 995–1022) are supposed to have been a kind of receipt of toll paid when merchants arrived in Sigtuna, where foreign silver was changed into royal silver.[9]

There is little to suggest that the small coinage of Óláfr Haraldsson would have had the same function. This does not mean that coins were little known, as there were many foreign coins, mostly from England, present in the hoards from the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, but the royal coinage was not regarded as exclusive and connected to a monopoly. The importance of the

[6] S. Gullbekk, *Pengevesenets fremvekst og fall i Norge i middelalderen* (Copenhagen 2009), 29–41.

[7] K. Skaare, *Coins and Coinage in Viking-Age Norway* (Oslo 1976), 58–60.

[8] B. Malmer, "A Contribution to the Numismatic History of Norway during the Eleventh Century," in *Commentationes de nummis saeculorum IX–XI in Suecia repertis, I*, ed. N. L. Rasmussen and L.O. Lagerqvist, (Lund 1961), 223–376 (especially 229–40).

[9] J. Runer, "Den äldsta svenska myntningen – dess funktion och utveckling," *Situne Dei* 2006, 81–94.

coins of Óláfr Tryggvason would rather mean that his name was connected to a royal image and to Christian symbolism (the Cross on the reverse) that was distributed along with similar coins with the authority and images of other Scandinavian and European rulers. An image of the king in connection to Latin script was in itself a novelty in Norway. After the death of Óláfr Tryggvason, his successors, Sveinn and Eiríkr Hákonarson (*r.* 1000–1016), jarls of Hlaðir in Trøndelag, apparently showed no interest in coinage, despite their alliance and reliance on the Swedish and Danish kings who developed their coinage at the time. Possibly, the coinage was related to the title *rex*, and the jarls of Hlaðir did not aspire to that title.

The number of preserved coins struck for Óláfr Haraldsson is larger than for his predecessor Óláfr Tryggvason, but only amounts to eleven specimens. These pennies can be classified in three types, the *Long Cross*, the *Facing Bird*, and the *Pointed Helmet*.[10] Seven are of the *Long Cross* type, an imitation of those coined by Æthelred II in 997–1003. These have been dated to the period 1017–1025 by Kolbjørn Skaare. Only two pennies of the *Facing Bird* type are preserved, being identified as imitations of the reverse of the *Agnus Dei* pennies issued by Æthelred II in 1009. On the obverse, King Óláf's pennies had a profile with a crown and a scepter, not the Lamb of God as on Æthelred II's coins. Skaare tentatively dated this type to 1019–1028. The heavier *Pointed Helmet* type also consists of two specimens, and Skaare suggested that these would be dated to the later phase of Óláf's reign, ca. 1023–1028. In England, the *Pointed Helmet*-coins were issued by Knútr inn ríki (Cnut the Great) in 1023–1029, but the Norwegian type of King Óláfr seems closer to the *Pointed Helmet* on the obverse of the type issued by Æthelred II in 1015.[11]

These early Norwegian pennies have seldom been regarded as more than imitations of foreign coinage. However, the Norwegian numismatist Kolbjørn Skaare speculated that the *Pointed Helmet* pennies of Óláfr Haraldsson might have been a sort of counter-coins against the attempts of Knútr inn ríki to bribe Norwegian magnates in the late 1020s, when Knútr issued the *Pointed Helmet* pennies that are found in abundance in several hoards from this time.[12]

The *Facing Bird* type is perhaps even more striking. The bird facing the viewer in an upward position on the reverse is conventionally interpreted as the dove, representing the Holy Spirit. On Óláfr's *Facing Bird* pennies, the bird is on the reverse as on the Anglo-Saxon type, but the obverse has a portrait of a king with a scepter instead of the Lamb of God. The English prototype,

[10] K. Skaare, *Coins and Coinage*, 60–64. See also K. Skaare, "Olav den helliges utmyntning," in *I forskningens lys. 32 artikler om norsk forskning i går, i dag, i morgen*, ed. M. S. Mortensen (Oslo 1974), 441–54.

[11] Skaare, *Coins and Coinage*, 62–63.

[12] K. Skaare, *Norges mynthistorie. Mynter og utmyntning i 1000 år. Pengesedler i 300 år*. *Numismatikk i Norge*, vol. I (Oslo 1995), 44.

known as the *Agnus Dei* pennies, can be linked to very special circumstances. Simon Keynes has argued that the *Agnus Dei* pennies in England were issued in very specific political and religious circumstances in 1009.[13] In this year, a large Scandinavian army under the leadership of Þorkell háfi (Thorkell the tall) attacked England. Keynes connects the coinage to the set of laws known as *VII Æthelred*. These were written by Archbishop Wulfstan of York, but issued in the name of King Æthelred II the same year as the attack. *VII Æthelred* prescribes a detailed program of penitential rituals, combining fasting, prayer, alms-giving and processions.[14] The idea was that the hostile army was an instrument of God's punishment of the English for their sins. Related to this notion of the great army from Scandinavia as the whip of God that calls for the penance of the English is found in Wulfstan's famous *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, a sermon Wulfstan seems to have composed in 1009 and revised in 1014 when Sveinn tjúguskegg attacked England. When Æthelred II later issued pennies with a pointed helmet on, this would be related to a more military take on the Scandinavian threat.

Keynes's arguments have been met with some opposition. David Woods opposes the idea that the reverse of the *Agnus Dei* pennies of Æthelred II depicts the Holy Spirit. He argues that the bird, lacking a clear nimbus, instead alludes to the prophecy in Isaiah XL.1–2. Here, the people of God, once receiving the forgiveness of God will "take wings as eagles" and route the enemy army.[15] An eagle would be a more familiar bird than the dove, and would appeal more to an audience that were getting ready for an armed defense of the land against the attackers.

A third type of symbolism has been suggested by Ildar Garipzanov. He argues that the Christian imagery on foreign coins was adapted to local contexts, in order to communicate political and religious messages significant for Scandinavian rulers. He interprets the facing bird on Scandinavian coins as a dove, and relates it to the *filioque* controversy concerning whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as the Father.[16] This would be especially relevant for Scandinavia, where eastern influences were strong in the eleventh century.

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[13] S. Keynes, "An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12," *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 36 (2007), 151–220. See also S. Keynes and R. Naismith, "The Agnus Dei Pennies of King Æthelred the Unready," *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 40 (2011), 175–223.

[14] On the two versions of *VII Æthelred*, see A. Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York* (Manchester 2015), 186–191.

[15] D. Woods, "The Agnus Dei Penny of King Æthelred II: A Call to Hope in the Lord (Isaiah XL)?," *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 42 (2013), 299–309.

[16] I. Garipzanov, "Religious Symbols on Early Christian Scandinavian Coins (c. 995–1000) From Imitation to Adaptation," *Viator*, vol. 42 (2011), 35–54 (36–37).

Such uses of the images of *Agnus Dei* and the *Holy Dove* seem to have remained rare, although not unique, in early eleventh-century Scandinavia. Some of the earliest imitations of the *Agnus Dei* type were dated to the 1020s by Brita Malmer, probably issued either at Lund or Sigtuna. King Anund Jacob of Sweden, King Óláfr Haraldsson's brother-in-law, issued coins with the text ANGNVS DEI ANO.[17] A peculiar trait of the *Agnus Dei* pennies found in Scandinavia, especially in Sweden, is that many of them are pierced and have a loop and some have (parts of) a ring attached. On the other hand, they have never been found in burials. This would indicate that they had a special importance and were carried as ornaments by their owners because of their religious motifs.[18] Several of the Anglo-Saxon coins are pierced and looped in Scandinavia for this purpose, although they might have been used as payment by other owners and in other contexts.[19] Different kinds of birds are also found on crosses, runestones, church portals, as well as on a fibula from the early eleventh century. Magnús góði issued a coin in Lund with a bird. It was, however, pictured from the side and not in an upward position as the two pennies of his father.[20]

Thus the studies conducted so far offer several possibilities to explain why King Óláfr Haraldsson used the image of a bird on his pennies in religious and political communication. Of course, these were not separate spheres in the early eleventh century. Thus, we need to search deeper both into the state of

[17] B. Malmer, "A Note on the Coinage of Sigtuna at the Time of Anund Jacob," in *Festskrift till Lars O. Lagerqvist*, ed. U. Ehrensvärd (Stockholm 1989), 259–62; B. Malmer, *The Anglo-Scandinavian Coinage*, 229, 430–31, 546–47; B. Malmer, *Den svenska mynthistorien. Vikingatiden ca. 995–1030* (Stockholm 2010), 60.

[18] K. Jonsson, "Möre i ett numismatiskt perspektiv," in *Möres kristnande*, ed. H. Williams (Uppsala 1993), 117–44 (at p. 128). See also S. Keynes and R. Naismith, *The* Agnus Dei *pennies*, 218–23.

[19] E. Screen, "Currency Conversion. Coins, Christianity and Norwegian Society in the Late Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," in *Early Medieval Monetary History. Studies in Memory of Mark Blackburn*, ed. R. Naismith, M. Allen, and E. Screen (Farnham 2014), 349–76. The only Anglo-Saxon *Agnus Dei* coin in Norwegian collections is not pierced or looped, see E. Screen, *Currency Conversion*, Table 15.12.

[20] A. Pedersen, "Rovfugle eller duer. Fugleformede fibler fra den tidlige middelalder," *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 1999 (2001), 19–66. Also relevant here is the bird-shaped sword-chapes. Especially some late tenth-century types have a similar shape as the *Facing Bird* pennies of Óláfr Haraldsson, see F. Androshchuk, *Viking Swords. Swords and Social Aspects of Weaponry in Viking Age Societies* (Stockholm 2014), 116–24; M. Strömberg, "Schwertortbänder mit Vogelmotiven," *Meddelanden från Lunds universitets historiska muséum* 1951, 99–121; C. Hedenstierna-Jonson, "Rus,' Varangians and Birka Warriors," in *The Martial Society. Aspects of Warriors, Fortifications and Social Change in Scandinavia*, ed. L. Holmquist Olausson and M. Olausson (Stockholm 2009), 159–78. Hedenstierna-Jonson argues that the symbol of the falcon, as found on sword-chapes, keys and mounts in Birka, had connections to the Rurikid family emblems, but was important to shape a communal identity within a heterogeneous group of warriors.

Christianity and kingship at the time of Óláfr Haraldsson, as well as into the notions of otherness in relation to royal power and identity.

The Christianization of Norway and the Construction of Heathenism

Do the *Facing Bird* pennies of Óláfr point to a similar usage of the theological and political ideology as those of the *Agnus Dei* type of Æthelred II in 1009? If so, were they a part of the conceptualization of the king's enemies as heathen in the manner resembling Wulfstan of York's description of the great Scandinavian army attacking Æthelred II in 1009?

The location where *Facing Bird* pennies were found, might serve as a clue to their symbolic function. The two specimens of the *Facing Bird* type were both found in 1924 in the same hoard found under the floor of the church at Stein in Ringerike, close to Tyrifjorden around fifty kilometers northwest of Oslo (photo 1). They were part of a collection of coins consisting of fifty-five coins and some coin fragments. There were three pennies of Óláfr Haraldsson; besides the two mentioned there was a *Pointed Helmet* struck on a square flan penny. There were also eighteen Anglo-Saxon coins, three of Æthelred II (one *Short Cross* and two of the *Long Cross* type) and fifteen of Knútr inn ríki, and finally thirty-three German coins (fifteen of Otto III, five of Henry II, one of Bishop Heimo of Verdun, one of Duke Bernard I of Saxony, one of Bishop Adalbert II of Basel, and the rest unidentified).[21] Most likely, based on the dating of the coins, the hoard at Stein was deposited in the latter half of the 1020s. At that time, there would probably be a wooden church at the farm, as the stone church at Stein was built in the twelfth century. The two *Facing Bird*



Photo 1. An image of one of the Facing Bird pennies (adverse and reverse) of Óláfr Haraldsson, found at Stein farm in Ringerike (Coin Cabinet, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo/Lill-Ann Chepston-Lusty)

[21] M. Harsson, *Stein – en storgård på Ringerike* (Hole 2000), 87–100 (with illustrations of many of the coins in the hoard); Skaare, *Olav den helliges utmyntning*, 444–46.

pennies had a high content of silver, in line of the English coinage at the time, but seem not to have been in wide circulation as payment. Furthermore, there are no signs of the marks left by testing the silver content, as is often found on coins in Norway until the mid-eleventh century. The hoard might have belonged to one of Óláfr's men who ran the royal farm of Stein. At the time of Óláfr's exile, the coins may have been hidden from the supporters of Knútr inn ríki. The dating of the hoard fits well with the time when Óláfr had to go in exile in 1028 when the king of England and Denmark gained control of Norway.[22]

The English *Agnus Dei* pennies of 1009 were part of a programme against Scandinavians and were connected to the support of God against what were considered heathen attackers and heathen practices among the English. It does not seem likely that Knútr was regarded as heathen by Óláfr Haraldsson and his followers in the 1020s, but a plausible hypothesis is that it was directed against heathens and heathen practices within Norway. Then the Stein farm could be interpreted as situated on the borderline between the Christianized coastal area in southern Norway and the more traditional inner districts of the kingdom.

The Stein farm in Ringerike was probably the farm of Óláfr's step-father Sigurðr Syr.[23] The sagas provide us with more information about the childhood of Óláfr than any other Norwegian king (although not naming the farm in Ringerike where he grew up). This should be seen in relation to the hagiographical interest in his character and how he was destined to be king and martyr. According to the kings' sagas, he was the son of the petty king Haraldr grenski Gudrøðarson (Harald the Greenlander), named after the district Grenland at the southwestern part of the region Viken (roughly the area around the Oslo Fjord). Haraldr was, again according to the sagas, a great-grandson of Haraldr hárfagri (Harald Fairhair), who unified the Norwegian realm under his rule at the end of the ninth century. The mother of Óláfr was Ásta, daughter of Guðbrand kúla, a local chieftain in Ringerike. Haraldr grenski was killed before Óláfr was born, allegedly during his courtship of the infamous Sigrid the Haughty. After giving birth to Óláfr, Ásta moved to her father in Ringerike and married the chieftain Sigurðr Syr, where Óláfr then spent his childhood. King Óláfr Tryggvason (*r.* 995–1000) visited him there when he was a few years old and had the young namesake baptized. Then, when he was twelve years old, he was equipped with a ship and a crew and sailed abroad along with his foster-father, Rane.

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[22] Skaare, *Olav den helliges utmyntning*, 444; Harsson, *Stein*, 99 (citing an unpublished report by T. Vigerust).

[23] The sagas does not name the farm of Óláfr's foster-father Sigurðr Syr. By the sixteenth century, the farm Bønsnes in Hole, a few kilometers from Stein, was associated with either the birthplace of Óláfr or the farm of his foster-father. However, the medieval sources remain silent concerning the specific farm Óláfr lived as a child, but Stein seems more likely as this was a royal farm later on, see M. Harsson, *Stein*, 47–49.

The hagiographical traits of Óláfr's childhood in the sagas have been pointed out in earlier scholarship. The saintly king himself appears a Christ-like figure, while Óláfr Tryggvason's baptism of the young Óláfr is associated to John the Baptist and connects the two kings in the Christianization of the Norwegian kingdom. There has also been raised considerable doubt whether the stories concerning Haraldr grenski are reliable at all. More importantly, Claus Krag has argued that Haraldr, as thus his son Óláfr, hardly descended from Haraldr hárfagri, nor that they legitimized their claim for rulership by remembering him as their ancestor.[24]

Whether Haraldr grenski really was a descendant of Haraldr hárfagri or not, there were many contestants for the realm of Norway in the late tenth century. Haraldr gráfeldr (Harald Greycloak) and his brothers, the sons of Eiríkr blóðøx (Eirik Bloodaxe) had dominated the political scene until around 970, after having killed Hákon góði (Håkon the Good), Eiríkr's half-brother, at Fitjar in 961, and also the father of Haraldr grenski. In the 970s and 980s, Hákon Sigurðarson, jarl of Hlaðir, built a strong power base in Trøndelag and Western Norway, at first in alliance with the Danish king Haraldr Gormsson (Harald Bluetooth), but later in opposition to the Danish rule. Jarl Hákon is linked to a pagan revival in Trøndelag, witnessed by his many skalds.

Although Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson defended his power against the Danish forces and the Jomsvikings at the Battle of Hjørungavåg in 986, the Danish kings seem to have had ambitions to control the Oslo Fjord area. According to the kings' sagas, Haraldr grenski made an allegiance to Haraldr Gormsson and received Viken from him. When Jarl Hákon was killed in 995 and Óláfr Tryggvason gained power in Trøndelag, Haraldr grenski seems to have reacted quickly. Although we should be skeptical about the details in the story in the kings' sagas concerning his failed bridal quest for Sigrid the Haughty, his relations to Sweden are not that unlikely. Archaeological evidence shows strong connections with Sweden during the Viking Age, especially in northern Vestfold and the inner Viken area.[25] It indicates that he sought an alliance there, possibly with the new ruler, Óláfr Skötkonung, who allegedly was the son of Sigrid and Eiríkr inn sigrsæli. As a reaction against Óláfr Tryggvason, such an alliance would have been promising, especially when both the Danish and Swedish kings allied with the sons of Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson, Eiríkr and Sveinn, against Óláfr.

If Ásta and Sigurðr Syr, Óláfr's mother and step-father, made allegiances to King Óláfr Tryggvason (even if the baptism of Óláfr Haraldsson was apocryphal), the Battle of Øresund in the year 1000, where the Danish-Swedish alliance

[24] C. Krag, "Norge som odel i Harald Hårfagres ætt," *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol. 68 (1989), 208–302; C. Krag, "Myten om Hårfagreættens 'odel,'" *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol. 81 (2002), 381–94. References to Óláfr being of the kin of Haraldr in skaldic poetry is interpreted by Krag as pointing to his father, Haraldr grenski not Haraldr hárfagri.

[25] B. Myhre, *Før Viken ble Norge. Borregravfeltet som religiøs og politisk arena* (Oslo 2015).

with the jarls of Hlaðir were victorious, could not have been advantageous for the career of the young son of Haraldr grenski. Jarl Eiríkr of Hlaðir married the daughter of King Sveinn of Denmark, while his brother Jarl Sveinn married Holmfrid, a sister of the Swedish king. In this situation, the young Óláfr would have had few prospects of becoming king. He would either just wait for the situation to change and wait for his opportunity, or otherwise try his luck abroad and get experience as a warrior and be prosperous in the service of a foreign ruler. For eight years, in the period from 1007–1015, Óláfr went abroad and was either in service of or encountered a range of different Christian rulers in northern Europe.[26]

There is scant knowledge of the rule of the jarls of Hlaðir in 1000–1016. It does not seem to have been based on a legitimation of power linked to Christianity, although the early towns, such as Trondheim and Oslo would have had churches, and the coastal areas of Viken would have been Christianized from the late tenth century. The political situation in Scandinavia after the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason was thus hardly a contest between heathen and Christian rulers. In *Heimskringla*, it is stated that the jarls, Sveinn and Eiríkr, allowed Norwegians to follow their own beliefs, even though they were baptized themselves. After his travels to England in the service of Knútr, Eiríkr, and later his son Hákon, appear to have adapted very well into the Christian society there.[27]

At the end of the tenth century, however, when the Danish kings Haraldr Gormsson and Sveinn tjúguskegg controlled the Viken area, the confrontation between traditional symbols of power and Christianity may have had greater significance. The most visible symbols were the burial mounds that indicate sites of power during the Viking Age. One of the large burials from the late tenth century, Gjermundsbu, is situated a short distance from the Stein farm at Ringerike, where Óláfr Haraldsson probably spent his early years. This burial is famous for the Viking Age helmet found in Scandinavia. The grave also contained the remains of a sword, an axe and a mail-coat. Although the notable warrior buried there died as a heathen a few decades before Óláfr was born, he would have been known to his mother, his foster-father Sigurðr Syr and perhaps also his father Haraldr grenski. On the Stein farm itself, there was an even larger mound, associated to Hálfdan svarti, the father of Haraldr hárfagri, in later saga tradition. Archaeological remains date the building of

[26] See O. A. Johnsen, *Olav Haraldssons ungdom indtil slaget ved Nesjar 25. mars 1016* (Kristiania 1916).

[27] *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson. Íslenzk fornrit 26 (Reykjavík 1941), 372. See also A. O. Johnsen, *Håkon jarl Eiriksson (998–1030). Nytt kildemateriale og nye synspunkter* (Oslo 1981); S. Keynes, "Cnut's Earls," in *The Reign of Cnut. King of England, Denmark and Norway*, ed. A. R. Rumble (Leicester 1994), 43–88.

the mound to the late fifth century, but it seems to have been reused during the Viking Age.

A recent analysis of the spades used at the breaking of the large mounds in Vestfold, at Oseberg and Gokstad, concludes that they most likely took place in the 970s, at the time Jarl Hákon of Hlaðir broke his alliance with Haraldr Gormsson. This might then be interpreted as a demonstrative use of force, as a new dynasty breaking down local, potent symbols of power in the region. This may also be a part of the Christianization of the region, linked to the ideas of the royal site of Jelling, where the mounds of the past and symbols of Christianity are interlinked.[28] It is also striking that there are very few archaeological remains in Vestfold, especially along the coastal area, in the late tenth century compared to the previous period. This may indicate deep social and cultural changes in the Viken area during the rule of Haraldr grenski who held the region on behalf of the Danish kings.

In the early eleventh century, Stein is often considered to have been at the border area between the area dominated by Christianity in the south, towards the Oslo Fjord area, and the inner region of eastern Norway, Oppland and Hedmark, and upper Setesdalen to the west of Ringerike, where traditional burials still were dominant. This is indicated by the find of spear-heads dated to the eleventh century in burials in the region north and east of Ringerike.[29] Even in the largely Christianized Oslo Fjord area, there were still burials in a traditional fashion during the reign of Óláfr Haraldsson.[30] The latest known traditional burial with grave goods, conventionally considered an indication of pre-Christian burial practice, is in Valle in Setesdalen, dated to the 1070s. The woman who was buried there had with her an axe, five coins, weights, a comb, beads, fittings for belts, and a horse harness.[31]

This does not necessarily mean, however, that she defined herself as a non-Christian, as there is evidence that also people who identified themselves as Christians were buried in a traditional way. The most famous example is perhaps the burials at Broby bro, north of Stockholm. The burials contained coins and items as expected in a pre-Christian burial, but the rune-stones erected over

[28] J. Bill and A. Daly, "The Plundering of the Ship Graves at Oseberg and Gokstad. An Example of Power Politics?," *Antiquity*, vol. 86 (2012), 808–24.

[29] B. Solberg, *Norwegian Spear-heads from the Merovingian and Viking Periods* (Bergen 1984), 128–29. See also B. Solberg, "From Paganism to Christianity in Norway – An Examination of Graves and Grave Finds," in *Nordic Middle Ages – Artefacts, Landscapes and Society. Essays in Honour of Ingvild Øye on her 70th Birthday*, ed. I. Baug, J. Larsen, and S. S. Mygland (Bergen 2015), 275–88.

[30] F.-A. Stylegar, "Vestfolds siste hedning fra Gipø?," *Njotarøy* (2005), 12–14.

[31] S. W. Nordeide, *The Viking Age as a Period of Religious Transformation. The Christianization of Norway from AD 560–1150 /1200* (Turnhout 2011), 172–77. See also J. H. Larsen, "Gravene og bosetningen," in *Spor i Setesdalsjord*, ed. L. Jansen, I. Paulsen, and N.O. Sundet (Tvedestrand 2014), 55–69.

the dead clearly show that they identified themselves as Christians, and one of the stones even mentions a pilgrimage to Rome and Greece.[32] Thus, in the eleventh century there could be a range of different Christian burial practices in Scandinavia.[33]

There has been some debate concerning the role of kings in the Christianization of Norway and the rest of Scandinavia. Some argue that kings such as Óláfr Tryggvason and especially Óláfr Haraldsson introduced more or less a revolution of ideas and practices during their reigns.[34] Others emphasize that Christianization was a process lasting over several centuries, where the royal influence was merely one among many factors.[35] This seems to be confirmed by the recent excavation of a burial at Langeid in Upper Setesdalen. A man was buried there, probably in the second quarter of the eleventh century, with a couple of coins (among them a coin of Æthelred II), an axe and a sword. The sword is decorated with many symbols, among them a hand that is similar to the one we find on the *First Hand* pennies of Æthelred II.[36] This grave might be seen in context with the rune-stone at Evje (ca. 60 km south of Langeid) that commemorates Bjór, son of Arnstein, who is said to have died during the campaigns of Knútr in England.[37] This rune-stone was erected too far away to help identify the person buried with the sword at Langeid, but they clearly lived at the same time and both were associated to England. Thus, it seems likely that both Bjór from Evje, who might have been part of Knútr's *lið* at the attack on England in 1015–1016 and the man buried at Langeid had met Knútr inn ríki, Þorkell háfi, and Óláfr Haraldsson. While the man at Langeid was buried in a traditional man-

[32] L. Andersson, *Jarlabankättens gravplats vid Broby bro* (Stockholm 1999); R. Edberg, "Spår efter en tidig Jerusalemsfärd," *Fornvännen*, vol. 101 (2006), 342–47.

[33] See also the discussion of the burial-ground in the hamlet of Bogla in Småland, southeast Sweden, in T. Artelius and A. Kristensson, "The Universal Container. Projections of Religious Meaning in a Viking Age Burial-Ground in northern Småland," in *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives. Origins, Changes, and Interactions*, ed. A. Andrén, K. Jennbert, and C. Raudvere (Lund 2006), 147–52, and the remarkable grave 4, perhaps of a *vǫlva* (sorceress), at Fyrkat, buried in association of the circular enclosure ('trelleborg') of King Haraldr Gormsson, see N. Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Uppsala 2002), 149–57.

[34] A recent supporter of the decisive impact of kingship in the Christianization of Norway is O. Tveito, "Olav den hellige – misjonær med 'jerntunge,'" *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol. 92 (2013), 359–83, S. W. Nordeide, *The Viking Age*, 308–9, with references to the debate.

[35] One of the recent studies arguing for this view is A. Winroth, *The Conversion of Scandinavia Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe* (Princeton 2011).

[36] K. Loftsgarden and C. C. Wenn, "Gravene ved Langeid. Foreløpige resultater fra en arkeologisk utgravning," *Nicolay*, vol. 117 (2012), 23–31.

[37] L. Jacobsen, *Evje-stenen og Alstad-stenen* (Oslo 1933); *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer, III*, ed. M. Olsen (Oslo 1954), 14–33.

ner, Bjór's father had most likely converted to Christianity, as he included a cross on the memorial rune-stone at Evje. He also added a short addition to the memorial text over his son that has been interpreted as 'God is one.' Although not necessarily a member of Arnstein and Bjór's family, the man buried at Langeid certainly had encountered Christianity and may have been part of Knútr's army, although he was buried in a traditional manner.

This indicates that in the early eleventh century, identity was not necessarily defined by Church organisation on the one hand, and non-Christian behaviour or practices on the other. During the reign of Óláfr Haraldsson, however, rulership became more concerned with loyalty to the king as a Christian ruler, defined in opposition to heathendom associated with disloyalty as well as non-sanctioned religious practices.[38] This tendency is indicated by the early Christian law sections of Norway.[39] According to the *Law of Borgarthing*, all infants who were found "not monstrous" should be baptised. By this act, the parents "lift them up from heathendom." Sigvatr Þórðarson echoed this phrase when King Óláfr Haraldsson held his daughter under water. Then Sigvat's daughter was "lifted home out of heathendom."[40] Failing to, or postponing, baptism would, on the other hand, make the father "heathen by his child."[41]

This statement concerns not only a religious demarcation, but also resembles closely the sentence of outlawry. In early Christian laws, outlawry meant to be exiled to a heathen land. This punishment was imposed on mothers who killed their infant children, people who ate dogs, cats or horses, men having incestuous relations, and those who initiated divorces. Despite being baptised, such people were confined to the spatial margins; to the land reigned by the Devil. Furthermore, those eating forbidden meat were known as sorcerers (*fordæðu*) or being "trollish" (*trylskr*). This was mostly associated to women, but even

[38] See also H. Janson, "Making Enemies. Aspects on the Formation of Conflicting Identities in the Southern Baltics around the Year 1000," in *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, ed. T. M. S. Lehtonen and K.V. Jensen (Helsinki 2005), 141–54.

[39] This legislation is only preserved in versions from the twelfth century and later, but several sections point to an eleventh century context, see E. F. Halvorsen, "De gamle østlandske kristenrettene," in *Nordiske middelalderlover. Tekst og kontekst*, ed. A. Dybdahl and J. Sandnes (Trondheim 1997), 59–68. Although the Anglo-Saxon impact on early Norwegian Christian law sections has been seen as massive, there has recently been pointed out that it is much more complex than this as there are also important influences from Germany and further east, see discussion in T. Landro, *Kristenrett og kyrkjerett: Borgartingsretten i et komparativt perspektiv* (Bergen 2010).

[40] Sigvatr, *Lausavísur 19*, ed. R. D. Fulk, in *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, I, 724: *Dróttin, hjalp, þeims dóttur / – dýrrs þinn vili – mína / heim ór heiðnum dómi / hóf ok nafn gaf Tófu*.

[41] *De eldste østlandske kristenrettene*, ed. E. F. Halvorsen and M. Rindal (Oslo 2008), 126 (§4.2): *þa værðr bonde hæiðin af barne sinu*. See also *Law of Gulaþing* §21 and §22, in *Den eldre Gulatingslova*, ed. B. Eithun, M. Rindal, and T. Ulset (Oslo 1994), 44–45.

men could be punished in the manner of a trollish woman, giving emphasis on their marginal, even monstrous identity in both a social, religious, and gendered sense.[42]

The main theme of the *Law of Borgarþing* is how individuals should attain and preserve their identity as Christians. This was constructed on spatial categories centred on the Church and rituals, with the unbaptised and heathens in the margins of Christian society.[43] Even those baptised could be marginalised if they did not observe Christian rituals or violated the laws, being labelled as heathen in monstrous terms and outlawed to heathen lands. These were robbers, truce breakers (*griðníðingr*), traitors, murderers (*morðvargr*), arsonists (*brennuvargr*), hired killers (*flugumenn*), as well as other excommunicates; they were all to be excluded from society and ultimately from salvation by being denied burials in churchyards.[44]

The use of the "wolfish" terms *morðvargr* and *brennuvargr*, as well as the legislation on the "trollish women" in a legal context is related to terms in several Anglo-Saxon and German sources, as well as in Old Norse texts.[45] However, there are also parallels in the political and legal writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York, the close advisor of Æthelred II during Óláfr Haraldsson's stay in England in 1009–1012. In the *Law of Edward and Guthrum* (§11), Wulfstan states: "If wizards or sorcerers, perjurers or murderers (*mansworan oðde morðwyrhtan*) or unclean women are discovered somewhere in this land, they must be expelled from the land and the area cleansed, or they must be annihilated if they do not end these misdeeds and do penance."[46] In *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, first composed under the immediate threat of the great Scandinavian army of

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[42] On the punishment of trollwomen, see *Law of Borgarþing* §16.6–8, in *De eldste østlandske kristenrettene*, 154. See also *Den eldre Gulatingslova*, 46 (§23).

[43] On this theme, with references, see B. Bandlien, "*Sexuality in the Early Church Laws in Norway and Iceland*," in *Law and Private Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Andersen, M. Münster-Swendsen, and H. Vogt (Copenhagen 2011), 191–204.

[44] See especially *Law of Eidsivaþing* §50.13, in *De eldste østlandske kristenrettene*, 56; *Den eldre Gulatingslova*, 44 (§21).

[45] A. L. Meaney, "And we forbeodað eornostlice ælcne hæðenscipe.' Wulfstan and Late Anglo-Saxon and Norse 'Heathenism,'" in *Wulfstan. Archbishop of York. The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. M. Townend (Turnhout 2004), 461–500. On the image of Vikings as pagans attacking the English in Anglo-Saxon writings at the time, see also the comments in D. Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England* (Turnhout 2002), 173–78. He points out how the English were identified with the Israelites being chastised by God through the Scandinavian 'Assyrians,' drawing especially on the Book of Jeremiah.

[46] A. Rabin, *The Political Writings*, 60, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. F. Liebermann, vol. 1 (Halle 1903), 134: *Gif wiccan oðde wigleras, mansworan oðde morðwyrhtan oðde fule, afylede, æbære horcwenan ahwar on lande wurðan agytene, ðonne fyse hi man of eared 7 clænsie þa ðeode, oðde on eared forfare hy mid ealle, buton hig geswican 7 þe deoppor gebetan*. This text was probably written shortly after he was appointed as bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York in 1002.

Þorkell háfi in which Óláfr Haraldsson was part of, Wulfstan extended his list of sinners further:

> Many in this land are wounded by sin: here are murderers, killers of kin, slayers of priests, enemies of monasteries, evil perjurers and murderers (*mansworan oððe morðwyrhtan*), here are whores and slayers of children, and many who have relations with other men's wives, and here are *wiccan* and *vælcyrian,* thiefs and robbers, and powerful plunderers, and in short innumerable crimes and every thinkable wrongdoings.[47]

Several scholars suggest that Wulfstan influenced Old Norse legal terms, especially through the early Christian law sections.[48] The prime suspect for this transfer is Bishop Grímkell, who followed Óláfr Haraldsson to Norway in 1015 and is said in the early provincial law codes to have introduced the Christian laws. He seems to have been related to southern England, but perhaps knew both Ælfric of Eynsham and Wulfstan of York. He was a central figure in promoting the cult of Óláfr after his death in 1030, and later returned to England to become bishop of Selsey.[49] Grímkell may also have transmitted Wulfstan's ideas on the power of bishops in legislation,[50] as well as on the importance of the qualities of the king and his fight against heathenism for the people to be pious and prosper: "Through an unwise king the people will become miserable –

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[47] *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, ed. D. Whitelock (London 1960), 49–50: *Her syndan wurh synleawa, swa hit wincan mæg, sare gelewede to manege on earde. Her syndan mannslagan 7 mægslagan 7 mæsserbanan 7 mynsterhatan, 7 her syndan mánsworan 7 morþorwyrhtan, 7 her syndan myltestran 7 bearnmyrðran 7 fule forlegene horingas manege, 7 her syndan wiccan 7 wælcyrian, 7 her syndan ryperas 7 reaferas 7 woralstruderas, 7, hrædest is to cweþenne, m´na 7 misdæda únwerim ealra*. This list of criminals is reminiscent in other texts by Wulfstan, and is found in Cnut's proclamation of 1020 (§15), see A. Rabin, *The Political Writings*, 195.

[48] S. M. Pons-Sanz, *Norse-derived Vocabulary in late Old English Texts. Wulfstan's Works, a Case Study* (Odense 2007), 254–56, on 'wiccan' and valkyries, see p. 197. She also emphasizes that this influence also redefined existent terms, such as *grið, frið*, and *lagu*.

[49] A. O. Johnsen, "Misjonsbiskopen Grimkellus," *Historisk tidsskrift*, vol. 54 (1975), 22–34. On the possible encounters of Wulfstan with the leading men in the army of Thorkell the Tall, and the transmission of his ideas on Church organisation and theology to Scandinavia, see L. Abrams: *The Anglo-Saxons and the Christianization of Scandinavia*. "Anglo-Saxon England" 1995, vol. 24, 213–49 (especially 213–223 for Norway).

[50] *Episcopus*, §6: "He [the bishop] must not permit any injustice, not an incorrect measurement nor a false weight, but it is proper that every law – both law in the town and law in the country – undergo his review and consent. And every town measurement and every weight-scale is to be properly adjusted under his supervision, lest any man defraud another and thereby sin all too greatly." Translation from A. Rabin, *The Political Writings*, 62; *Die Gesetze*, I, 477: *Ne sceall he geþafian ænig unriht ne who gemet ne fals gewihte; ac hit gebyreð, þæt be his ræde fare 7 be his gewitnesse æghwylc lahriht, ge burhriht ge landriht; 7 ælc burhgemet 7 ælc wægpundern beo be his dihte gescift swiðe rihte, þe læs ænig man oðrum misbeode 7 ðurh þæt syngige ealles to swyþe*.

not once, but very often! – because of his foolish counsel; yet through a king's wisdom, the people become happy, prosperous and glorious. Accordingly, the wise king must extend and enlarge Christendom and his kingdom, and he must always resist and repress heathenism."[51]

Scholars have also pointed out that some of the terms used in Wulfstan's list of criminals seem related to a stanza in the Eddic poem *Vǫluspá*:

> Sá hón þar vaða — þunga strauma
> menn meinsvara — ok morðvarga,
> oc þannz annars glepr — eyrarúno
> þar saug Níðhǫggr — nái framgengna,
> sleit vargr vera. — Vitoð er enn, eða hvat?
>
> There she saw wading in turbid streams
> false-oath swearers and murderers,
> and the seducer of another man's close confidante;
> there Nidhogg sucks the corpses of the dead –
> a wolf tears at men – do you want to know more: and what?[52]

The dating and place of composition of *Vǫluspá* is contested. Most scholars agree, however, that it was composed by a poet with deep knowledge of Norse mythology and Icelandic geography (as volcanos are mentioned), but also under the influence of Christian apocalyptic theology. Some would place the poem in Northumbria, where Scandinavian influence was significant in the Late Viking Age and where Wulfstan was active, some regard it as an Icelander's response to the missionaries activities around the year 1000, and still others consider it as a part of the 'heathen revival' of Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson at Hlaðir in the last quarter of the tenth century.[53] Even though uncertainty remains concerning

[51] *II Polity*, 2, translation from A. Rabin, *The Political Writings*, 104. This section on kingship is not found in the first version of *The Institutions of Polity* written in the late reign of Æthelstan II, but in the revision from 1022 or 1023 for Knútr, see R. Trilling, "Sovereignty and Social Order. Archbishop Wulfstan and the Institutes of Polity," in *The Bishop Reformed. Studies of Episcopal Power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. J. Ott and A. T. Jones (Aldershot 2007), 58–85. The idea of the wise king is reminiscent of the work on 'the twelve abuses,' an Irish text on kingship that was translated by Ælfric of Eynsham into Anglo-Saxon and into Old Norse in the mid-twelfth century at latest, see M. Clayton, "De Duodecim Abusiuis, Lordship and Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Saints and Scholars. New Perspectives on Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture in Honour of Hugh Magennis*, ed. S. McWilliams (Cambridge 2012), 141–63; D. A. Seip, "Et Pseudo-Cypriansk skrift i norsk oversettelse fra 12. hundreår," *Maal og minne* (1945), 21–29.

[52] *Vǫluspá*, st. 38, ed. in U. Dronke, *The Poetic Edda, II. Mythological Poems* (Oxford 1997); trans. C. Larrington, *The Poetic Edda*, Rev. ed. (Oxford 2014), 9.

[53] G. Steinsland and P. Meulengracht Sørensen, *Voluspå* (Oslo 1999); J. McKinnell, "Vǫluspá and the Feast of Easter," *álvíssmál*, vol. 12 (2008), 3–28; R. North, "End Time and the Date of Vǫluspá. Two Models of Conversion," in *Conversion and Colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*,

the immediate context and specific poet of *Vǫluspá*, the common terms with Wulfstan's legislation and political texts indicate that the worldview and conceptions of outsiders of Christian theologians, preachers, politicians and legislators, would also be meaningful in a Scandinavian heathen context.

The stanza in *Vǫluspá* also alludes to, although not necessarily is directly derived from, two texts, in addition to Wulfstan's writings and the early Christian legislation in Norway. The first is the Book of Revelation, where it is stated that the unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.[54] The other text is the poem *Beowulf*, where the dwelling of Grendel and his mother is associated to the wetlands in the dangerous margins of society. The marginal space in *Beowulf* recalls not only *Vǫluspá* st. 38's false-oath swearers and murderers (*meinsvara ok morðvarga*) wading in turbid streams, or the brimstone lake in the Book of Revelation, but also Anglo-Saxon religious texts from the early eleventh century. The passage closest to the description of the monster-mere in *Beowulf* is found in the depiction of Hell in *Blickling Homily XVI* written ca. 1000, indicating that the homilist and the audience of *Beowulf* may have shared a common understanding of social ideals and categories concerning otherness.[55]

Although *Beowulf* itself may have been composed long before the time of Wulfstan, Óláfr Haraldsson and the composition of *Vǫluspá*, it is still of relevance here that the manuscript it is preserved in (British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xv) was probably produced in the first decades of the eleventh century. The manuscript also contains the prose texts, *The Life of St. Christopher*, *Wonders of the East*, and *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, and the poem *Judith*, all concerning either encounters of otherness in the margins of the world, or the transformation of a monstrous being into a human and Christian one (*St. Christopher*).[56] Of special interest is *Judith*, the story of the pious woman who decapitated the

ed. N. Howe and C. E. Karkov (Tempe 2006), 213–36; as well as the contributions in *The Nordic Apocalypse: Approaches to Vǫluspá and the Nordic Days of Judgement*, ed. T. Gunnell and A. Lassen (Turnhout 2013).

[54] Rev 21.8. In the Authorized version: *timidis autem et incredulis et exsecratis et homicidis et fornicatoribus et veneficis et idololatris et omnibus mendacibus pars illorum erit in stagno ardenti igne et suphure quod est mors secunda*. See on this parallel, J. McKinnell, *Vǫluspá and the Feast of Easter*, 9–10.

[55] See C. D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* (Cambridge 1993), 116–36, with references to previous scholarship. Wright argues that both authors drew on a vernacular version of the apocryphal *Visio S. Pauli*. A convenient discussion of other parallels between *Beowulf* and religious literature is in A. Orchard, *A Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge 2003), 130–68.

[56] On arguments for the unity of and intra-textual references within the Beowulf-manuscript, see A. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies. Studies in the Monsters of the 'Beowulf'-Manuscript* (Cambridge 1995).

heathen Holophernes. Contemporary to the writing of the Beowulf manuscript, Ælfric wrote to his friend, the nobleman Sigeweard, urging him and any other men whom the text might benefit to take Judith as an exemplum of military prowess "so that you will defend your land with weapons against an attacking force."[57] The story of the encounter of Judith and Holophernes was thus used in a similar fashion as Beowulf's encounter with the forces of the monster-mere that homilists associated as hell.

Another aspect of the intermingling of the heroic and religious encounters of monsters and heathens can be found in the parallels of Wulfstan's political writings and *Beowulf*. Leonard Neidorf argues that the important theme in *Beowulf*, the peril of disloyalty and deception, also concerned the worries of learned men, such as Wulfstan, who described Scandinavian attacks and the defeat of the English in similar terms.[58] In Wulfstan's terms, the danger of Christian society is posed by evil perjurers (*mansworan*), who are then linked to murderers (*morðwyrhtan*), evil women and heathens.[59] These categories are also included in Wulfstan's lists of criminals, in, for example, *VII Æthelred*, issued in 1009 in conjunction to the penitential program and the *Agnus Dei* pennies. This echoes, as we have seen, the passages in not only *Vǫluspá*, but also the early legislation of Norway. It would then seem likely that the *Facing Bird* pennies, if interpreted as a dove representing the Holy Spirit, can be seen in context with the introduction of the Christian laws in 1024. The dove, associated with the meekness and peacemaking, would allude to the works of Bishop Grímkell and King Óláfr, bringing peace to Christians, while excluding from the society the unbaptized and those who were outlaws and heathens by their actions.

There is, however, the possibility that the facing bird on the pennies of Óláfr Haraldsson alludes to another theological symbolism. The dove representing the Holy Spirit is in Anglo-Saxon illumination often seen as pointing its head downwards as it is communicating the words or the truth of God. The bird on the coins of Óláfr is more triumphal and indicating a move upwards, from the world towards heaven. The ambiguity of the bird on the *Agnus Dei* pennies of Æthelred II, whether eagle or dove, was pointed out by David Woods.[60] Moreover, birds such as eagles and ravens were important as symbols of victory

[57] M. Clayton, "Ælfric's Judith. Manipulative or Manipulated?," *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 23 (1994), 215–27. *Judith* may have been bound with Beowulf-manuscript at a later stage, but it was written by the same scribe who wrote the latter part of *Beowulf*.

[58] L. Neidorf, "VII Æthelred and the Genesis of the Beowulf Manuscript," *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 89 (2010), 119–39.

[59] On the links between poetic monsters and legal categories in Old English poetry, see J. Neville, "Monsters and Criminals. Defining Humanity in Old English Poetry," in *Monsters and the Monstrous in Medieval Northwest Europe*, ed. K. E. Olsen and L. A. J. R. Houwen (Leuven 2001), 103–122.

[60] Woods, *The Agnus Dei Penny*, 308–9.

and death in skaldic, mythological and heroic poetry in Western Scandinavia, both before and after Christianization. These would not be either heathen or Christian symbols, but adapted into the religious context of the praise poem and for different ideological purposes.[61]

This is relevant in other pictorial representation of a facing bird associated with Stein in Ringerike at the time of Óláfr Haraldsson. At Alstad, Østre Toten (western side of the lake Mjøsa) there is a runic stone erected by a certain Jorunn in memory of her husband (photo 2). It also includes images of some horses,



Photo 2. An image of the upper part of the Alstad runestone (Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo/Zodiaque)

two with and one without riders, dogs as well as a facing bird on top. This bird is similar to the *Facing Bird* pennies of Óláfr found at Stein. Moreover, the runic inscription on the stone itself states that it was brought from Ulvøya in Ringerike. The stone itself has been identified as red sandstone from Ulvøya

[61] J. Jesch, "Eagles, Ravens and Wolves. Beasts of Battle, Symbols of Victory and Death," in *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century*, ed. J. Jesch (San Marino 2001), 251–71. A recent discussion of Anglo-Saxon examples, see N. Adams, "Between Myth and Reality. Hunter and Prey in Early Anglo-Saxon Art," in *Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia*, ed. M. D. J. Bintley and T. J. T. Williams (Woodbridge 2015), 13–52.

in Ringerike. Ulvøya is a small island in Tyrifjorden with traces of an old quarry, situated close to the farm Stein.[62] Sandstone was a material increasingly used for runestones in eleventh-century Scandinavia, often raised at churchyards.[63] The interpretation of the imagery divides scholars, whether depicting scenes from Sigurd legend,[64] or showing a hunting scene.[65]

Signe Horn Fuglesang suggests that the triumphal bird seen from the front might have borne some allusions to the eschatological symbolism, without discussing this aspect in depth.[66] On the other hand, Fuglesang compares the iconography of the Alstad stone with a range of other pictorial sources. She regards it as an early example of the so-called Ringerike style, also found on other runic stones in Eastern Norway and Sweden from the eleventh century. It is also closely related to images on early eleventh century items in Scandinavia and to English images; most notably on the panels in Winchester and London.[67] In this area, there was a significant manuscript production, and some of the illuminations show similarities to the Ringerike style. Fuglesang found the closest parallel to it in the Cambridge Psalter from the early elev-

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[62] *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer, I*, ed. M. Olsen (Oslo 1941), 133–76. The name of Jorunn's husband is lost, but it speculated that she came from Ringerike and had the stone brought from there to Alstad, some hundred kilometers northeast of Stein farm. For the younger inscription and the association with the farm Stein, see B. Kleiber, "Alstadsteinen i lys av nye utgravninger ved Kiev," *Viking*, vol. 29 (1965), 61–76. See also F. Birkeli, *Norske steinkors i tidlig middelalder* (Oslo 1973), 89–91, and C. J. S. Marstrander, "Bredsideinnskriftene på Alstadstenen," in *Festskrift til Professor Olaf Broch på hans 80-årsdag*, ed. C. S. Stang, E. Krag, and A. Gallis (Oslo 1947), 105–144. The more famous Dynna stone was erected a few decades later, situated about midway between Alstad and Stein. This stone was of the same type as Alstad and must have been brought to Hadeland from Ringerike. Its imagery of the epiphany relate to a Christmas homily in the Norwegian Homily book, see D. Strömbäck, *The Epiphany in Runic Art. The Dynna and Sika Stones* (London 1970). The Dynna stone might also have been made at a workshop at Stein during the reigns of Magnús góði, or Haraldr harðráði.

[63] S. E. Hagenfeldt and R. Palm, *Sandstone Runestones. The Use of Sandstone for erected Runestones* (Stockholm 1996).

[64] L. Jacobsen, *Evje-stenen*, 21–33; M. Blindheim, "Fra hedensk sagnfigur til kristent forbilde. Sigurdsdiktningen i middelalderens billedkunst," *Den iconographiske Post*, vol. 4 (3) (1973), 3–28.

[65] S. Margeson, "The Völsung legend in Medieval Art," in *Medieval Iconography and Narrative. A Symposium*, ed. F. G. Andersen et al. (Odense 1980), 183–211 (194); I. M. Christiansen, "Alstadstenen – et eksempel på europeisk jagtikonografi?," in *Bilder og bilders bruk i vikingtid og middelalder*, ed. S. H. Fuglesang (Oslo 1997), 148–226; A. Ney, *Bland ormar och drakar. Hjältemyt och manligt ideal i berättartraditioner om Sigurd Fafnesbane* (Lund 2017), 158–59.

[66] S. H. Fuglesang, *Some Aspects of the Ringerike Style: A Phase of 11th-Century Scandinavian Art* (Odense 1980), 83–87.

[67] B. Kjølbye-Biddle, "The Winchester 'Weather-vane' Reconsidered," *Hikuin*, vol. 10 (1984), 307–14; K. Holman, "Scandinavian Runic Inscriptions as a source for the History of the British Isles: The St Paul's Rune-Stone," in *Runeninschriften als Quellen interdiszilpinärer Forschung*, ed. K. Düwel (Berlin 1998), 629–38.

enth century.[68] Fuglesang also points to the possible influence from German manuscripts, especially from the scriptorium of Reichenau. Illuminations from Reichenau also influenced some of the Anglo-Saxon illuminations at the turn of the millennium.

Art historians, based on what has been termed early Ringerike style, as well as runologists date the Alstad stone to ca. 1000 or to the first decades of the eleventh century. The possible relations of the imagery to some manuscript illumination and carvings in learned circles of England could indicate that the *Facing Bird* pennies minted at Stein could be part of a workshop. In contemporary Lund, scholars have suggested that English moneyers were associated with the workshops that produced brooches with similar motives as on the pennies.[69] It is possible that this was also the case at the royal farm of Stein, which would mean that not only the stone itself was brought from Ringerike, but also that the new, fashionable imagery was carved there in collaboration with English moneyers during the reign of Óláfr Haraldsson.

If the bird on the Alstad stone was inspired by the Anglo-Saxon illumination, it could resemble the eagle representing John the Evangelist rather than a dove symbolising the Holy Spirit. St John depicted as standing and writing at the Crucifixion had been developed as a devotional image and allusive aid to meditation, and became an important symbol for the learned movement for monastic reform in late Anglo-Saxon England.[70] John had an elevated position among the Evangelists. A late tenth-century Gospel Book, written at St-Bertin but illuminated by a painter trained in England, shows St John's divine inspiration. The dove representing the Holy Spirit perches there on his shoulder and speaks directly into his ear (Boulogne, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 11, fol. 107r). In this scene, the dove's head is pointing slightly downwards, but at another scene, the eagle representing St. John is standing and facing the viewer.[71] John the Evangelist is here the intermediary between the divine and

[68] On the Cambridge Psalter (Cambridge University Library Ff. I.23) and its likeness to the Ringerike style, see S. H. Fuglesang, *Some Aspects*, 70–72. On fol. 4v in this manuscripts the Holy Spirit is represented as a dove in a downwards position with a profile head, frontal body, and outstretched wings, whispering into the ear of King David playing his harp. For a later representation of this scene, with the dove turned directly downwards, see the Tiberius Psalter (British Library Cotton MS Tiberius C.vi) f. 30v.

[69] M. Cinthio, "Guldsmed i Lund," in *Beretning fra attende tværfaglige vikingesymposium*, ed. G. Fellows-Jensen and N. Lund (Aarhus 1999), 35–52; A. Pedersen, "Religiøse symboler i vikingetidens arkæologiske materiale," in *Kristendommen i Danmark før 1050*, ed. N. Lund (Roskilde 2004), 60–74 (71).

[70] J. O'Reilly, "St John as a Figure of the Contemplative Life. Text and Image in the Art of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Reform," in *St. Dunstan. His Life, Times and Cult* (Woodbridge 1992), 165–85.

[71] A similar emphasis on the special position of St John the Evangelist, is found in the Lindisfarne Gospels, produced ca. 700. Aldred of Chester-le-Street stated, in a colophon added to the manuscript in the late tenth century, that the inspiration from God distinguishes John from

secular worlds, where the dove is communicating from God to him, while he is moving upwards to Heaven as an eagle.[72]

In the Arenberg Gospels (Pierpoint Morgan, MS M.869), produced at Christ Church, Canterbury during the first decades of the eleventh century, St John looks upwards rather than down at the book, indicating that his book is the word of God. His gaze seems to be fixed on the Hand of God, reaching down towards him. The eagle representing the Evangelist is within a medallion on the upper level, in a frontal position, with head in profile. The artist indicates the eagle moving upwards, rather than downward, as is the case in many representations of the dove as the Holy Spirit. As a deified evangelist, the symbol of St John is reminiscent of Christ rising to Heaven: "The medallion encircling the eagle, which is framed in leaves bound at the top like a wreath, transforms the beast of John into a symbol of Christ's victorious ascension."[73] According to art historian Jeffrey Hamburger, St John is most often associated with the imitation of Christ. To imitate him is then to imitate Christ. The eagle, rather than the dove, carried also more noble connotations with itself. In antiquity, the high-flying eagle was a symbol of imperial apotheosis, while in Christian tradition the eagle was increasingly associated with the ascending Christ and his human body transcending into Heaven.[74]

John the Evangelist was in the Middle Ages associated with both John the Baptist and the Book of Revelation. He was thus not only a key figure in pointing to the Lamb of God (John 1.29, 1.36) and the baptism of Christ, symbolized by the dove from Heaven, but also in eschatology as telling about the *Agnus Dei* sitting on the throne (Revelation 4.6–7 and 22.1). An ivory clasp from the late eleventh century, probably of Italian origin, used to fasten liturgical garments, shows the Lamb, the embodiment of Christ's humanity, surrounded with the symbols of the Evangelists, while the other side is a depiction of the eagle with a cross-halo seen from the front with outstretched wings, symbolizing

the other Evangelists, see L. Nees, "Reading Aldred's Colophon for the Lindisfarne Gospels," *Speculum*, vol. 78 (2003), 333–77.

[72] The bird on the weather-vane of Heggen is usually interpreted as an eagle and might have been used on a ship as a symbol of royalty, see M. Blindheim, "De gylne skipsfløyer fra sen vikingetid. Bruk og teknikk," *Viking*, vol. 46 (1982), 85–111. This weather-vane is usually dated to the early eleventh century, and thus contemporary to the Alstad runestone and the *Facing Bird* pennies of Óláfr Haraldsson. Heggen is on the southwestern part of Tyrifjord not far from Stein farm. On the relation between the weather-vane from Heggen and continental art of the eleventh century, see M. Baylé, "Reminiscences anglo-scandinaves dans la sculpture romane de Normandie," *Anglo-Norman Studies*, vol. 13 (1990), 35–48.

[73] J. Rosenthal, "The Unique Architectural Settings of the Arenberg Evangelists," in *Studien zur mittelalterlichen Kunst 800–1250*, ed. K. Bierbrauer, P. K. Klein, and W. Sauerländer (München 1985), 145–156 (152).

[74] J. Hamburger, *St. John the Divine. The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley 2002), 85. This is also emphasized and developed in the Bernward Gospels, produced in Hildesheim at about 1015.

Christ's ascent to heaven. The clasp links John the Baptist to the Evangelist, and in turn identifies the priest handling the liturgical vestments with both the Baptist and the Evangelist.[75]

Finally, a mention should be made concerning the representations found in the Bury Psalter (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 12) dated to the second quarter of the eleventh century. This manuscript is discussed by Fuglesang as having possible relations to the Ringerike style and the upper bird of the Alstad stone.[76] In this manuscript, the upward position of the bird seems to be associated first with the Trinity in Heaven (f. 88r), and then in the margin in relation to prayers (f. 169r). This manuscript gives a different and novel emphasis to the ascension of Christ compared to the previous iconography of the scene. It represents the "disappearing Christ" of the Ascension, first appearing in the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges produced ca. 1020 in Rouen. Here, the body of Christ has almost reached Heaven already, and only his feet are visible.[77]

Interpreting the facing bird on Óláfr's pennies as an eagle representing John the Evangelist and his mediation from the human world to Heaven could also have implications on the royal portrait on the obverse. The king would then represent the Lamb of God, imitating Christ, or be associated with the role of St John. Considering that the skaldic poetry associated with Óláfr Haraldsson speaks of Christ as a ruler, and the king as the highest ruler under heaven, the former interpretation would seem more likely.[78] In either case, the king would have a key position in his people's relation to heaven and salvation.

Conclusion

This study is hardly the last word on the *Facing Bird* pennies of Óláfr Haraldsson. They remain much of a puzzle, but further studies on early coinage should in any case be regarded as part of the ideology of early Christian kingship in Norway. What is striking on this coinage, however, is the upward

[75] Hamburger, *St John the Divine*, 69.

[76] See also on the illuminations, A. Heimann, "Three Illustrations from the Bury St. Edmunds Psalter and their Prototypes. Notes on the Iconography of Some Anglo-Saxon Drawings," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 29 (1966), 39–59; C. E. Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge 2011), 189–93.

[77] M. Schapiro, "The Image of the Disappearing Christ. The Ascension in English Art around the Year 1000," in M. Schapiro,, *Selected Papers, III. Late Antique, Early Christian, and Mediaeval Art* (New York 1979), 267–87. See also the discussion in R. Deshman, "Another Look at the Disappearing Christ: Corporeal and Spiritual Vision in Early Medieval Art," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 79 (1997), 518–46.

[78] O. Tveito, *Ad fines orbis terrae – like til jordens ender: En studie i primær trosformidling i nordisk kristningskontekst* (Oslo 2005), 173–98.

direction towards Heaven and the transition to the divine. The king, depicted as an intermediary between the divine and the Christian society, should be seen in the context of the establishment of Christian legislation in 1024, and its new discourse of heathens as representing disloyalty, chaos, and the monstrous.

Aspects of this definition of otherness were not something unknown before the reign of Óláfr Haraldsson, as the legal semantics of perjurers and evildoers was known for instance in *Vǫluspá*. The use of such terminology by Wulfstan of York, in homilies as well as heroic poetry, would perhaps have made it easier for Óláfr to gain support in his rivalries against those who based their power on traditional kingship. It seems that there was an intermingling of traditions concerning burials and perhaps religious practice before Óláfr's kingship, where, for instance, identity was not necessarily defined by burials in churchyards and baptism. The innovation of Óláfr seems rather to have linked loyalty to the king with the devotion to the Church and to religious practices. The mode of otherness was on the one hand traditional, with references to breaking the perjurers, murderers, and sorcerers as opposed the laws and being a threat to society. On the other hand, the discourse on legality and loyalty became centred on the king as the prime protector of peace and prosperity in a Christianized society, signaled by the rising bird on the reverse of the *Facing Bird* pennies found at the royal farm at Stein. The bird could both be victorious over his enemies in the traditional sense, while in a new way transmitting prayers and loyalty to the king of Heaven on behalf of a worldly one.

The Dangers of Generosity
Money, Power, and Politics in *Vestrfararvísur* and *Kálfsflokkr*

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The figure of King Knútr inn ríki (the Great) Sveinsson looms large over the history of the early medieval period. Born around the end of the tenth century to the Danish king Sveinn tjúguskegg (Forkbeard) Haraldsson, by the late 1020s Knútr had established himself as the ruler of a proto-empire that stretched across northern Europe.[1] Styling himself "rex totius Angliae et Danemarkiae et Norregiae et partis Suauorum" (king of all England and Denmark and Norway and of part of the Swedes) in his 1027 *Letter to the English*, Knútr cultivated an image of himself as a powerful but benevolent ruler, a Christian king with a penchant for law-making, and a fearsome warrior capable of defending his ancestral lands in Denmark while acquiring new territories abroad.[2] Most importantly, according to the thirteenth-century chronicle of the Danish kings, *Knýtlinga saga*, Knútr's control over lands beyond Denmark gave him access to unprecedented wealth, which he used to consolidate his personal and political relationships. As the saga relates:

> Knútr kounugr hefir verit ǫrvastr konunga á Norðrlǫndum, því at þat er sannliga sagt, at eigi hafði hann þat miðr umfram aðra konunga, hversu mikit fé hann veitti í vingjafir á hverju ári, heldr en hit, at hann tók miklu meira í skatta ok skyldir á hverju ári af þrim þjóðlǫndum en hverr sá annarra, er hafði eitt konungsríki fyrir at ráða, ok þó þat með, at England er auðgast at lausafé allra Norðrlanda.[3]

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[1] For an account of his reign, see in particular M. Lawson, *Cnut. England's Viking King 1016–35* (Stroud 1993, 2004). The extent to which the lands under Knútr's control should be thought of as an empire is discussed by T. Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great* (Leiden 2009), 289–316 and P. Sawyer, "Cnut's Scandinavian Empire," in *The Reign of Cnut*, ed. A. Rumble (London 1994), 10–22.

[2] Knútr's *Letter* is quoted from *Gesta regum Anglorum. The History of the English Kings by William of Malmesbury*, vols. 1, ed. R. Mynors, R. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (Oxford 1998), 324. On Knútr's self-promotion, see especially R. Frank, "King Cnut in the Verse of his Skalds," in *The Reign of Cnut*, ed. A. Rumble (London 1994), 106–24.

[3] ÍF 35, 124. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

> King Knútr was the most generous of kings in the North, because it is truly said that he did not a little exceed other kings in the amount of money he gave as gifts to his friends every year; indeed, he collected much more in taxes and tributes every year from the three countries than anyone who ruled over one kingdom, as England is the wealthiest in riches of all the northern lands.

Knútr's generosity is praised not only in the prose sagas, but also in many of the skaldic sequences composed in his honour by the Icelandic poets who flocked to his court.[4] In the sequence known as *Tøgdrápa*, Þórarinn loftunga boasts of receiving fifty gold marks from the king as a reward for his composition, while Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld thanks the king in a *lausavísa* for the gift of two gold arm-rings.[5] Óttarr svarti, in his praise-poem *Knútsdrápa*, repeatedly emphasises the king's reputation as a generous man, calling him a "blíðr bjóðr stórgjafa" (cheerful giver of great gifts) and "siklingr ǫrr søkkva" (prince generous with treasures).[6] Both skaldic poets and the later saga-authors were well aware that generosity was a key aspect of royal power in early medieval Scandinavia, and that the giving of gifts was one of the most effective ways in which a king could express that power publicly.[7]

Generosity was, however, a double-edged sword. King Knútr used his wealth not only to reward his own retinue, but to buy the loyalty of his opponents' followers. In the mid-1020s Knútr began offering members of the Norwegian nobility gifts of land and treasure in exchange for their support against the Norwegian king, Óláfr Haraldsson. Alongside the many skaldic

[4] The extant corpus of poems composed for Knútr comprises three sequences, each known as *Knútsdrápa*, by the poets Sigvatr Þórðarson, Óttarr svarti, and Hallvarðr háreksblesi, as well as *Hǫfuðlausn* and *Tøgdrápa* by Þórarinn loftunga, and the anonymous *Liðsmannaflokkr*. Knútr is also mentioned in a series of occasional and fragmentary verses and in Þórðr Kolbeinsson's *Eiríksdrápa*, composed in honour of one of his earls. For a discussion of the corpus and its historical context, see M. Townend, "Contextualizing the Knútsdrápur. Skaldic Praise-Poetry at the Court of Cnut," *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol. 30 (2001), 145–79 and R. Poole, "Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History," *Speculum*, vol. 62 (1987), 265–98. On the literary representation of the king, see J. Jesch, "Knútr in Poetry and History," in *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*, ed. M. Dallapiazza et al. (Trieste 2000), 243–56.

[5] *SkP* I, 825, 861.

[6] *SkP* I, 778, 781.

[7] The practice of gift-giving in medieval Scandinavian has received much attention from anthropologists, historians, and literary scholars alike. See especially A. Gurevich, "Wealth and Gift-bestowal Among the Ancient Scandinavians," *Scandinavica*, vol. 7 (1968), 126–38. More recent work on the subject includes W. Miller, "Is a Gift Forever?," *Representations*, vol. 100 (1) (2007), 13–22 and C. Andersson, "Gifts and Society in Fourteenth Century Sweden," in *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. K. Esmark et al. (Leiden 2013), 219–45. On the financial remuneration of skaldic verse, see B. Fidjestøl: "'Have You Heard a Poem Worth More?' A Note on the Economic Background of Early Skaldic Praise-Poetry," in *Selected Papers*, Ed. O. Haugen and E. Mundal (Odense 1997), 117–32.

stanzas praising Knútr's generosity, the sagas also record those which excoriate Knútr's Norwegian supporters for accepting payments from a foreign king. As a series of *lausavísur* by the poet Sigvatr Þórðarson demonstrate, royal generosity could all too easily blur into bribery, and bribery exposed the state to treachery. In one such stanza, Sigvatr furiously condemns the Norwegian chieftains for having been bought by Óláfr's greatest enemy:

> Fjandr ganga þar þengils
> (þjóð býðr opt) með sjóða
> (hǫfgan malm fyr hilmis
> haus ófalan) lausa.
> Sitt veit hverr, ef harra
> hollan selr við golli,
> — vert es slíks — í svǫrtu,
> sinn, helvíti innan.[8]
>
> The prince's enemies go there with open money-bags; people often offer solid metal for the ruler's precious skull. Every man knows he will [find] himself inside black hell – that is deserved – if he sells his faithful lord for gold.

The skaldic corpus is thus divided in its representation of Knútr's generosity. On one side, poets in the service of the Danish king praise his liberality and use it to promote the image of a just but ambitious monarch; on the other, supporters of King Óláfr point to Knútr's duplicity and denounce the treachery his gifts provoked among the Norwegian aristocracy. But what of those caught in the middle? What of those whose loyalty was to both kings, or those who changed their allegiance in an attempt to survive an increasingly volatile political atmosphere? Although skaldic verse is often unashamedly partisan, sequences do exist which acknowledge the difficulties faced by those living in times of turmoil. This article will investigate two skaldic sequences in which the limits of loyalty are tested, and the implications of royal generosity examined. In *Vestrfararvísur*, Sigvatr Þórðarson must find a way of excusing to King Óláfr the fact that he has recently composed poetry for King Knútr, and was rewarded for it. Bjarni Hallbjarnarson's *Kálfsflokkr*, on the other hand, follows the changing allegiances of the Norwegian nobleman Kálfr Árnason, one of the last chieftains to turn from Óláfr to Knútr in the struggle of the kings. The two sequences offer contrasting examples of how those caught up in the events of the early eleventh century negotiated the conflict between the two rulers, and the different strategies employed by skaldic poets forced to respond to the constantly changing parameters of royal power.

[8] *SkP* I, 715.

I. *Vestrfararvísur*

Although he condemned the Norwegian chieftains for betraying Óláfr to Knútr, the poet Sigvatr Þórðarson was himself the servant of many masters. A close friend and confidant of the Norwegian king, Sigvatr nevertheless composed praise-poetry for Óláfr's royal rival, King Knútr, as well as one of Óláfr's main enemies at home, the chieftain Erlingr Skjálgsson.[9] It was not unusual for skalds to travel to multiple courts and seek rewards from multiple rulers; what is unusual in Sigvatr's work is the unease with which the poet describes his travels outside of Norway, and the vehemence with which he attempts to excuse payments made to him by Óláfr's enemies. In particular, the sequence known as *Vestrfararvísur* (Verses about a Journey to the West) is an unconventional example of praise-poetry in that it addresses one king, Óláfr Haraldsson, but describes the poet's interactions with another, Knútr inn ríki. In *Vestrfararvísur*, Sigvatr makes no secret of the fact that Knútr rewarded him with gold for his service, but he decisively rejects the implication that a skald might transfer his allegiance from one king to another in the hope of financial gain. Instead, Sigvatr posits an emotional bond between poet and patron, employing a rhetoric of emotional attachment to excuse his financial relationship with other kings.

The title *Vestrfararvísur* is assigned to the sequence by Snorri Sturluson, but the poem as reconstructed by modern editors is not recorded complete in any medieval text or manuscript.[10] The first seven stanzas are cited in *Óláfs saga helga* in *Flateyjarbók*, as well as in Snorri's *Separate saga* and *Heimskringla* versions of the king's life.[11] Stanza 3 is also recorded in *Fagrskinna* and stanza 5 in *Knýtlinga saga*.[12] In the latter two texts, the name of the poem is not mentioned, nor is it important in that context; in *Fagrskinna* and *Knýtlinga saga* the stanzas function as "authenticating" records for the sake of a saga narrative that has little to do with the events related by the poet.[13] The story of the poem's supposed genesis is related in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga* and in

[9] There is further evidence that Sigvatr composed verse for the Swedish king, Ǫnundr (Anund Jacob) Óláfsson, as well as the Norwegian noblemen Ívarr inn hvíti and Tryggvi Óláfsson. For a brief biography of the skald, see *SkP* I, 532–533. See also the Icelandic list of poets, *Skáldatal*, in *The Uppsala Edda*, ed. Heimir Pálsson (London 2012), 99–117.

[10] *SkP* I, 615–627. All subsequent references will be to this edition.

[11] For the prose context, see *Flateyjarbók*, vol. 2, 253, 276–77, 287–88; ÍF 26–28, 224, 271–73, 292–93. The stanzas are cited in roughly the order of the reconstructed text, with the exception of stanza 5, which is cited earlier in the sagas.

[12] The author of *Knýtlinga saga* cites stanza 5 as further proof of Knútr's generosity: ÍF 35, 126. Citing stanza 3, the author of *Fagrskinna* provides even less information about the provenance of the poem, stating simply that Knútr planned to invade Norway, and offering stanza 3 as evidence. See ÍF 29, 190–1.

[13] Cf. D. Whaley, "Skalds and Situational Verses in Heimskringla," in *Snorri Sturluson*, ed. A. Wolf (Tübingen 1993), 245–66.

Flateyjarbók. Here, the recitation of *Vestrfararvísur* is set in 1025–1026 against the backdrop of imminent warfare between the two kings: in England, Knútr and his Norwegian ally, Jarl Hákon Eiríksson, have begun to muster their troops before the confrontation that will become known as the Battle of Holy River.[14] Sigvatr and his companion Bergr have been on a trading voyage to France, and they plan to return to Norway via England. Knútr having banned all merchant ships from sailing, Sigvatr is forced to visit the king and ask for his permission to leave. Stanzas 1–4 of *Vestrfararvísur* describe this meeting.[15] However, when Sigvatr returns to Norway, King Óláfr is suspicious that the poet's loyalties may have shifted, asking, "Eigi veit ek, hvárt þú ætlar nú at vera minn stallari. Eða hefir þú nú gǫrzk maðr Knúts konungs?" (I don't know whether you intend to be my marshal now. Or have you now become King Knútr's man?).[16] Although Sigvatr's life is not expressly in danger, the circumstances are related to those of the *hǫfuðlausn* (head-ransom poem), in which the poet has angered the king and must present a poem to win back his favour.[17] Sigvatr accordingly recites stanzas 6 and 7 of *Vestrfararvísur*, in which he repudiates Knútr and the Danish king's gifts. The recitation functions as a public demonstration of his loyalty to Óláfr, after which the poet is able to reclaim his former position at the Norwegian king's court.

Although the sequence is split into two groups of stanzas in the context of the prose narrative, the issues of gift-giving and loyalty serve to unify the piece as a whole. Somewhat unusually for a skaldic poem, the sequence begins as an intimate exchange between two men. Addressing a friend rather than a patron, Sigvatr uses the first-person plural to create the illusion that the audience is listening in on a private conversation, a memory shared by two former travelling companions:

> Bergr, hǫfum minnzk, hvé margan
> morgun Rúðu borgar
> bǫrð létk í fǫr fyrða
> fest við arm inn vestra (st 1).[18]

[14] ÍF 27, 271–73.

[15] The saga prose notes that Sigvatr composed other verses about Knútr and Hákon, and the episode is surrounded by citations from Sigvatr's formal praise-poem, *Knútsdrápa*. In this context the audience of the saga is left in no doubt that Sigvatr did indeed compose verse for Óláfr's enemy, and that he would have deserved some form of payment from the king: ÍF 27, 269–74.

[16] ÍF 27, 293.

[17] On the characteristics of the "head-ransom" poem, see M. Clunies Ross, "Hǫfuðlausn and Egils saga," *Notes and Queries*, vol. 51 (2) (2004), 114–18 and J. Hines, "Egill's Hǫfuðlausn in Time and Place," *Saga-Book*, vol. 24 (2–3) (1995), 83–104.

[18] *SkP* I, 617.

> Bergr, we have remembered how, many a morning during the voyage of men, I had the ship's prow moored to the western rampart of Rouen's fortifications.[19]

Such a beginning does not herald a formal, courtly *drápa*, but rather a poem of the genre Roberta Frank has called the "versified travelogue."[20] *Vestrfararvísur* is likely the second of two such poems composed by Sigvatr, following the more light-hearted *Austrfararvísur* (Verses about a Journey to the East), composed around 1019.[21] In the earlier sequence Sigvatr recounts a diplomatic mission for which he travelled to Sweden with another member of Óláfr's court, Bjǫrn stallari. *Austrfararvísur* similarly describes the two companions' journey, emphasising the physical discomforts of travel and the unwelcoming pagans they encounter along the way. In *Austrfararvísur*, such details serve to create an almost satirical contrast between the comforts of home and the uncertainties of the road.[22] *Vestrfararvísur* similarly describes the wanderings of the king's men through a potentially hostile world, but one in which the dangers are political rather than comically pagan. As in *Austrfararvísur*, Sigvatr establishes an emotive contrast between home and away, but in this case the contrast is between the halls of the rival kings, Óláfr and Knútr, and the poet's emotional reaction to each.

Focalised though the poet's eyes, Knútr's hall appears dark and foreboding as Sigvatr stands before it, an outsider both literally and figuratively:

> Útan varðk, áðr Jóta
> andspilli fekk'k stillis,
> — melld sák h*ús* fyr hauldi —
> húsdyrr fyrir spyrjask (st. 2).[23]
>
> I had to make enquiries from outside the building's doors, before I won a conversation with the lord of the Jutes – I saw the building bolted before the man (i.e., me).

[19] The translation of the phrase *við inn vestra arm borgar Rúðu* follows that proposed by Jesch in *SkP* I, 617. As she notes, the compound name *Rúðuborg* could also be correct, but the idea of fortifications suggested by the word *borg* fits well with the idea of the *armr*, or rampart.

[20] R. Frank, *Old Norse Court Poetry* (Ithaca 1978), 154–57.

[21] *SkP* I, 578–613. All subsequent references will be to this edition.

[22] Heather O'Donoghue has discussed Snorri's presentation of *Austrfararvísur* in *Heimskringla*, noting that he divides the account of the voyage east into two parts, separating the chatty travelogue section from his account of the diplomatic mission itself. She observes that Snorri's object in citing this lively poem seems to be entertainment rather than instruction. See H. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford 2005), 64–68.

[23] *SkP* I, 618.

In *Austrfararvísur* the house of the pagan family was similarly unwelcoming: as the poet reports, "hurð vas aptr, en spurðumk fyrir útan" (the door was closed, and I made enquiries from without, st. 4). Approaching Knútr's hall, Sigvatr is prepared for trouble: "opt berk járnstúkur á armi" (often I wore iron sleeves [armour] on my arm, st. 2). The phrase is not only an acknowledgement of the potentially hostile reception that awaits him inside Knútr's hall, but also an ironic inversion of the more conventional skaldic boast in which poets describe the gifts of jewellery they have received from generous rulers. In the *lausavísur* mentioned above, for example, Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld thanks Knútr for his gift of the golden arm-rings in similar language: "berk goll á bǫðum greipum" (I wore gold on both hands), he says.[24] Sigvatr's apprehension, however, is not without cause, as in the following stanza he learns of a plot to kill King Óláfr:

> Ǫrr tegask Ǫleif gerva
> (allt hefr sá*) fjǫrvaltan
> — konungs dauða munk kvíða —
> Knútr ok Hǫkun (úti) (st. 3).[25]
>
> Bold/generous Knútr and Hákon show themselves ready to make Óláfr unsteady of life; he [Knútr] has everything (ready) – I will fear the death of the king.

There is a sense of the poet listening through the locked door as he overhears the details of a conspiracy. Óláfr's enemies are many, their ubiquity emphasised by the mirrored structure of the phrases "Knútr ok Hǫkun" and, in the next *helmingr*, "Knútr ok jarlar" (Knútr and the earls). Knútr is described as "ǫrr," a term which can mean both "brave" and "generous." The precise meaning is ambiguous in this context, as the word could refer equally well to the gifts Knútr gives his followers, and with which he bribes King Óláfr's; or, it could simply refer to his well-known bravery as a warrior, hinting perhaps at his kingly determination to conquer new lands. It is unclear whether Hákon and the jarls are drawn to Knútr because of his generosity or his bravery; however, the king's circle of conspirators contrasts sharply in this stanza with the figure of the lone, vulnerable Óláfr, the enemy they plan to "gerva fjǫrvaltr" (make unsteady of life). In an intercalary clause the poet reminds the audience of the fatal implications of the conspiracy and of his own, emotional response to it: "munk kvíða dauða konungs" (I will fear the death of the king). In these two stanzas Sigvatr presents Knútr's hall as a space of unknown danger, a source of ominous possibilities enabled by his ambiguous generosity.

[24] *SkP* I, 825.
[25] *SkP* I, 619.

This image stands in direct contrast to the way the poet describes Óláfr's court upon his return to Norway. Here, the sequence is no longer presented as an intimate conversation between the two travellers. Rather, in stanza 6, Sigvatr utters a formal call for attention as he addresses the Norwegian king:

> Heim erum hingat komnir
> — hygg at, jǫfurr skatna —
> — menn nemi mǫ́l, sem innik,
> mín — stallarar þínir (st. 6).[26]
>
> We, your marshals, have come home – consider that, lord of men (Óláfr) – let men heed my words as I speak.

This stanza has all the characteristics of the *upphaf*, the call for attention that would normally occur in the first stanza of a *drápa*: Sigvatr addresses the king directly and announces his intent to recite poetry.[27] This sudden adoption of formal, courtly discourse in the middle of the skaldic sequence mirrors the poet's resumption of his courtly duties. He does not ask the king for his position back, but assumes it, commanding,

> Seg, hvar sess hafið hugðan
> seims, þjóðkonungr, beimum
> (allr es þekkr) með þollum
> (þinn skáli mér innan) (st. 6).[28]
>
> Say, mighty king, where you have decided on a bench for heroes, among the fir-trees of gold (warriors); inside, all of your hall his pleasant to me.

In marked contrast to the trembling poet listening *útan* Knútr's hall, Sigvatr is now firmly ensconced *innan* Óláfr's. Here too, there is both a metaphorical and literal quality to the language of inclusion: the "sess" (bench or seat) Sigvatr requests is both a symbol of the king's court and a reference to the physical structures that support it. Similarly, the poet describes Óláfr's warriors as "þollar seims" (fir-trees of gold). This is a relatively conventional kenning for men, but the image of fir-trees adorned with gold suggests a visual parallel between the decorated pillars of the king's hall and the king's followers themselves, splendidly arrayed in the weapons and jewellery given to them by Óláfr.[29] Sigvatr

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[26] *SkP* I, 623.

[27] Cf. M. Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge 2005), 38. See also J. Quinn, "'Ok er þetta upphaf' – First-Stanza Quotation in Old Norse Prosimetrum," *alvíssmál*, vol. 7 (1997), 61–80.

[28] *SkP* I, 623.

[29] Cf. kennings for men such as "*þollr glaums*" (fir-tree of merriment) in *Liðsmannaflokkr* st. 3 (*SkP* I, 1019) and *þollr seims* (fir-tree of gold) in Sigvatr's *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga* st. 17

proclaims himself a full member of the courtly community so described, and his emotional response to this hall is diametrically opposed to the fear he felt upon his arrival at Knútr's: "innan, allr skáli þinn es mér þekkr" (inside, all of your hall his pleasant to me), he assures Óláfr.[30] The emotive contrast thus established between the two halls serves to counteract the accusations of disloyalty thrown at Sigvatr upon his return.

Mirroring the opposition established between the two rival halls, Sigvatr also uses the sequence to set up a contrast between himself and his fellow poet, Bersi Skáld-Torfuson.[31] In an unusual move for a skaldic poet, he focuses on gifts *not* given to him; rather, he praises Knútr's generosity to his fellow skald:

> Þér gaf hann mǫrk eða meira
> margvitr ok hjǫr bitran
> golls — ræðr gǫrva ǫllu
> goð sjalfr — en mér halfa (st. 5).[32]
>
> To you the man wise in many things (Knútr) gave a mark or more and a sharp sword – God himself fully decides all things – and to me half [a mark].

With the phrase "eða meira," Sigvatr coyly leaves the exact amount of Bersi's monetary reward unspecified, implicitly exaggerating the value of the gift. This description of one skald's apparently ungrudging admiration for another's reward is not unprecedented, but it is unusual; tales such as *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*, *Bjarnar saga Hítdœlakappa*, and *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu* all describe the fierce rivalries rather than friendships that develop between poets as they jockey for success at court and in love. It is unlikely that Sigvatr's willingness to praise a fellow skald's reward stems only from his admiration for it; rather, Bersi's impressive payment and consequent relationship with Knútr serve as a foil to emphasize Sigvatr's contrasting relationship with

(*SkP* I, 685). However, the word could also be used metaphorically to denote Yggdrasill, as in *Vǫluspá* (st. 20) and the pillars of a hall, as in *Hymiskviða* (st. 13) when Hymir breaks the pillars of his hall in two. *Eddukvæði*, vols. 1–2, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, Vésteinn Ólason. Íslenzk fornrit (Reykjavik 2014), 295–96 and 401–402, respectively.

[30] Cleasby and Vigfússon define *þekkr* as "agreeable, pleasant, liked"; see *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, ed. R. Cleasby, G. Vigfússon, and W. Craigie (Oxford 1874, 1957), 733. Poets also use the word with a sense of welcoming or valuing: in *Haraldskvæði (Hrafnsmál)* st. 2 Þorbjǫrn hornklofi describes how men are not *þekkir* to a valkyrie (*SkP* I, 95), while in his *Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar*, st. 1, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson uses the related verb *þekkja* to say that the king welcomed or encouraged the courage shown by his men (*SkP* I, 404).

[31] In *Óláfs saga helga*, this stanza is separated from the other verses in the sequence. Snorri cites it fifteen chapters earlier as corroboration that Sigvatr and Bersi received gifts from Knútr (ÍF 27, 224).

[32] *SkP* I, 622.

Óláfr. Unlike Bersi, Sigvatr has profited by only a small amount at Knútr's court. He is precise in declaring himself the recipient of no more than half a mark, an admission he reserves until the final line of the stanza; it is as if the amount is so small, he remembers it only as an afterthought. The intercalary phrase, "goð sjalfr ræðr ǫllu gǫrva" (God himself fully decides all things), sounds like the poet's rueful admission that he did not receive as much gold as his companion, but it also emphasises Sigvatr's pious refusal to be bought by a rival king. Ostensibly staged as a conversation between Sigvatr and Bersi, the stanza is really about Sigvatr and Óláfr. Sigvatr's report of his experience in England is constructed not to represent a real conversation, but to assure Óláfr of his loyalty.

The theatricality of this apparent conversation between the two skalds continues in stanza 7 as Sigvatr recounts his meeting with Knútr to King Óláfr. In this stanza, the reconstructed nature of the exchange is made explicit, with the two *helmingar* couched in a question-and-answer format:

> Knútr spurði mik mætra
> mildr, ef hǫ́num vildak
> hendilangr sem hringa
> hugreifum Ǫ́leifi.
> Einn kvaðk senn, en sǫnnu
> svara þóttumk ek, dróttinn
> — gefin eru gumna hverjum
> góð dœmi — mér sœma (st. 7).[33]
>
> Knútr, generous with treasures, asked me if I wished to serve him as I did Óláfr, cheerful with rings. I said it was fitting for me to have one lord at a time, and I thought I answered truthfully – good examples are given to every man.

In this stanza, Sigvatr appears to act out, line by line, the scene that took place at Knútr's court. Sitting in the audience, Óláfr is able to witness personally his skald's rejection of the rival king. Curiously, the events described in the stanza mirror the actual context of performance: where the poet once stood before King Knútr in England, he now addresses King Óláfr in Norway. One king's hall has been replaced by another, as Sigvatr repeats to Óláfr the words he originally addressed to Knútr. The poet draws a further parallel between the two kings by emphasising their generosity: Knútr is "mildr mæta" (generous with treasures), just as Óláfr is "hugreifr hringa" (mind-happy with rings). Knútr – or perhaps one should say, the *character* of Knútr as presented by Sigvatr in this stanza – further references the similarities between himself and the Norwegian king when he asks Sigvatr if the poet will serve him "sem Ǫ́leifi" (as [he did]

[33] *SkP* I, 625.

Óláfr). If the kings are so similar, the poet implies, it is really so bad to shift one's allegiance between them? If they are equally generous, is it wrong to accept rewards from both? These are the questions raised in the first *helmingr*. In the second, however, the identity of the kings is shown to be no more than an illusion as Sigvatr dramatically rejects Knútr's offer. The theatrical quality of this rejection – "kvaðk einn dróttinn senn sœma mér" (I said it was fitting for me to have one lord at a time) – is compounded by its complex syntax: Sigvatr's pledge extends over all four lines of the *helmingr*. The assertion of loyalty is wrapped around intercalary clauses that use language reminiscent of legal defence: "þóttumk ek svara sǫnnu" (I thought I answered truthfully) and "góð dœmi eru gefin hverjum gumna" (good examples are given to every man). In this way, Sigvatr seems to turn the hall into a courtroom and the surrounding *drótt* into witnesses of his devotion to Óláfr. In this way, the poet's loyalty to his king is sanctioned and affirmed by the watching community, and the threat of Knútr's destabilising generosity utterly rejected.

Vestrfararvísur is almost the antithesis of a typical skaldic poem. Whereas most eulogies affirm the skald's relationship with the patron, in this sequence, Sigvatr publicly renounces his ties with King Knútr. Although most skalds use their poetry to praise the gifts given to them by kings, in this sequence, Sigvatr praises the gifts given to a fellow skald. While the *dróttkvætt* form invokes a formal, courtly discourse, *Vestrfararvísur* ostensibly begins as an intimate conversation between friends. As a poetic product, its worth is that of a *hǫfuðlausn*, but *Vestrfararvísur* is unlike other poems offered to kings to buy their indulgence and is more akin to the "versified travelogue" in its meditative, first-person description of a journey. Creating in this way a subversive combination of genres and discourses, Sigvatr challenges the audience's assumptions and fears about royal generosity. He acknowledges the expectation that a poet might be tempted to transfer his allegiance between kings in exchange for financial reward, but he counters that expectation by boldly proclaiming his own attachment to Óláfr to be something more. Unlike the many skaldic sequences that applaud King Knútr's influence and wealth, *Vestrfararvísur* is an eloquent meditation on the limits of his royal power.

II. *Kálfsflokkr*

As the section above demonstrates, Sigvatr Þórðarson's talent as a skald accorded him a measure of immunity from the vicissitudes of eleventh-century politics. Not all of Óláfr's followers were so lucky, as Knútr's designs on Norway rendered loyalty to Óláfr not only difficult but dangerous, particularly for those who were warriors rather than poets. This is the situation described in *Kálfsflokkr*, a praise-poem composed by Bjarni gullbrárskáld Hallbjarnarson

about the life of the Norwegian nobleman Kálfr Árnason.[34] The *konungasögur* present a decidedly mixed portrait of Kálfr. Although he remained loyal to the Norwegian king until Óláfr was forced by Knútr's forces to flee to Russia, Kálfr then travelled to England and pledged his allegiance to King Knútr and Jarl Hákon. Kálfr led the Norwegian opposition to Óláfr at the Battle of Stiklastaðir in 1030 and was present at the king's death, although it is unclear whether he himself delivered the fatal blow.[35] Kálfr, however, soon became disenchanted with Knútr's rule in Norway, and only four years later led a delegation to Russia to persuade Óláfr's son Magnús to reclaim the throne. Despite this, Magnús remained distrustful of Kálfr and the nobleman soon fled Norway for Scotland.[36] Kálfr's life, with his multiple shifts in allegiance, is diametrically opposed to the steadfast loyalty described by Sigvatr in *Vestrfararvísur*. In crafting a poem of praise, however, Bjarni the skald must find a way to portray Kálfr's changing loyalties in a positive light. Like Sigvatr before him, Bjarni acknowledges the difficulties posed by Knútr's generosity, but he sets the king's gifts to Kálfr within the wider context of land-ownership and loss. Despite the changing nature of Kálfr's allegiance, the poet emphasises his essential heroism as a warrior fighting for his country, against friend and foe alike.

Like *Vestrfararvísur*, the order and composition of *Kálfsflokkr* varies considerably in the prose sagas; the reconstructed poem is of necessity an educated guess as to the original structure of the sequence.[37] As edited most recently by Alison Finlay, the sequence follows the order of the stanzas cited in the Snorri's *Separate saga* of King Óláfr, although some of the stanzas are also preserved in a different order and combination in *Fagrskinna*.[38] Despite the fact that few

[34] *SkP* I, 877–90. All further references will be to this edition.

[35] Two chieftains named Kálfr were part of the final skirmish with the king and, as Snorri writes, "Menn greinask at því, hvárr Kálfr veitti konungi sár" (men disagree as to which Kálfr gave the king this wound). ÍF 27, 385.

[36] Snorri describes a tense scene in which Magnús commands Kálfr to visit the site of the battle with him, and to show him the exact location of his father's death. From Kálfr's description, Magnús deduces the nobleman's role in Óláfr's death. ÍF 27, 444–45.

[37] That a sequence did once exist – rather than a series of *lausavísur* – is supported by a reference to the name of the poem in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga*, where he also refers to the sequence as a "kvæði" (poem). ÍF 27, 320, 442 and ÍF 28, 25 (here, in *Magnúss saga ins góða* in *Heimskringla*).

[38] See further Finlay's introduction to the sequence in *SkP* I, 877–79. Snorri mainly cites the stanzas as support for events narrated in the prose, such as the Battle of Bókn, Óláfr's exile and return, and Kálfr's subsequent journey to Russia. For the prose context of the verses in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga*, see ÍF 27, 320–21, 334–35, 385, 442, 445, 449. Stanzas 1–6 appear in similar contexts in *Flateyjarbók*, vol. 2, 311, 318–19, 357, and 374, while stanza 8 is recorded in *Orkneyinga saga* as part of the description of the Battle of Rauðabjǫrg. See ÍF 34, 67–68. The verses are recorded somewhat differently in *Fagrskinna*. A stanza combining the first *helmingr* of stanza 1 and the middle four lines of stanza 2 is cited as part of the description of the Battle of Bókn, while a verse composed of the second half each of stanzas 3 and 4 is cited in the

details are known about the poet, Bjarni also appears as a character in *Þorgríms þáttr Hallasonar*, now extant in *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*.[39] There, he is said to perform a poem before Kálfr in Trondheim during the reign of King Magnús Óláfsson. No stanzas are cited in the *þáttr* itself; the narrative focuses not on the poetry *per se* but on the wider issue of Kálfr's loyalty and the ethics of composing praise-poetry about him. As the text relates, in Bjarni's poem "var þar mjǫk getit bardagans á Stiklarstǫðum ok hrósat þeim tíðendum, er þar gerðusk, til lofs Kálfi" (there was much related about the battle at Stiklastaðir and it praised the deeds that were accomplished [there], to the honour of Kálfr).[40] The protagonist of the *þáttr*, Þorgrímr, objects to Bjarni's portrayal of events, saying, "Undarligt er þat, Kálfr, svá vitr maðr sem þú ert, er þér þykkir sœmð í slíku, at menn kveði um glœpi þína ok níðingsverk, er þér genguð í mót Óláfi konungi" (it is remarkable, Kálfr, that a wise man like you thinks there is honour in this, that men speak about your crime and the shameful deeds that you committed against King Óláfr).[41] An argument ensues in which Þorgrímr kills Bjarni and is then killed himself. Although it is doubtful whether the events related in the *þáttr* are accurate – not least because the final stanza of the sequence describes events that must have happened later than those described in the *þáttr* – it is notable that the memory of Kálfr's *glœpr* and *níðingsverk* is thought to present a real and public obstacle to the performance of poetry about his life.

How, then, does Bjarni negotiate this difficulty in the sequence itself? In the order presented in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga* the poem opens with two relatively conventional stanzas that describe Kálfr's support of King Óláfr at the Battle of Bókn in 1027/1028. The king, heroically described as "vápndjarfr Haralds arfi" (weapon-bold heir of Haraldr), is clearly in command at this point: he "bað kosta vígs" (ordered battle to be waged). A description of Kálfr's bravery, however, occupies the majority of the first stanza and is expressed through more innovative and complex poetic circumlocutions than those that describe the king:

> Gǫtuð Gríðar sóta
> gólig fǫng til jóla;
> kenndr vast fyrstr at fundi
> flettugrjóts ok spjóta (st. 1).[42]
>
> You gave the dark steed of the giantess (wolf) good cheer for Christmas;
> you were known to be first at the meeting of split stone and spears (battle).

context of Óláfr's exile in Russia and Kálfr's meeting with Knútr. The two *helmingar* of stanza 6 are reversed, and cited as evidence of Kálfr's journey to Russia to fetch Mágnus. See ÍF 29, 195–96, 198–99, and 208, respectively.

[39] ÍF 9, 299–303. See also a brief biography of the skald in the introduction to this poem in: *SkP* I, 877.

[40] ÍF 9, 301.

[41] ÍF 9, 301.

[42] *SkP* I, 879.

The kenning for wolf, "sóti Gríðar" (dark steed of the giantess), is conventional, but the implied comparison between corpses devoured by wolves and a Christmas feast enjoyed by men is not.[43] There is a gruesome playfulness to this metaphor, and yet the comparison is surprisingly fitting, as the Battle of Bókn took place in late December; the dark humour that compares Christmas cheer to the carnage of battle makes an otherwise conventional kenning more notable and arresting. The kenning for war, "fundi flettugrjóts ok spjóta" (meeting of split stone and spears), is similarly conventional in its presentation of battle as a meeting filled with flying objects; however, the double determinant is unnecessary.[44] The image of stones *and* spears flying through the air emphasises the chaos and danger of this Christmas conflict. It portrays Kálfr's bravery in such a battle – "vast kenndr fyrstr" (you were known to be first) – in a particularly heroic light.

The bravery of Kálfr and the commanding presence of Óláfr are an unbeatable combination, as the second stanza demonstrates, as the poet describes their victory over the Norwegian chieftain Erlingr Skjálgsson. According to the sagas, Erlingr had pledged allegiance to Knútr and Hákon, but was captured during the battle and killed by one of Óláfr's followers.[45] In the prose narratives, Óláfr recognises the killing of Erlingr as the moment which presages his own downfall: when Óláfr's follower, Áslákr Fitjaskalli, impetuously kills Erlingr just as the king is accepting his surrender, Óláfr declares angrily, "Hǫgg þú allra manna armastr! Nú hjóttu Nóreg ór hendi mér" (You strike as the most wicked of all men! Now you have struck Norway out of my hand").[46] In the sagas, the killing of Erlingr brings into sharp focus the divisions that have

[43] Sigvatr also notes the closeness of the battle to Christmas in stanza 8 of his *flokkr* about Erlingr; however, in that sequence the reference to Christmas emphasises the mournful contrast between the expected seasonal festivities and the sadness caused by Erlingr's death (*SkP* I, 640). References to feast-days are not unknown in the skaldic canon, as they provide a useful means of recording the date of notable events. Sigvatr's *Nejavísur*, for example, records the date of Óláfr's victory at the Battle of Nesjar: "Hirð Ǫleifs vann harða hríð palmsunnudag" (Óláfr's army won a hard battle on Palm Sunday, st. 15), see *SkP* I, 578. Bjarni's metaphorical use of Christmas in *Kálfsflokkr* is, however, unusual.

[44] Cf. the many battle-kennings of this kind that include only one determinant, such as "fund odda" (meeting of points, Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga* st. 19), "móti malma" (assembly of weapons, Bragi Boddason, *Ragnarsdrápa*, st. 9), and "þingi vápna" (assembly of weapons, Egill Skalla-grímsson, *Lausavísa* no. 13).

[45] The battle is described in chapter 176 in Snorri's *Óláfs saga helga* (ÍF 27, 313–19). This chapter cites a number of stanzas from Sigvatr Þórðarson's *flokkr* for Erlingr Skjálgsson, in which the poet strongly criticises King Óláfr for the killing of Erlingr. Despite some parallels between the lives of Erlingr and Kálfr – particularly in their alliance with Knútr and conflict with Óláfr – it is notable that Sigvatr makes no mention of Knútr in this sequence. Rather, he describes the killing of Erlingr as a "frændsekja" (crime against one's kin, st. 7) stemming from domestic conflict rather than Knútr's designs on Norway. See *SkP* I, 629–26.

[46] ÍF 27, 317.

arisen between members of the Norwegian nobility, and the king's ultimately fatal inability to control them. It is a dramatic and highly effective move on the part of the saga-author, as the complex political situation is pared down to become an intimate confrontation between just three men. *Kálfsflokkr*, by contrast, articulates the wider consequences of Erlingr's death. The extant stanzas report only his capture, and the poet's focus is not on Erlingr's death but on his loss of territory:

> Ljós es raun, at ræsir
> ráðinn varð frá láði;
> lǫgðusk lǫnd und Egða;
> lið þeira frák meira (st. 2).[47]
>
> The outcome is clear, that the ruler (Erlingr) was deprived of land; lands became subject to the Eygðir; I heard their company was larger.[48]

Although the loss of Erlingr's land to king Óláfr is a triumph for the joint forces of Kálfr and the king, it is also a stark foreshadowing of Óláfr's own impending exile. In the stanza that follows, it is the king, rather than his subject, who must now leave his land:

> Austr réð allvaldr rísta
> ótála haf stáli;
> varð at vitja Garða
> vígmóðr Haralds bróðir.
> Enn of íðnir manna
> emkak tamr at samna
> skrǫkvi; at skilnað ykkarn
> skjótt lézt Knút of sóttan (st. 3).[49]
>
> Certainly, the powerful king (Óláfr) decided to carve the sea with the steel prow, to the east; the battle-minded brother of Haraldr (Óláfr) had to visit

[47] *SkP* I, 880.

[48] The combination of stanzas 1 and 2 in *Fagrskinna* means that the kennings found in the second *helmingr* of stanza 1 are removed in that text, as is the kenning for Óláfr in the *helmingr* cited. The stanza presents a condensed version of the conflict between Kálfr and Óláfr, on one side, and Erlingr on the other: "Vastu, þars vígs bað kosta, / vinreifr með Ǫleifi / — kynnisk kapp þitt mǫnnum — / Kalfr, viðr Bókn austr sjalfa. / Óðu brún í blóði / borð fyr Útstein norðan; / ljós varð raun, at ræsir / ráðinn varð frá láði" (Friend-happy Kálfr, you were with Óláfr, where he ordered battle to be waged, in the east by Bókn itself – your energy is revealed to men. Brown planks advanced through blood to the north of Ústeinn; the outcome became clear, that the ruler was deprived of land). Despite the condensed form of the verse, it is notable that the focus Erlingr's loss of the land remains. ÍF 29, 195–96. On this and other textual variants in the poem, see B. Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstedikte* (Bergen 1982), 56–58.

[49] *SkP* I, 882.

> Russia. Nevertheless, I am not ready to gather false accounts of the deeds of men; after your parting (i.e., the parting between Kálfr and Óláfr), you quickly went to seek out Knútr.

Here, the unambiguous heroism of the first stanza gives way to uncertainty, equivocation, and a distinct unease on the part of the poet about his role as Kálfr's eulogist. In the first few lines of this stanza the poet details the reasons for Óláfr's journey to Russia. In the phrase "allvaldr reð rísta haf," the verb *ráða* could simply function periphrastically as an alliterative space-filler: "the king did carve the sea."[50] The emphasis, in that case, would be on the action of the king departing Norway for Russia, with his defeat echoing Erling's loss of land in the previous verse. The verb *ráða*, however, could also suggest that the king made an active decision to leave Norway – "the powerful king decided to carve the sea" – and this would attribute much greater agency to him. The idea that the king actively chose to leave has close parallels in hagiographic verse composed after his death, in which poets similarly emphasise his decision to return and fight at Stiklastaðir. Þórarinn loftunga, for example, asserts in *Glæolognskviða* that the king "hafði harðla ráðit sér til himinríks" (had powerfully decided to remove himself to the heavenly kingdom).[51] The use of the term "allvaldr" (literally, all-powerful man) in this stanza, although undoubtedly formulaic, further emphasises Óláfr's power and perhaps the king's agency in controlling his own destiny. It must, of course, be admitted that this image is undercut in the following lines by the use of the verb *verða*, denoting the necessity of the king's departure: he "varð at vitja Garða" (had to visit Russia). And yet, a further ambiguity concludes the *helmingr*, as the king is described as "vígmóðr bróðir Haralds" (battle-minded brother of Haraldr). In the context of the king's defeat, one could easily understand *vígmóðr* as denoting battle-weariness: exhausted from the conflict, the king departs for Russia, defeated both mentally and physically.[52] The simplex *–móðr*, however, carries a range of connotations and could equally refer to the king's battle-fury, that is, to his courage.[53] In that case, the decision to depart Norway takes on a distinctly heroic aspect.

The first *helmingr* of this stanza, therefore, may be interpreted in different ways, and in way that are almost directly contrasting in their characterisation of the king and the implications of his journey to Russia. It is consequently fitting that the poet acknowledges the difficulties of his own situation in the second

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[50] *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 485–86.

[51] *SkP* I, 869.

[52] This is how Finlay translates it in *SkP* I.

[53] Cf. its use in this way in an anonymous poem about Óláfr Tryggvason in which the king is described as "vígmóðr vísi" (battle-furious ruler), as well as Halldórr ókristni's description of Jarl Eiríkr Hákonarson as "gunnbliks élmóðr" (eager for the storm of the battle-gleam, i.e., eager for battle). See *SkP* I, 1031 and 469, respectively.

helmingr: "emkak tamr at samna skrǫkvi of íðnir manna" (I am not ready to gather false accounts of the deeds of men). The identity of the *menn* and the nature of their *íðnir* remains unspecified: is the poet referring to Óláfr and his army? To Kálfr and his followers? To warriors in general? The poet proclaims his unease with the possibility of disseminating "fake news," but leaves the nature of that news unspecified. This is a notable contrast to the poet's expressions of certainty elsewhere in the sequence. Bjarni twice uses the adverb "ótála" (certainly, sts. 3 and 4), and once the expression "satts" (it is true, st. 5). In other stanzas he is also happy to assert his dependence on oral report through the repeated use of the verb *fregna*, "to hear, to become informed": "þat kveðk mik frǫgu" (I declare that was reported to me, st. 5); "frák" (I heard, sts. 2 and 7); "frǫgum" (we heard, st. 8). The idea, in stanza 3, that the act of composing poetry is "at samna skrǫkvi" (to gather false reports), is thus emphatically at odds with the representation of the poet's craft elsewhere in the sequence. It is all the more interesting, therefore, that the stanza concludes by reporting Kálfr's change in allegiance: "at skilnað ykkarn lézt skjótt Knút of sóttan" (after your parting you quickly went to seek Knútr). The language here is matter-of-fact and concise, unadorned by kennings and uncloaked by the ambiguity that characterises the first half of the verse. It suggests to the audience that, although the circumstances of Óláfr's departure may be uncertain, the fact of Kálfr's prompt change in allegiance is not. It is interesting that the poet does not seek to hide this fact in a sequence that purports to be a direct address to Kálfr himself. Despite his later regrets, perhaps Kálfr was not ashamed of his change in allegiance at the time this sequence was performed. Indeed, the use of the dual pronoun to refer to Kálfr and Óláfr, followed so quickly by the reference to Knútr, is a surprising analogue to the drama of Erlingr's death, discussed above. In the prose sagas, the drama between three men – Erlingr, Óláfr, and Áslákr – becomes a microcosm of the political unrest in Norway. Bjarni's sequence similarly focuses on the political manoeuvrings of three men, but in this case Kálfr becomes king-maker: his change in allegiance is shown to coincide with Óláfr's loss and Knútr's gain of the Norwegian throne. In this way, betrayal is re-framed as political strength; desertion is no more than necessary quick-thinking in the face of widespread national uncertainty.

In Snorri's account, Kálfr is urged to support Knútr by his wife, Sigríðr. Reminding him that Óláfr was responsible for the deaths of her first husband and two sons, she is an example of the much-discussed "whetting woman" found elsewhere in Old Norse literature.[54] Kálfr is notably reluctant to ac-

[54] See in particular E. Mundal, "The Position of Women in Old Norse Society and the Basis for their Power," *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, vol. 1(1994), 3–11 and J. Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women* (Philadelphia 1996), 174–203. A recent re-examination of this figure is that by Jóhanna Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature. Bodies, Words, and Power* (New York 2013), 15–25.

cede to her demands for vengeance, and it is only in combination with the promise of a large financial pay-out that he agrees to support Jarl Hákon: "Kálfr svarar opt stuggliga, en þó varð hitt at lykðum, at hann leiddisk eptir fortǫlum hennar, ok hét þá því at gerask jarli handgenginn, ef jarli vildi auka veizlur hans" (Kálfr often answers [his wife] angrily, but it concluded that he was persuaded by her arguments and promised then that he would support the jarl if the jarl would increase his revenues).[55] Kálfr travels first to Trondheim to pledge his allegiance to Hákon, and then to England to do the same with Knútr. Snorri cites stanzas 3 and 4 in the context of Kálfr's meeting with the king in England. Although stanza 3, with its focus on Óláfr and his departure to Russia, seems oddly out of place here, stanza 4 closely matches the account in the prose, which concludes with the comment, "en af skilnaði gaf Knútr konungr honum gjafar vegsamligar" (and at their parting King Knútr gave him splendid gifts).[56] The poet similarly notes, "áttu þakka dróttni Engla gjafar" (you have the lord of the English to thank for gifts) and, further, that "gramr Lundúna lét fold fundna þér, áðr fœrir vestan" (the lord of London had land found for you, before you might travel from the west). Yet again, the theme of land-ownership – particularly the passing of land from one man to another – plays a prominent role in this sequence. Kálfr's receipt of land from Knútr works to cement his relationship with his new overlord, although the poet emphasises the pragmatic nature of this deal, which seems to stem more from an extensive process of negotiation than ideals of friendship or loyalty: as the poet remarks, "komtu ótála máli yðru vel" (you [Kálfr] certainly advanced your [i.e., yours and Knútr's] case well), even though "frest urðu þess" (there was a delay in this).

It is possible that the reference to a delay is an ironic comment on the fact that the king's gifts did not materialise,[57] but the stanza that follows makes no hint of trouble between Knútr and his new ally. Rather, Kálfr's rejection of his former lord, Óláfr, is unequivocal:

> Jǫrð rétt vígi at varða
> vígreifr fyr Ǫleifi;
> brauzt við bragning nýztan
> bág; þat kveðk mik frǫgu.
> Fyrr gekkt á stað Stiklar
> stór verk, en óð merki;

[55] ÍF 27, 333.

[56] ÍF 27, 334. Interestingly, the verse composed of stanzas 3 and 4 recorded in *Fagrskinna* combines the *helmingr* about the poet's reluctance to spread false reports is cited here with that describing Knútr's gift of land. In that context, the poet's unease seems more to reflect Kálfr's alliance with Knútr rather than his desertion of Óláfr, but the two events are of course connected: ÍF 29, 198–99.

[57] As suggested by Finlay in *SkP* I, 884.

satts, at sókn of veittir
snjallr, unz gramr vas fallinn (St. 5).[58]

War-cheerful, you decided to defend the land against Óláfr; you fought hard in battle against the most capable prince; I declare that was reported to me. Earlier, you accomplished great deeds at Stiklastaðir, and the standard rushed forth; it is true, brave man, that you sustained the attack until the lord had fallen.

This stanza reprises the much of the same language of battle and bravery used earlier in the sequence. King Óláfr is still portrayed as a great warrior – he is a "bragningr nýztr" (most capable prince) – but praise of Kálfr predominates, as he alone accomplishes his "stór verk" (great deeds). He is "snjallr" (brave) and "vígreifr" (battle-cheerful), the latter in particular recalling the earlier, more ambiguous characterisation of Óláfr as "vígmóðr" (st. 3).[59] Whereas in stanza 2 ships under the joint command of Kálfr and Óláfr "óðu í blóði" (advanced through blood), in stanza 5 Kálfr's standard alone performs the same action against Óláfr's troops. Whereas Óláfr earlier "réð rísta haf" (decided to carve the sea, st. 3), it is Kálfr who now determines the action of the stanza: "rétt at varða jǫrð" (you decided to defend the land), the poet declares. With Kálfr associated with the defence of the land, Óláfr is recast as the enemy whose invasion must be resisted, and battle continues into the final line of the stanza, "unz gramr vas fallinn" (until the lord had fallen). The passive construction not only emphasises the king's final defeat, but echoes the earlier defeat of the traitor Erlingr, who, as the poet similarly related in stanza 2, "vas fenginn" (was captured) and "varð ráðinn frá landi" (was deprived of land). Gone is the poet's anxiety about false rumours and possible treachery; Bjarni has accomplished a rhetorical sleight of hand as Kálfr himself becomes Norway's guardian. The chieftain's allegiance may shift between Óláfr and Knútr, the poet implies, but his devotion to Norway is absolute. Although Knútr's generosity may have weakened the bonds between Óláfr and his followers, the Danish king's promises of land pale into insignificance as Kálfr, the former king-maker, becomes almost a king himself. Royal power, in this sequence, is not the prerogative of any one man; rather, it is available to those who have the bravery to claim it.

King Knútr inn ríki understood well the value of skaldic verse as a tool for propaganda and self-promotion. As Roberta Frank writes:

Skalds flocked to his court – some of the biggest names in the profession – to compose his praises and receive his gifts. During his twenty years

[58] *SkP* I, 885.

[59] This may also be an ironic echo of a variant found in the *Fagrskinna* version of the first stanza, in which Kálfr is described as "vinreifr" (friend-happy) in the context of his relationship with Óláfr and their joint undertaking at the Battle of Bókn: ÍF 29, 195.

> on the throne, England rivalled Norway as *the* centre in the North for the production and distribution of skaldic poetry.[60]

The extant *Knútsdrápur* portray a king who was both a brave warrior and a devout Christian, a prince who precociously conquered new lands as a teenager, and yet grew into a wise law-giver and just ruler. Sequences such as *Vestrfararvísur* and *Kálfsflokkr* do not overtly challenge this portrayal, but they do offer a different perspective on the king's power and way he employed that power against King Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway. Unlike the majority of skaldic poems, these sequences do not unequivocally champion one ruler; rather, they depict two men – a poet and a chieftain – caught between warring kings. Attempting to negotiate the high political drama of the early eleventh century, the two men's loyalties necessarily shift from one ruler to the next; they both desire and resist Knútr's dangerous generosity. *Vestrfararvísur* and *Kálfsflokkr* reveal the poetic strategies that could be employed to legitimise these potentially unorthodox transfers of allegiance. Although not part of the standard corpus of *Knútsdrápur*, the two sequences nevertheless offer an important perspective from which to evaluate the king and the ways his influence and wealth affected those around him. Like Sigvatr watching from behind the locked door of Knútr's hall, the two poems are unique in their examination of the king from just outside the centre of power.

[60] Frank, *King Cnut in the Verse*, 107.

Hlæfdige and *Hlaford*
Gendered Power and Images of Continuity in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*

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The woman who, depending on a historical source, political environment, and the time of her life, is remembered under the names of Emma and Ælfgifu was in the very centre of events shaping eleventh-century political reality of England, Normandy, and Denmark. As a wife of two kings and a mother of two kings whose rule extended, albeit with varying degree of efficiency, over England, Denmark, and Norway, her importance can hardly be questioned. At the same time, the dramatic events in which she was embroiled, including the particularly brutal maiming and then death of one of her sons, her repeated loss of and reinstatement into power, the pendulum swings between periods of political usefulness and relative abandonment, might make her particularly appealing to the attempts at what may be called historical psychologizing of her character. Indeed, to our contemporary eyes and sensitivity she seems on the one hand a figure larger than life: ambitious, influential, perhaps scheming, and self-confident. On the other hand, like all the women of prominence of her times, her importance was directly effectuated only by her relations to powerful men; beginning with her father, who must have been instrumental in deciding about her marriage, and, principally, her royal husbands and her royal sons. Understandably, tempting as they may be, any endeavours at conceptualizing Emma's emotional states and transitions are fraught with controversy and, at best, may be accused of anachronism. However, the fact that with the creation of the *Ecomum Emmae Reginae*, a unique textual eulogy that must have been written under her guidance, she is a rare example of a woman of her era who transcends her gendered role by asserting, shaping, and promulgating a vision of power balances and of her own persona. The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* where these tasks are undertaken is not so much a portrayal of her own story, or of her husbands' and her sons' reigns, but it seeks to create a cohesively angled vision upon them, weaving them into a consistent entity. As much as it describes the events and tensions of the transitions of power in the first decades of the eleventh century, it also prescribes them. In doing so, the *Encomium* may

resemble a hagiography where the unfolding of events corroborates a vision of sanctity, since no action is ultimately accidental or coincidental and they are all predestined to serve their divinely ordained aim, introduced and clarified in the *Encomium*.

The chief point of this chapter is, however, not so much to look at the questions of historicity of the *Encomium* in the way it depicts Queen Emma, nor to view the *Encomium* dedicated to her in order to sift the historical fact from historical propaganda. Instead the intention of the present text is threefold: first and foremost, to propose a reading of and a reading in the creation of Emma's figure as queen in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, secondly, to look at it as a literary text offering a discussion on the mysticism of royal rule and, thirdly, to consider the roles of the issues of gender, understood as a cultural construct of sex, present in the *Encomium*. Consequently, the chapter will be an attempt at an analysis of the *Encomium* as a text writing and asserting Emma's power in its feminine dimension, augmented by the aspects connecting it with masculine prerogatives. Within the scope of this paper, therefore, lies a question of how much of a *hlaford* "lord" we can see in the portrayal of the *hlæfdige* "lady" of the *Encomium*. The discussion will be grounded upon Simon Keynes's 1989 edition of the *Encomium*,[1] which itself is a broadened and revised edition of Alistair Campbell's seminal 1949 work on its text. I shall be also relying and, with due allowances, offering a supplementary interpretation of the image of Queen Emma proposed by Pauline Stafford in what is so far one of the most thorough attempts at a study of the queen's character.[2] In trying to read the gendered power written into the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, I shall also refer to what may be inferred from a selection of late tenth/early eleventh century Old English poetic comments on femininity and queenship preserved within Old English gnomic texts.

Let us begin with an unavoidably sketchy recapitulation of several chief points related to the figure of Queen Emma in order to establish the necessary contextual backdrop to the *Encomium*. Emma, who during her marriage to King Æthelred the Unready accepted the English name of Ælfgifu, should be perhaps counted as one of the most politically engaged and as one of the most ambivalent of early English queens. A daughter of Richard I of Normandy and Gunnora, separated by only two generations from her great grandfather Rollo, possibly identifiable as Göngu Hrólfr, she may be described as either a catalyst of socio-political events of the first half of the eleventh century or, at the very least, a figure in their maelstrom. Related to Norman, Viking, English, Danish, and Norwegian centres of power, Emma witnessed and oversaw the transforma-

[1] A. Campbell ed., *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, with a supplementary introduction by S. Keynes (Cambridge 1998).

[2] P. Stafford, "Emma: The Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century," in A. J. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge 1997), 3–26.

tion of what is commonly described as Anglo-Saxon England into a short-lived Viking-inspired anarchy and, subsequently, into an Anglo-Danish and, as Queen Consort of Norway, Anglo-Scandinavian realm. Less directly, her influence has been discussed as extending well beyond her lifetime: Eleanor Searle convincingly presents Emma as eventually paving the way for the future Norman Conquest.[3] From the House of Normandy, the House of Wessex, the House of Denmark and, posthumously, the House of Normandy again, the wife of King Æthelred the Unready and then of King Knútr inn ríki (Cnut), the mother of King Hǫrða-Knútr (Harthacnut) and King Edward the Confessor, present in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and in skaldic verse – *Emma Normanorum gemma*, to borrow the phrase coined by Henry of Huntingdon some one hundred years after her death,[4] was pivotal in the great eleventh-century "game of thrones." Understandably, both the power struggles of her era and she herself are by far too large to fit into a totalizing image in the scope of this paper, which, as has been said above, is conceived to be an attempt at reading Emma in the contexts of the *Encomium*'s political, matrimonial, and matrifocal dimensions of gendered power.

The second contextual theme which requires recapitulation at this stage is the complex question of the purpose that the *Encomium* was designed to serve. Central to it is the dating of the text, which, as both Campbell and Keynes agree, was most likely created early during the short English reign of King Hǫrða-Knútr, sometime around the year 1041 or 1042.[5] The Encomiast, a Flemish monk from the monastery of Saint-Omer, conceived a text with a clear political agenda, in all likelihood composed in agreement with the queen's vision of her own roles and, as both editors prove, in relative disagreement with the factual state of events.[6] On the issue of reliability of the *Encomium* as a historical source, Simon Keynes sums up his and Alistair Cambpell's view by emphasising the necessity of the approach which should be "guided in the first instance not so much by a determination (against the odds) to separate the hard information from the rhetorical or polemical embellishment … as by wish to understand why Queen Emma should have commissioned a work of this nature in the early 1040s, and how the Encomiast set about the task in hand."[7] Put briefly then, the *Encomium* is a text which appears to be serving its immediate political context of, firstly, presenting the righteousness and beneficial aspects of the Danish rule in England derived from King Sveinn tjúguskegg (Sweyn Forkbeard) and,

[3] E. Searle, "Emma the Conqueror," in C. Harper-Bill et al. (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown* (Woodbridge 1989), 281–88.

[4] Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People 1000–1154*, D. Greenway (trans.) (Oxford 2000), 7.

[5] Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, xxxix–xli, xciii.

[6] Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, lv–lxvi, cxxxii-cli.

[7] S. Keynes, "Introduction to the 1998 Reprint," in Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, lxvii.

more importantly, Knútr inn ríki, and, secondly, of reaffirming the legitimacy of Emma's sons, Hǫrða-Knútr and Edward, on the English throne. The famously dark element associated with it is whether the *Encomium* was not intended to perform one other specific function, namely to appease the situation after an expedition in which Emma's sons by Æthelred, Alfred the Ætheling and Edward, later remembered as the Confessor, failed to gain control over the kingdom having arrived to England from their Norman exile in 1036 after the death of Knútr. Alfred's infamous betrayal by Earl Godwine, his imprisonment, blinding and, soon after, his death at Ely monastery, sent shockwaves across the kingdom, such that several years later the Encomiast goes to great pains in explaining that Godwine's treason and royal death had been instigated by a letter supposedly sent to the English princes and signed by their mother. The letter, the Encomiast stresses, had been apparently fabricated by Harold Harefoot, Knútr's son by Ælfgifu of Northampton, his previous female companion, in order to lure the princes back to England, eliminate them and thus clear his own claims to the throne. The question whether the letter included in the *Encomium* is a "genuine" forgery on Harold's instigation, Emma's own failed political attempt to regain the crown for the House of Wessex or, most chillingly, her attempt to clear the path to the throne for Hǫrða-Knútr, vexes contemporary historians and must have vexed people in her time.[8] The *Encomium* communicates in this respect a clear message of an external, Harold-inspired plot and its tragic consequences. There is no way of deciding, naturally, to what an extent Emma's party was successful in clearing her name. Suffice it to say, however, that rumours and ambiguities may have lingered long enough[9] as the Encomiast completes his work some six years after the disastrous events of 1035–1036.

It is tempting, perhaps, to see Emma as a scheming royal femme fatale, an eleventh-century Lady Macbeth type of figure. However, laying the obviously impossible moral judgement aside, it remains without a shade of doubt that the *Encomium* presents the queen-mother as a person, who, in both her political identity as queen and in her gendered identity as a widow and mother, is in the centre of power. Whether the historical extent of her political influence matched her portrait painted by the Encomiast is a matter of some debate among historians.[10] But if her power is to be understood as consisting in the continuity

[8] Cf. M. W. Campbell, "The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: Personal Panegyric or Political Propaganda," *Annuale Medievale*, 19 (1979), 27–45; T. Bolton, "Ælfgifu of Northampton: Cnut the Great's Other Woman," *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, LI (2007), 247–68.

[9] Cf. F. Barlow, "Two Notes: Cnut's Second Pilgrimage and Queen Emma's Disgrace in 1043," *The English Historical Review*, 73 (1958), 649–656.

[10] Cf. P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh Century England* (Oxford 1997); E. M. Tyler, "Crossing Conquests: Polyglot Royal Women and Literary Culture in Eleventh-Century England," in E. M. Tyler, *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England, c.800–c.1250* (Turnhout, Brepols 2011), 171–96.

and perpetuation of rule and of the Anglo-Scandinavian body politic, then such a perspective presents her influence as directly stemming from the cultural and political expectation associated with femininity. The power understood in this way is the power of the wife, mother, and widow, and it is in these aspects that Pauline Stafford and Katherine Karkov understand its manifestation in the *Encomium* as corresponding to a rising Marian cult in the West.[11]

In order to establish at least a partial cultural perspective on the idealized literary roles of queenship in the exertion of power and perpetuation of stability, we may turn to Old English gnomic verse recorded around the time of Emma's political prominence. The Exeter Book's tripartite *Maxims* poem occupies the central part of the manuscript containing a rich and diverse body of poetry in the vernacular. The poem is a gnomic discussion of the nature of relations in the world as understood by the late tenth- or early eleventh-century poet. The emphasis here is laid upon balance and stability which are effectuated by the mediation and equilibrium of contrasting elements in the obviously Christian ramifications. The stress is on their complementariness, which the *Maxims* present as an organizing principle in what is an apparently turbulent universe. Out of binary oppositions and reciprocal relations emerge wisdom and meaning which also extend to gender relations. Early in the poem, they are asserted as a productive union of sexes:

> … Tu beoð gemæccan;
> sceal wif ond wer in worulд cennan
> bearn mid gebyrdum. … (*Maxims I*, 23–25)[12]
>
> Two shall make a match; man and wife shall bring into the world, children through birth.

In the second, so-called B-part of the poem, reciprocity is applied to the relationship between royal spouses who are assigned complementary roles, external for the *cyning* and internal for the *cwene*. The poem speaks of a queen that is to be procured by king with gifts, which may be understood as a form of externalization of power towards the queen on the part of the king. The queen, however, is subsequently presented as a peacekeeper of the court, which, in turn is a form of internalized power. If the warlike valour belongs to the king, to her belong the comfort and confidence of the people. What unites them both is their mutual generosity, and even though its vectors are, respectively, directed

[11] P. Stafford, "Emma: The Powers of the Queen," 3–26; K. Karkov, "Emma: Image and Ideology," in S. Baxter et al. (eds.), *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald* (Farnham 2009), 509–21.

[12] *Maxims I*, in B. J. Muir (ed.), *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, Vol. I (Exeter 1994), 251. Unless otherwise stated, the translations into Modern English are mine own.

outside and inside of the community, the verse represents the queen and the king as its joint possessors and distributors:

> Cyning sceal mid ceape cwene gebicgan,
> bunum ond beagum; bu sceolon ærest
> geofum god wesan. Guð sceal in eorle,
> wig geweaxan, ond wif geþeon
> leof mid hyre leodum, leohtmod wesan,
> rune healdan, rumheort beon
> mearum ond maþmum, meodorædenne
> for gesiðmægen symle æghwær
> eodor æþelinga ærest gegretan,
> forman fulle to frean hond
> ricene geræcan, ond him ræd witan
> boldagendum bæm ætsomne. (*Maxims I*, 81–92)[13]
>
> A king must acquire a queen after some bargaining, win her with chalices and bracelets. Generous with gifts they must both be. Battle courage must grow strong in an eorl and the woman must increase in the love of her people. She must keep secrets and be of cheerful mind, be generous with horses and treasures. At the mead-drinking she must always greet first the protector of princes; quickly offer the cup to the hand of her lord and to know what is wise for them both as rulers of a home.

The binary relation is then reminiscent of the relation retained in the etymologies of the Old English words denoting the lord and lady, *hlaford* and *hlæfdige* respectively. Both words were used as forms of address to monarchs; the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and royal charters on numerous occasions speak of *Ælfgifu seo hlæfdige* and *Emma hlæfdie* "the Lady *Ælfgifu*" and "Lady Emma."[14] Both contain the root *hlaf* "bread" and, in essence, both display a degree of externality and internality of their gender roles: etymologically *hlaford* can be derived from the Old English *hlaf-weard* "guardian of bread," whereas *hlæfdige* is ultimately rooted in the *hlaf-dæge* "bread-kneader."[15] Along with the etymologies, the passages from the *Maxims* as well as other Old English exemplifications of the roles of queens may be then attesting to the fact that Old English literature seems to be painting a more proportionate picture of gender relations than the later Middle Ages. Intriguingly, this may also be substantiated by the legal

[13] *Maxims I*, in B. J. Muir (ed.), *The Exeter Anthology*, 254.

[14] S. Keynes, "Introduction to the 1998 Reprint," in A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, xvi–xvii.

[15] See the entries for *dæge*, *hlæfdige*, and *hlaford*, in T. N. Toller, *Supplement to J. Bosworth, An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford 1955), 144, 548–49.

positioning of Anglo-Saxon women as oath-worthy and as able to represent themselves in court.[16]

Old English women and Old English queens, such as the one described in *Maxims*, are then culturally conceptualized as complemental, concord-weaving, and productive agents to masculinity, much like *Beowulf*'s conciliatory Wealhtheow, King Hrothgar's royal wife. Indeed, recently she has been compared to the peace-weaving roles assigned to Queen Emma in Helen Damico's radical reading of *Beowulf* as a political and social parable on England of the first half of the eleventh century.[17] Old English tradition boasts a number of feminine figures of royal descent who are represented in historical sources authored by men as instrumental to the germination of political concord and learning and who appear either at important junctures or are meant to be understood as harbingers of resolutions of some crises. Suffice it to mention the Northumbrian princess and abbess, St. Hild, whom the Venerable Bede presents as a godmother of Christian poetry in the vernacular and a patroness of the unity of the church among *gens Anglorum* in her role as the hostess of the Synod of Whitby.[18] Alfred the Great's mother, Queen Osburh of Wessex, is yet another example of a royal personage who, in the words of Asser, played a pivotal role in the education of the future scholarly king, setting Alfred in a direction which would later assert his uniqueness, for, if we are to believe the words of Alfred's biographer, it was her who instilled in the young prince his love of books and learning.[19] In *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, although perhaps less so in her factual life, Lady Emma is all this as a royal wife and a royal mother, but she is also much more, for in the narrative of power that the *Encomium* is, her roles are not only extended towards the spheres reserved for kings, but also towards the spheres that are celestial.

The Encomiast opens his Prologue with what clearly is a most lofty address to the excellence of the queen over anyone else of her sex. Gender is then crucially accentuated from the very start, but Emma's gendered power is established in the manner that brings to mind the salutation of the Virgin Mary, with the Encomiast's emphasis on his own unworthiness and the queen's brilliance which, as the Encomiast does not fail to inform his readership, is more obvious than the radiance of the sun:

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[16] A. L. Klinck, "Anglo-Saxon Women and the Law," *Journal of Medieval History*, 8 (1982), 107–21.

[17] H. Damico, *Beowulf and the Grendel-kin. Politics and Poetry in Eleventh Century England* (Morgantown 2015), 204–84.

[18] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Leo Sherley-Price (trans.) (London 1990), Book IV. 23–24, pp. 243–50.

[19] S. Keynes and M. Lapidge (trans. and eds.), *Alfred the Great. Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London 1983), Chap. 23, p. 75.

> Salus tibi sit a domino Iesu Christo, o regina, quae omnibus in hoc sexu positis prestas morum elegantia.
>
> Ego servus tuus nobilitati tuae digna factis meis exhibere nequeo, quoque pacto verbis saltem illi placere possim nescio. Quod enim cuiuslibet peritiae loquentis de te virtus tua preminet, omnibus a quibus cognosceris ipso solis iubare elarius lucet. (*Encomium...*, Incipit Prologus)

> May our Lord Jesus Christ preserve you, O Queen, who excel all those of your sex in the admirability of your way of life.
>
> I, your servant, am unable to show to you, noble lady, anything worthy in my deeds, and I do not know how I can be acceptable to you even in words. That your excellence transcends the skill of any one speaking about you is apparent to all to whom you are known, more clearly than the very radiance of the sun.[20]

The radiance of the sun invoked at the onset of the *Encomium* has recently been noted by Catherine A. M. Clarke to be a conventional reference to the power of the male ruler in late antique and early medieval tradition of panegyrical writings. Clarke is inclined to see its mention in the Prologue as especially meaningful and "evoking here a sense of Emma's sole authority and power in her own right (rather than merely in relation to a husband, father or son)."[21] The worshipful approach to the queen's grandeur is later augmented in the Encomiast's protracted explanation, the *Argumentum*, as to why he begins his work with an account of King Sveinn tjúguskegg. In a convoluted, almost gnostic manner, in the part which precedes the actual historical account, he is at pains to present his work as constantly orbiting around the queen, even if she is not immediately apparent and literally present in the passages which are to follow. The Encomiast begins with a grandiose comparison of his work to Virgil's *Aeneid*, which, he emphasises, does not openly refer to Octavian and yet is clearly devoted to his praise. This is meant to assure the audiences of the *Encomium* that its author intends to speak of Emma in the like manner. The centrality of her status and her immaterial presence are thus the marks of her queenship as the body politic and as such extend beyond her femininity into the realm of masculinities:

> Nosti, quoniam ubicumque giraveris circulum, primo omnium procul dubio principium facies esse punctum, sicque rotato continuatim orbe reducetur circulus, quo reductu ad suum principium eius figurae continuetur ambitus. Simili igitur continuatione laus reginae claret in primis, in mediis viget, in ultimis invenitur, omnemque prorsus codicis summam complectitur. (*Encomium...*, Argumentum)

[20] A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 4–5.

[21] C. A. M. Clarke, *Writing Power in Anglo-Saxon England. Texts, Hierarchies, Economies* (Cambridge 2012), 129–30.

> You are aware that wherever you draw a circle, first of all you certainly establish a point to be the beginning, and so the circle is made to return by continuously wheeling its orb, and by this return the circumference of the circle is made to connect itself to its own beginning. By a similar connection, therefore, the praise of the Queen is evident at the beginning, thrives in the middle, is present at the end, and embraces absolutely all of what the book amounts to.[22]

Whether the Encomiast, as well as alluding to an imperial and almost celestial status of the queen, is also quasi-biblically alluding to the etymology of her name connected with Gothic *ermen* "whole" (as in the name of Ermanaric)[23] and Old English *eormen* "universal, immense, whole, general" and *emnis* "equity, evenness and equilibrium"[24] is impossible to be corroborated, although it is not inconceivable. In a similar vein and in the spirit of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, the very sound of Emma's name may have been construed by the Encomiast as a sign which implies cyclicity with its two syllables, "em-ma," one immediately giving rise to the other and doing so *ad infinitum*.

The first time the Encomiast makes an explicit mention of Queen Emma as a character of his historical oeuvre does not happen until the sixteenth chapter of the *Encomium*'s second book. When she does appear as a *nobilissima coniuge* "most noble wife," in keeping with the message of the *Maxims* cited above about wooing a queen with gifts, we read not only about the customary gift giving, but, more importantly, also of Emma's immediate declaration of the chief marital condition with which she aims to secure her rank. In so doing, she is portrayed in an act of asserting her gender-related power as a mother of a future heir. Thus her inaugural mention in the account of events immediately positions her as bargaining with the king and as wrestling from him some of his prerogatives – whatever her true bargaining power at that point was, the Encomiast depicts Emma as a match for King Knútr. In this short passage she, as it were, becomes a *hlaford* in the body of a *hlæfdige*:

> Mittuntur proci ad dominam, mittuntur dona regalia, mittuntur et verba precatoria. Sed abnegat illa, se unquam Chnutonis sponsam fieri, nisi illi iusiurando affirmaret, quod nunquam alterius coniugis filium post se regnare faceret nisi eius, si forte ille Deus ex eo filium dedisset. (*Encomium*, Book II.16)
>
> Wooers were sent to the lady, royal gifts were sent, furthermore precatory messages were sent. But she refused ever to become the bride of

[22] A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 6–7.

[23] See the entry for *Ermeniricus*, in W. P. Lehmann, *A Gothic Etymological Dictionary* (Leiden 1986), 100.

[24] See the entries for *emnis* and eormen in J. Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford 1898), 250, 254.

> Knútr, unless he would affirm to her by oath, that he would never set up the son of any wife other than herself to rule after him, if it happened that God should give *her* a son by him.[25]

As the conjugal union is agreed, the marriage is portrayed as being of mutually supportive and mutually inspiring nature in which both King Knútr and Queen Emma appear as spouses of equal importance – the king rejoices at the unexpectedly, as the Encomiast says, noble marriage, while the queen at the excellence of the king and expectation of the offspring:

> Gaudebat enim rex, nobilissimis insperato se usum thalamis; haec autem hinc praestantissima virtute coniugis; hinc etiam spe gratulabunda ace(n)debatur futurae prolis. (*Encomium*, Book II.17)
>
> For the king rejoiced that he had unexpectedly entered upon a most noble marriage; the lady, on the other hand, was inspired both by the excellence of her husband, and by the delightful hope of future offspring.[26]

Finally, the birth of Hǫrða-Knútr complements and seals the marriage and is, as if, effectuated by the queen's "delightful hope of future offspring." This, along with the indisputable grace granted by the Saviour, openly invites a mystical reading of the royal nativity scene, while the mutual care about the newborn and the mutual choice of the name by the royal parents are presented as acts of mutual and commensurate development. The *Encomium* implicitly declares what is an obvious truth at this stage, so obvious that it may almost be deemed confrontational to power relations within the marital union: that there is no king without his queen, since the paramount aim of a monarch is to outlive his time in the body of his successor, who may only be granted by the queen. It is, as if, only because of Emma, in her sacred dual role as a queen and as a queen-mother, that Knútr the father becomes a stronger Knútr in his son, a Hǫrða-Knútr. If we are to follow the likely belief in the mysticism of names that is present in the *Encomium*, then not only is Hǫrða-Knútr a "stronger knot," a bond unifying both the marriage and legitimising Knútr's reign in England, but also Queen Emma, with her original Norman name signifying completeness, is presented by the Encomiast as complementing King Knútr by granting him that which is desired by all kings – a perpetuation of the rule:

> Non multo post siquidem, Salvatoris annuente gratia, filium peperit nobilissima regina. Cuius cum uterque parens intima atque ut ita dicam singulari gauderet dilectione, alios vero liberales filios educandos direxerunt Normanniae, istum hunc retinentes sibi, utpote futurum heredem regni.

[25] A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 32–33, emphasis mine.
[26] A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 34–35.

> Itaque dilectissimum pignus, uti mos est catholicis, sacro abluerunt fonte baptismatis, imponuntque ei vocabulum quodammodo optinens indicium futurae virtutis. Vocatur siquidem Hardocnuto, nomen patris referens cum additamento. Cuius si ethimologia theutonice perquiratur, profecto quis quantusve fuerit dinoscitur. 'Harde' quidem 'velox' vel 'fortis', quod utrumque, multoque maius his, in eo uno cognosci potuit, quippe qui omnes sui temporis viros omnium virtutum praestantia anteivit. (*Encomium*, Book II.18)
>
> For indeed soon afterwards it was granted by the Saviour's grace that the most noble queen bore a son. The two parents, happy in the most profound and, I might say, unparalleled love for this child, sent in fact their other legitimate sons to Normandy to be brought up, while keeping this one with themselves, inasmuch as he was to be the heir to the kingdom. And so they washed this very dear child, as is the custom of all Christians, in the sacred baptismal font, and gave him a name which conveyed in a measure an indication of his future excellence. For indeed he was called Hǫrða-Knútr, which reproduced his father's name with an addition, and if the etymology of this is investigated in Germanic, one truly discerns his identity and greatness. 'Harde,' indeed means 'swift' or 'strong,' both of which qualities and much more could be recognized in him above all others, for he excelled all the men of his time by superiority in all high qualities.[27]

The intention of the *Encomium* as a text reinforcing a vision of Hǫrða-Knútr as a rightful king at the time of its creation, cannot be made more explicit. Regardless what the real state of affairs at the birth of Hǫrða-Knútr was, the *Encomium* offers a vision of continuity of power in which Emma plays a pivotal role. In emphasising the mutual love and care over the new-born son, the mutual baptism, performed as though without the presence of any Church figure, and the mutual choice of the name by the two parents, Hǫrða-Knútr's birth is presented as important to them both. What can be indirectly read from the manner in which he is introduced in the *Encomium* is that the legitimacy of his later reign in England is effectuated not only by his descent from the royal father, but, at least equally importantly, from his royal mother. As a matter of fact, it is the latter that may be seen as strengthening Hǫrða-Knútr's royal rights even more, since the figure of Queen Emma becomes the embodiment of the continuity of rule stretching back to the times of Æthelred on the one hand and promising the preservation of this continuity in the persona of her other son, Edward, on the other hand. Completed around the time of the transition of power in England to Hǫrða-Knútr, who is soon after followed on the throne by Edward, the *Encomium* is an exhortation to the two royal half-brothers, whose rights to the throne, despite their mutual prolonged absences from England, in

[27] A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 34–35.

Denmark and Normandy respectively, are presented as well-founded ultimately because of the authority of their mother.

Queen Emma's true power, as envisaged in the *Encomium*, lies then in maintaining its continuity and perpetuation in and by her sons. In this sense, she is portrayed as central to upholding the line of succession and, consequently, central to upholding the domestic peace, performing the role familiar from the queen in the *Maxims*. And since the perpetuation of royal power is of obviously cyclical nature, as it is repeatedly re-established by the changing monarchic persona and the unchanging realm, the Encomiast resorts to the rhetoric of cyclicity in his eulogy. The metaphor of circularity, as has been mentioned, is markedly employed by the Encomiast in the Argument in order to present his text as revolving around the persona of the queen. Likewise, it is implicitly present in the understanding of the queen's name and may be one of the reasons for which she is named Emma and not Ælfgifu in the manuscript.[28] However, the cyclical aspect of Emma's power over the realm and over the text is also present in two other preeminent features of the *Encomium*: in the prefatory image of Queen Emma receiving the *Encomium* from the hands of the Encomiast, with her sons observing the bestowal, and at the book's end, where the Encomiast expresses the conviction of the perpetuation of the kingdom. It is, therefore, as if the *Encomium Emmae Regine* was indeed conceived as a self-perpetuating work, since the remarkable opening image is a representation of the queen receiving the *Encomium*, which, effectively, would also contain an image of the queen receiving the *Encomium*, and so on; depicting the offering of a book within a book, within a book, within a book, *ad infinitum*, and resembling mirrors reflecting mirrors.

What then was outwardly conceived as a work of history is additionally a work on the mysticism of the continuation of royal power in general and on the mysticism of Queen Emma's gendered power. The correlations between the representation of the queen enthroned and the iconic representations of the Virgin Mary are evident and have been noted by Pauline Stafford,[29] and by Catherine Karkov. Karkov sees the portrait as "based on the traditional iconography of the Adoration of the Magi where the magi bow or kneel before the enthroned Virgin and Child."[30] To expand the discussion of the gendered mysticism of the monarchic ideal, the closing section of this paper intends to suggest some supplementary reading to the scope proposed by Stafford and Karkov.

The similarities between Emma and the Virgin are conspicuous, beginning with the fact that much as the Holy Virgin had to suffer through the ordeal of her son, Queen Emma is portrayed as experiencing comparably traumatic

[28] For Queen Emma's name, title and forms of assent see Appendix I, in: A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 55–61.

[29] P. Stafford, "Emma: The Powers of the Queen," 3–26

[30] C. Karkov, "Emma: Image and Ideology," 510.

vicissitudes related to the disastrous plight of Alfred the Ætheling, and, more importantly, to the struggle of Hǫrða-Knútr with the malignant Harold Harefoot, whom the Encomiast does not fail to present as being of illegitimate birth. This, together with the miracles mentioned as occurring at the tomb of the murdered Alfred, highlights the legitimacy of Emma's sons not only in the eyes of people, but also in the eyes of God.[31] The *Encomium*'s closing paragraph rejoicing in the harmony of the reunited family and in the harmony of the joint rule is visibly conceived to form an enveloping structure with the image of the enthroned queen.

> Hic fides habetur regni sotiis, hic inviolabile viget foedus materni fraternique amoris. Haec illis omnia prestitit, qui unanimes in domo habitare facit, Iesus Christus dominus omnium, cui in Trinitate manenti inmarcessibile floret imperium. Amen. (*Encomium...*, Book III.l4)
>
> Here there is loyalty among sharers of rule, here the bond of motherly and brotherly love is of strength indestructible. All these things are granted them [i.e. Emma, Hǫrða-Knútr and Edward] by Him, who makes dwellers in the house be of one mind, Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, who, abiding in the Trinity, holds a kingdom which flourishes unfading. Amen.[32]

The harmonious vision that the Encomiast presents at the end of his work is already present in its frontispiece illustration of the queen being handed the book while her two sons are admiringly watching this from aside. Likewise then, the visual portrayal of the queen at the opening of the *Encomium* may be illustrated with the words with which it is concluded. In the opening image, clearly a form of a visual motto setting the agenda for the entire text, she is portrayed, perhaps even with some visibly individualised facial features, as sitting enthroned in the pose characteristic of power figures – monarchs in majesty. The representation is that of a *regina utilis*, an effective and pragmatic queen. The fact that she is already holding the book to her left side, between her heart, the kneeling and tonsured Encomiast, and the visible busts of her sons, both deferentially looking up to her, not only positions her as the key figure of the image, but also centralizes the position of the book. And since Emma's posture may also be understood as judiciary, the book and the vision it conveys is the truth against which her achievements are to be measured. The vectors of power are distinctly obvious with their two main axes, which, incidentally, repeat the axes of her shanks: Emma's acceptance of the *Encomium* introduces her sons, Hǫrða-Knútr in particular, as if patiently waiting for the book to assume its place, while the queen's eyes are carefully levelled with the eyes of the new king. Moreover, the position Emma is sketched in, as the enthroned position of power, is tradition-

[31] Book III.6, in: A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 46–47.

[32] A. Campbell (ed.), *Encomium Emmae*, 52–53.

ally used in representations of God, Christ[33] and the Virgin Mary.[34] If we were to apply the Marian iconography to this portrayal, the open book occupies the place of Christ on Mary's lap. This could not be coincidental as the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* is focused also on Emma's sons and, more importantly, it is indeed intended to offer what Christ did offer: the way, the truth and the life, not to mankind, of course, but to the body politic of her sons as a perpetuation of the kingdom and of the Anglo-Danish line of succession, which is among the main purports of the *Encomium*. She is then not only a mother to her sons and people, but also a law- and truth-giving figure.

Intriguingly, this may be corroborated and reinforced by the masculine element present in the depiction of Emma in the image, namely in Emma's dual resemblance to Moses the Lawgiver in the *Encomium*'s frontispiece. For one thing, the book she is holding may be likened to the ten commandments demarcating the new covenant. Correspondingly, the succession of Hǫrða-Knútr and then of Edward may undoubtedly be understood as an opening of a new era. The other elements are the curious leaf-like or horn-like shapes protruding from Emma's crown. Can we see in them a reflection of Vulgate's mistranslation of Moses's apparition as *cornutus* "horned" after a conversation with God?[35] If that were the case, Emma's queenship may be said to have been gendered by her *Encomium* into forms of kingship as well. The *hlæfdige* may have needed to at least partially become a *hlaford* in order to bolster the position of her sons, and thus, in a curiously reversed way, the queen reminds her people that it is her who offers the continuity of power and connections with the past kings in the opening year of Hǫrða-Knútr's reign.

[33] Cf. the representation of Christ in Majesty in the Trinity Gospels, Cambridge, Trinity College MS. B 10 4, fol. 16v. See: C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art* (Ithaca 1982), plate B, p. 97.

[34] For a discussion of visual depictions of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England, see M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge 1990), 142–78.

[35] The theme of the horned Moses is discussed, for instance, by E. G. Suhr, "The Horned Moses," *Folklore* 74 (1963), 387–95.

A Wolf among Wolves*
Kings, Outlaws, and Discourse in the Icelandic Sagas

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Kings and outlaws stand at opposite ends of the legal spectrum. In medieval literature, monarchs are often portrayed as the embodiment of the law, law-givers, law-menders, protectors of the people, peace-makers, figures of the *rex iustus*.[1] On the other hand, outlaws are, by their nature, a negation of legality. Having broken the law embodied by the king, they disturb the peace he tries to keep within his territory. It is therefore expected that both figures are depicted as mutually antagonistic, as each other's *nemesis*. Moreover, kings are not only abstract figures of law, but also figures of executive power, and thus are able to either pardon or punish outlaws found in their domains. For this reason, kings and outlaws, as cats and mice, are expected antagonists. If they met, a king would have no other choice but to perform his function towards the outlaw, which would often entail a life or death sentence.

Yet, in practice, they may have more in common than it seems at first glance. In *The City of God*, Augustine relates the story of an encounter between Alexander the Great and a pirate:

> Remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia? quia et latrocinia quid sunt nisi parua regna? manus et ipsa hominum est, imperio principis regitur, pacto societatis adstringitur, placiti lege praeda diuiditur. [...] eleganter enim et ueraciter Alexandro illi Magno quidam conprehensus pirata respondit. nam cum idem rex hominem interrogaret, quid ei uideretur, ut mare haberet infestum, ille libera contumacia: quod tibi, inquit, ut orbem terrarum; sed quia id ego exiguo nauigio facio, latro uocor; quia tu magna classe, imperator.

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* The title refers to a proverb from *Hrólfs saga kraka*: "kann vera, at hér ráði vargar með úlfum." In Guðni Jónsson (ed.), *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda* (Reykjavík 1959), I. 3. 8. The translation "can it be that wolves are plotting with wolves" does not render the subtle wordplay between "vargr" and "úlfr," both meaning "wolf," though "vargr" was recurrently associated with criminals and outlaws.

[1] For a detailed analysis of the implantation and evolution of the *Rex Iustus* in the sagas, see H. Monclair, *Lederskapsideologi på Island i det trettende århundret. En analyse av gavegivning, gjestebud og lederfremtoning i islandsk sagamateriale* (Olso 2004).

> Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince; it is knit together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. […] Indeed, that was an apt and true reply which was given to Alexander the Great by a pirate who had been seized. For when that king had asked the man what he meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with bold pride, "What you meant by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, whilst you who do it with a great fleet, you are a styled emperor.[2]

Reading this statement can easily bring to mind the examples of outstanding Norse kings, such as Saint Ólafr, who plundered all the northern and Baltic seas before becoming the Saint King of Norway, or King Sverrir, a gang leader becoming anointed king of Norway, to paraphrase the title of Sverre Bagge's book.[3] Joonas Ahola, in his recent dissertation on outlawry in the family sagas, purports that the description of Sverrir's youth in the Faeroe Islands and in Norway uses the same narrative features as the outlaw narratives of Icelanders,[4] with a similar kind of "David and Goliath" pattern.[5] Indeed, Sverrir starts his career by being chased from the Faeroes for striking a man,[6] a woman provides him with shelter (another important feature of outlaw narratives[7]), and he later escapes to Norway, where he wanders in the woods until he becomes the leader of the defeated troops of King Eysteinn. He is described as being extremely resourceful in the wilderness despite the numerical superiority of his enemies; he overcomes his hardship, achieves victory, and finally becomes king.[8] Therefore, we may state that the difference between a king and an outlaw is not always a difference of nature, but rather a difference of scale and ambition. A bandit chief can become a royal pretender seeking to legitimize

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[2] Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, M. Dods (trans.) (Peabody 2009), Book IV, 4, p. 101. This passage is thought to have been formulated by Cicero, *De Re Publica*, *De Legibus*. C. W. Keyes (trans.) (Cambridge 1961), 9–11.

[3] S. Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed: Kingship in Sverris saga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* (Odense 1996).

[4] J. Ahola, *Outlawry in the Icelandic Family Sagas* (Helsinki 2014), 373–75. Also discussed by A. Wilson, "Ef eigi kœmi troll milli húss ok heima"; Monstrousness and the Communication of Power in *Sverris saga*, in *Quastio Insularis 16* (2016), 117–42.

[5] S. Bagge, "Ideology and Propaganda in Sverris saga," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, vol. 108 (1993), 3–4.

[6] *Sverris saga*, ed. Þorleifur Hauksson, Íslenzk fornrit 30 (Reykjavík 2007), ch. 1.

[7] J. Ahola, *Outlawry*, 198–203. See also J. Ahola, "Outlaws, Women and Violence. In the Social Margins of Saga Literature," in A. Ney, H. Williams, and F. Charpentier Ljungqvist (eds.), *Á Austrvega. Saga and East Scandinavia* (Gävle 2009).

[8] His youth is also reminiscent of hagiographic literature, showing signs and portents present from birth. See L. Holm-Olsen, *Studier i Sverres saga* (Oslo 1953), 71.

his status (as Sverrir Sigurðarson), and, in turn, a king can become a fugitive, a king in exile (such as Saint Ólafr). Moreover, as in the Robin Hood tradition and other post-medieval tales about historical outlaws, kings and outlaws could even be pictured as defending the same ideal of justice (as in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*), since numerous outlaws were wronged aristocrats in search of a restoration of their status; villains being the middlemen, the illegitimates, the local authorities, and the sheriffs.[9]

Consequently, keeping these dynamics in mind, this article aims to question the type of discourse held towards kings and kinship through specific scenes of encounters with outlaws in the sagas. What is at stake in their dealings? A king may be accused of a wrongdoing by an outlaw who becomes then a figure of justice and puts the king's legitimacy at risk. This will help to define outlaw characters as a literary device used to produce a type of "criminal discourse," a dialectical tool used to criticize aspects of royal leadership in the saga-world.

Kings, Outlaws, and the Birth of Iceland

In a study about the relationship between outlaw tales in England and in Iceland, Joost de Lange stated that the two types of tradition diverged mostly because of the geographical and political situation of Iceland.[10] According to him, Iceland, not being a monarchy contrary to England, had no reason to explore the problems of tyranny, succession or extent of royal power that appear prominently in English narratives. Neither could the king appear as a benevolent character. Icelandic outlaws, in result, tended to be solitary men, and their stories focused on individual fates rather than common causes involving political statements. Yet, Lange is only partly right in his opinion. Considering that there was no king in Iceland during the Saga Age,[11] and the fact that an Icelandic full outlaw was supposedly unable to leave the island since he was *óferjandi* (not transportable), it is true that no actual king-outlaw meetings occurred in Iceland. This may be the reason why not a lot of scholarly attention had been paid to the king-outlaw relationship in Icelandic sources, while it became such an important motif in the insular, the so-called the Matter of Greenwood tradition.[12]

Nonetheless, Icelanders wrote the *Könungasögur* (Kings' sagas), where the antagonism between kings and outlaws is clearly stated, as for instance in

[9] On the ideal of justice being the source for outlaws' popularity, see the classical study by E. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London 1969).

[10] J. De Lange, *The Relation and Development of English and Icelandic outlaw-traditions* (Haarlem 1935), 127-128.

[11] Even after the submission to Norway in 1262–1264, no Norwegian King entered Icelandic territory. The first king to ever visit Iceland was Christian IX, King of Denmark in 1874.

[12] M. Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend* (New York 1961), 1–8.

Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar: "Hann friðaði vel fyrir landi sínu ok eyddi öllum víkingum ok útilegumönnum," "he maintained peace well in his land and defeated all vikings and outlaws."[13] Similarly, the *Íslendingasögur* (Sagas of Icelanders), including outlaw narratives, hold a rather strong presence of kings, even though these kings are geographically distant. Contrary to what Lange stated, a distant king does not mean a lack of interest in kingship, nor whether the saga was written before or after the submission to the Norwegian crown. The king always played a part in Icelandic narratives, and the service to foreign kings is a recurrent theme in saga writing.

From the earliest sagas to the latest ones, most prologues in the sagas of Icelanders do not fail to mention a king and a lot of them even hold discourses on kingship. Regardless of the precise time of writing of each saga, these discourses can be summed up according to the tone or tendency they take towards kingship or, more precisely, towards a specific king, namely Haraldr hárfagri. The most exemplary virulent speech against the king could be found at the beginning of the outlaw story *Harðar saga*:

> Á dögum Haralds ins hárfagra byggðist mest Ísland, því at men þoldu eigi ánauð hans ok ofríki, einkanliga þeir, sem váru stórrar ættar ok mikillar lundar, en áttu góða kosti, ok vildu þeir heldr flýja eignir sínar en þola ágang ok ójafnað, eigi heldr konungi en öðrum manni.[14]
>
> It was in the days of Harald Finehair that Iceland was largely settled, because people could not put up with his oppression and tyranny, particularly those who were of great descent and proud mind and had good means, and they preferred to abandon their possessions than suffer aggression and injustice, whether from the king or anyone else.[15]

In *Egils saga*, which has a style comparable to Snorri Sturluson's history of kings *Heimskringla*, the reign of King Haraldr is labelled as tyranny[16] and in *Laxdæla saga*, a speech held by Ketill *flatnefr* (Flat-Nose) and his son Bjǫrn, states that they "[...] þykkjumk ek ekki af því vaxa, þótt ek bíða heiman þræla Haralds konungs, ok elti þeir oss af eignum várum [...],"[17] "…see little honor to be gained in sitting at home waiting for King Haraldr's henchmen to chase

[13] *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson, Þorður Ingi Guðjónsson, Íslenzk fornrit 31 (Reykjavík 2013), 128.

[14] *Harðar saga*, ed. Þorhallur Vilmundarson, Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, , Íslenzk fornrit 13 (Reykjavík 1991), 3.

[15] A. Faulkes (trans.), *Three Icelandic Outlaw Sagas* (London 2004), 267.

[16] "En af þessi áþján...." *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit 2 (Reykjavík 1979), ch. 4, p. 12.

[17] *Laxdæla saga*, ed. Einarr Ólafur Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík 1934), ch. 2, p. 4.

us off our lands,"[18] knowing that the king will not give any compensation for their killed kinsmen.

Other sagas take a more realistic tone, acknowledging the tensions created by King Haraldr's hostility (*Grettis saga*,[19] *Flóamanna saga*) and the migration to Iceland as a result of a no-choice situation (*Eyrbyggja saga*, *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Kórmaks saga*). Some others mention the king for reckoning time, as a regnal function[20] (*Gísla saga*, *Hrafnkels saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*), while some do not mention the settlement myth as the story starts when the island is already settled (*Njáls saga*, *Bandamanna saga*, *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Víga-glúms saga*…). Finally, few sagas describe the king in a positive light. Haraldr is mentioned as the wisest of men with all the skills fitting his royal dignity (*Víglundar saga*), or as being a close friend with the settler who does not want to leave his side (*Vatnsdæla saga*). Therefore, the sentiment towards the king seems to move between three categories, from a clear tyranny, to an acknowledgment of the tensions generated because of his ascension, to an obvious pro-royal statement.

In majority of cases, the settlement myth of Iceland presents kings and settlers starting off on the wrong foot. Iceland's founding ancestors are presented as outlaws of the king of Norway, who used outlawry as a political tool to get rid of possible challengers to power. In that aspect, the Norwegian king is the indirect founder of Iceland.[21] Yet, in one case it could be argued that the king is also presented as a direct founder of Iceland, as in *Vatnsdæla saga*. Ingimundr, the noble chieftain starting the Vatnsdalur's lineage, is reluctant to leave his friend the king to settle Iceland, which appears to him as an unworthy "eyðisker."[22] Ingimundr, however, prepares to leave for Iceland. There is no formal ritual of land-taking, but only a series of names given to new places. Unlike other sagas, this settlement myth is slow and melancholic, as Ingimundr misses Norway dearly while wandering around the land.[23] He is, in fact, looking for a precious amulet, given to him by the king as a token of friendship, which

[18] Viðar Hreinsson (ed. and tr.), *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, Vol. 5 (Reykjavík 1997), 2.

[19] "…fyrir ófríði Haralds konungs." *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit 7 (Reykjavík 1964), 8.

[20] It is part of the saga-world to refer to time in regnal years, that is to say by mentioning kings in order to situate the story within a time-frame. In that sense, Iceland belonged to the Norwegian time zone. See Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, "Kings, Earls and Chieftains. Rulers in Norway, Orkney and Iceland c. 900–1300," in G. Steinsland et al. (eds.), *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Medieval Ages. Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland, Orkney and the Faeroes* (Leiden 2011), 84.

[21] Ármann Jakobsson, "Our Norwegian Friend: The Role of Kings in the Family Sagas," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, vol. 117, (2002), 149.

[22] "A desert skerry." *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. Einarr Ólafur Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 8 (Reykjavík 1939), ch. 10, p. 27.

[23] *Vatnsdæla saga*, ch. 15, p. 40.

mysteriously disappeared from his belongings. The prophecy revealed to him that this amulet is buried somewhere in Iceland, where he should settle for good. Therefore, in this case, the land-taking is not only about carrying a sacred or ancestral power from Norway to Iceland,[24] but about literally carrying a specifically *royal* power to Iceland at the time of the settlement, symbolized by the king's gift providentially buried there before anyone's arrival. Yet again, in the very same saga, kings and criminals are closely associated with each other, as Grímr, Ingimundr's foster-brother, promotes the journey to Iceland by saying: "…er mér sagt got frá landakostum, at þar gangi fé sjálfala á vetrum, en fiskur í hverju vatni, skógar miklir, en frjálsir af ágangi konunga ok illræðismanna,"[25] "I have heard good things about the land – that livestock feed themselves during the winters, that there are fish in every river and lake and great forests, and that men are free from the assaults of kings and criminals."[26]

Therefore, we could say that kings and outlaws, even though antagonist figures, together gave birth to Iceland, and thus marked their relationship with an original and unbreakable tie, which later on will still be a matter of concern in the sagas. When the narratives turn their focus towards the development of Icelandic protagonists within Iceland, there is still a recurrent theme of service (one may say a rite of passage) at the Norwegian court, common for promoting promising Icelandic young men. In a similar fashion, lesser outlaws fleeing from Iceland could be meeting with the Norwegian or Danish kings, as their sentence applied only to the Icelandic territory.[27] The meetings under scrutiny will logically only include Icelandic outlaws abroad or the king's outlaws, and will only be happening outside Iceland, at the king's advantage.

Kings as Law-Breakers

Egils saga is probably one of the sagas of Icelanders developing most extensively the theme of kingship through the enmity between the kings of Norway and Kveld-Úlfr and his descendants. The saga has been held as abnormally

[24] M. Clunies-Ross, *Prolonged Echoes, Volume 2: The Reception of Norse Myths in Medieval Iceland* (Odense 1998), 138.

[25] *Vatnsdæla saga*, ch. 10, p. 31.

[26] *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. IV, ch. 10, p. 15.

[27] There are very few examples of an Icelandic full outlaw (*skógarmaðr*) succeeding in escaping Iceland, as it was forbidden to transport them by boat. See the index of outlaws by J. Ahola, *Outlawry*, 454–57. On the similitude between lesser outlawry and social means of promotion for young Icelandic men, see M. Poilvez, "Grettir's Little Sword. Outlawry, Childhood and Masculinity in Medieval Iceland," in R. Gogosz and T. Zielińska (eds.), *Grettir's Little Sword. Constructing Masculinity in Old Norse Society* (Wodzisław Śląski 2017).

hostile towards the institution of kingship for the genre.[28] After the death of Egill's uncle Þórólfr at royal hands, the enmity between the king and Egill's father, Skalla-Grímr reaches its climax of tension. Egill travels to Norway and, expectably, the king's attitude towards the son of his enemy is less than welcoming. Yet, Egill is not initially declared an outlaw.

The situation changes when Egill enters a dispute on inheritance with a follower of the king. During the legal battle at the assembly in Norway (*Gulaþing*), Berg-Qnundr, Egill's antagonist, calls him *útlagi Eiríks konungs*,[29] "an outlaw of King Eiríkr." This is the first time Egill is called an outlaw, and in particular the king's outlaw. Yet, Egill is not officially an outlaw at that time and Qnundr probably aims at discrediting Egill's claim to inheritance.[30] Supported by Queen Gunnhildr and by the king, Qnundr wins the case. Egill – as usual – reacts aggressively, and infuriates the king. His friend Arinbjǫrn urges him to flee, and so Egill does. Later on, the king has to set for an expedition, and officially declares Egill an outlaw throughout Norway: "En áðr Eiríkr konungr reri þenna leiðangr, þá gerði hann Egil útlaga fyrir endilangan Nóreg ok dræpan hverjum manni,"[31] "before sailing off on his expedition, King Eirik declared Egill an outlaw throughout Norway, whom anyone might kill with impunity."[32] The news of Egill's outlawing spread, and Egill then delivers a stanza where he clearly calls the king a law-breaker (*lǫgbrigðir*):

> 29. Lǫgbrigðir hefr lagða,
> landalfr, fyr mér sjǫlfum,
> blekkir brœðra søkkva
> brúðfang, vega langa;
> Gunnhildi ák gjalda,
> greypt's hennar skap, þennan,
> ungr gatk ok læ launat,
> landrekstr, bili grandat.[33]
>
> 29. Land spirit, the law-breaker
> has forced me to travel
> far and wide; his bride deceives
> the man who slew his brothers.
> grim-tempered Gunnhild must pay

[28] Ármann Jakobsson, "Royal Pretenders and Faithful Retainers: The Icelandic Vision of Kingship in Transition," *Gardar*, 30 (1999), 50. See also J. Byock, "Egilsssaga og samfélagsminni," in G. J. Guðmundsson and E. K. Björnsson (eds.), *Íslenska söguþingið 28–31. Maí 1997* (Reykjavík 1998), 379–89.

[29] *Egils saga*, ch. 56, p. 153.

[30] It could also be a scribal mistake in the timeline of the story.

[31] *Egils saga*, ch. 57, p. 164.

[32] *Egil's saga*, B. Scudder (trans.) (London 2004), 114.

[33] *Egils saga*, ch. 57, p. 165.

> for driving me from this land.
> In my youth, I was quick to conquer
> hesitation and avenge treachery.[34]

Afterwards, Egill kills Ǫnundr, and the king's young son, before setting up a mocking-pole against the king and queen, and thereafter leaving for Iceland.

There is a last mention of Egill as an outlaw, before he is pardoned (but not reconciled) thanks to his famous poem *Hǫfuðlausn* (head-ransom). His friend Arinbjǫrn is trying to persuade the king not to kill Egill, who showed up in his court in England (meanwhile Eiríkr was, ironically, forced into exile from his own kingdom by Hákon Aðalsteinsfóstri). During the negotiations, Arinbjǫrn reaffirms that the king broke the law against Egill:

> En þér, konungr, brutuð lǫg á Agli fyrir sakir Berg-Ǫnundar, en þar á ofan vildu þér hafa Egill at dauðamanni ok drápuð menn af honum, en ræntuð hann fé ǫllu, ok þar á ofan gerðu þér hann útlaga ok rákuð hann af landi, en Egill er engi ertingamaðr.[35]
>
> But you, king, broke the law against Egill in favor of Berg-Ǫnundr, and later wanted to have Egill killed, and killed his men, and seized all his wealth, and thereafter you made him an outlaw and seized his land, but Egill is not a man who stands being provoked.[36]

Egils saga has been widely studied on its discourse on kingship, showing that men who are loyal to the king end up dead (the two Þórólfrs), while those refusing to serve a king have a good destiny (Skalla-Grímr and Egill). As shown here, one of the specific mechanisms behind this discourse involves staining the king with accusations of lawlessness/law-breaking, which, through its rhetoric, would bring him closer to the status of an outlaw, at least in theory.

As a matter of fact, it is not the only time a king is compared to a law-breaker while dealing with an outlaw. In *Heimskringla*,[37] King Haraldr hárfagri outlawed Gǫngu-Hrólfr from Norway (*útlaga af Noregi*) for harrying the area of Vík. His mother Hildr begs the king to forgive her son, but the king refuses. Out of rage, she utters a verse, a *lausavísa*:

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[34] *Egil's saga*, B. Scudder (trans.), 114.

[35] *Egils saga*, ch. 59, p. 181.

[36] *Egil's saga*, B. Scudder (trans.), 125–26.

[37] The point of the present article is not to discuss authorship, yet it is noteworthy to underline that Snorri Sturluson, author of *Heimskringla*, is thought by many to be also the author of *Egils saga*, and this similar use of the concept of law-breaker and outlaw applied in discourses regarding kings might be yet another layer pointing towards his authorship, or at least strenghening the idea of a close circle to him producing both texts. For the most recent debate, see Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Enigma of Egill: The Saga, the Viking Poet, and Snorri Sturluson*, Victoria Cribb (trans.) (Ithaca 2014).

49. Hafnið Nefju nafna,
nú rekið gand ór landi
horskan hölða barma.
Hví bellið því, stillir?
Illt's við úlf at ylfask
Yggs valbríkar slíkan,
muna við hilmis hjarðir
hœgr, ef hann renn til skógar.[38]

49. Now you banish Nefja's namesake,
from the land outlawed
drive the wise brother of heroes.
Why do you act so, ruler?
Unwise to be wolfish with such a wolf
of Óðinn's slaughter-board;
he'll treat the king's flocks fiercely
if he takes to the forest.[39]

The whole playfulness of the *vísa* relies on the wolf-related puns, a common image for outlaws and lawlessness. First, Hrólfr's name is a compound of *hróðr* (fame) and *úlfr* (wolf). Then *gandr* has also the second meaning of "wolf."[40] Finally, the poem progresses towards its climax: "*við úlf at ylfask*," ("*wolfish with such a wolf*") where "ylfask," which means "to threaten," translates literally as "to act as a wolf/wolfishly" or "to turn oneself into a wolf."[41] Therefore, with a kind of artistic license given by the skaldic verse, Hildr does not only accuse the king of unfair behaviour towards her son, but accuses him of unlawfulness by equating him with the man he exiled, through the traditional semantics of the wolf/outlaw.[42]

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[38] *Heimskringla I*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnason, Íslenzk fornrit 26 (Reykjavík, 1941), 123–24, emphasis mine.

[39] Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla volume I: The Beginnings to Óláfr* Tryggvason, A. Finlay and A. Faulkes (trans.) (London 2011), 72, emphasis is mine.

[40] According to Sveinbjörn Egilsson, Finnur Jónsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguæ septentrionalis: ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog* (Copenhagen 1931), 170, even though the first meaning is "stout stick, staff." This first meaning has been analysed in connection with this specific poem by E. Heide, *Gand, seid og åndevind* (Bergen 2006), 18–22.

[41] *Ylfask* is an *hap. leg*. formed from the noun "úlfr," wolf. Several scholars choose to render that literal meaning in their own translation of the stanza. See M. Clunies-Ross, *History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge 2005), 80, and S. Ballif Straubhaar, *Old Norse Women's Poetry: The Voices of Female Skalds* (Cambridge 2011), 12.

[42] On the terminology of outlawry and its association with wilderness, see M. Jacoby, *Wargus, Vargr, Verbrecher, Wolf. Eine sprach- und rechtsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Uppsala 1974); G. Breen, "'The Wolf is at the Door.' Outlaws, Assassins, and Avengers Who Cry 'Wolf!,'" *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, vol. 114 (1999), 31–43; For a recent study of the vocabulary of outlawry,

Later on, Hrólfr would settle an earldom in Normandy, and the earls of Normandy would be said to descend from him, including William the Conqueror. Here again, we see that the distance between a king (or a noble ruler) and an outlaw is not rigid, but a matter of individual actions and lawfulness, at least in the saga discourse. A king can act unlawfully, even though he is supposed to enact the law. And, conversely, an outlaw can still act lawfully, even though he has been declared outside the protection of the law.

The moment of an encounter between a king and an outlaw seems to be a dangerous moment, as it might reveal publicly how similar they may be despite their difference of status, and it may stain the king's legitimacy. In short, it sends a warning to kings: you may be king but you can be outside the law, and not according to an official legal status, but according to a higher sense of justice, which is what partly holds a king in place, and which finds expression in saga literature.

Royal Patrons for Outlaws

Though the encounter with an outlaw is a moment of risk for a king, it is also a moment of risk for an outlaw, as he could be killed or put into irons on the spot. In *Grettis saga*, the famous Grettir *sterki*, after having been exiled once abroad, returns to Iceland, but leaves again, as he still cannot really settle into the farm lifestyle. During this second trip, trying to bring fire for the night for his companions, he accidentally sets another camp on fire, frightening the people there as he emerges from the water looking like a troll (ch. 38). Three Icelandic brothers die in the incident. Thereafter, Grettir goes to see King Óláfr Haraldsson in order to explain the situation. King Óláfr gives him a chance of an ordeal in church, even if dissonant voices are heard among his audience:

> Undarligr háttr er nú hér í landi þessu, þar sem menn skulu kristnir heita, at illvirkjar ok ránsmenn ok þjófar skulu fara í friði ok gera þeim skírslur […] ok er þetta allmikill ósiðr.[43]
>
> What a strange custom in this country that calls itself Christian, to allow evil-doers and bandits and thieves to go about in peace and undergo ordeals […] This is an outrage.[44]

But Grettir loses his temper once again and, at the same time, loses his chance to get rid of the accusations against him. He tries to remind King Óláfr

see A. I. Riisøy, "Outlawy: From Western Norway to England," in S. Brink and L. Collinson (eds.), *New Approaches to Early Law in Scandinavia* (Turnhout 2014), 101–29.

[43] *Grettis saga*, ch. 39, p. 133.

[44] *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. II, ch. 39, p. 112.

of their kinship[45] and of his warriors' skills. King Óláfr cannot let such a public offence go unpunished, yet he still praises Grettir:

> "Sé ek þat" sagði konungr, "at fáir menn eru nú slíkir fyrir afls sakar ok hreysti, sem þú ert, en miklu ertu meiri ógæfumaðr en þú megir fyrir þat með oss vera. Nú skaltu fara í friði fyrir mér."[46]
>
> "I can see there are few men to match you in strength and valour" said the king, "but you are far too ill-fated. You may go in peace as far as I am concerned."[47]

King Óláfr, in a way, seems to respect and acknowledge Grettir's valour. He blames Grettir's unluckiness/misfortune (*ógæfa*) and the circumstances more than the man himself.

In a similar way in *Króka-Refs saga*, Króka-Refr is depicted – even if not named – as a *kólbítr* "coal-biter." After being considered an idiot and an antisocial child, he reveals his potential as a bloodthirsty revenge machine and has to leave Iceland for Greenland. He then starts a kind of long-distance relationship with the Norwegian King Haraldr harðráði.[48] The latter is aware of his deeds in Iceland and Greenland because of one of his retainers spreading the gossip, and sends gifts to the king, asking for his help to kill the outlaw. However, the King of Norway displays respect for Króka-Refr. He makes statements about his craftsmanship and skills, receives his gifts, and blames his condition on the circumstances (as did King Óláfr with Grettir[49]). Reluctantly, he declares him outlawed:

> Nú þó at hann sé mikill fyrir sér, þá verðum vér þó at geyma várrar tignar, at leiða öðrum at drepa niðr hirð vára, ok af því gerum vér hér í dag þenna mann útlægan fyrir endilangan Nóreg.[50]

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[45] The kinship with Saint Óláfr is reminded also in the genealogical prologue: "Qnundr hér maðr; hann var Ófeigsonr burlufótar, Ívars sonar beytils. Qnundr var bróðir Guðbjargar, móður Guðbrands kúlu, fǫður Ástu, móður Óláfs konungs ins Helga." *Grettis saga*, ch. 1, p. 3. "There was a man called Onund. He was the son of Ofeig Hobbler, whose father was Ivar Horse-cock. Onund's sister Gudbjorg was the mother of Gudbrand Lump, whose daughter Asta was the mother of King Olaf the Holy." *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. II, ch. 1, p. 49.

[46] *Grettis saga*, ch. 39, p. 134.

[47] *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, vol. II, 113.

[48] Similarly, in *Egils saga*, Egill and his father developed a kind of distant relationship with the Norwegian kings and leaders through gift-giving. On the meaning of these royal gifts, see S. Barreiro, "Two Enraging Gifts in *Egils saga*," *Mirator*, vol. 15.2 (2014).

[49] "Konungr sagði svá, at honum þætti svá verða í hans frásögn sem nauðr hefði til rekit víðast um harðræði hans…." *Króka-Refs saga*, ed. Hermann Pálsson (Reykjavík 1960), ch. 18, p. 158. "The king said that it seemed to him that necessity had often driven Ref to act harshly." *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, vol. III, The Saga of Ref the Sly*, ch. 18, 418.

[50] *Króka-Refs saga*, ch. 19, p. 157.

> Now, even though he is a powerful and strong man, we must preserve our dignity and make others fear to slay our followers, and therefore we here today make this man outlawed the length and breadth of Norway and as far as our realm extends.[51]

The king then acts to avoid fear spreading among his subjects, and preserves his own status as king, a peace-keeper, rather than following his own opinion. Later on in the saga, another king, the king of Denmark, will give the outlaw full recognition.[52] In short, the outlaw is following an ideal of justice as much as the king, but the latter has to face its practice in order to protect his retainers and his own status. In a way, the outlaw has the prerogative of a more extreme, purer sense of justice than the king himself. Both make statements showing respect for one another, as worthy enemies. The king states that necessity has let the outlaw to act harshly, Refr says that his enemy could not have set up a plan without the counsel of a wiser man than themselves (namely the king). Moreover, despite many killings all over Iceland and Greenland, Refr never publicly announces his deeds, except the one single time when he does it in front of the king himself,[53] which grants him a better treatment than anyone else. As long as they are distant, mutual respect is kept. Once occupying the same space, the king has to take action to keep his dignity, to dissociate himself from the outlaw, as their blending natures could be exposed.

From these encounters, a tutelary figure seems to emerge, namely Saint Óláfr as the preferred royal patron for outlaws. In *Fóstbræðra saga*, it is said that Þormóðr, sentenced to outlawry, is one of the king's favourites. By the end of his life-time, it is said that: "Þormóðr fór ór landi með Óláfi konungi ok þolði með honum alla útlegð."[54] The king's exile and the outlaw's condition are put in parallel, stressing once again the troubling alikeness they fall into. Joonas Ahola strengthens this connection by asserting "a referential link between king Óláfr and three famous outlaws" and by comparing their strangely matching lifetimes (cf. Table 1).[55]

According to him, the exile before their death is a parallel, a literary device to help noble outlawed men to be accepted and interpreted in saintly terms. For instance, the other sworn-brother Þorgeirr, outlawed, escapes to Denmark where it is said "…at Danir tignuðu hann nær sem konung,"[56] "…that the Danes

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[51] *The Saga of Ref the Sly*, ch. 19, p. 419.

[52] *Króka-Refs saga*, ch. 20, 159–60.

[53] Ibid., Ch. 16

[54] "Þormóðr travelled abroad with King Óláfr and stayed with him throughout his outlawry." *Fóstbræðra saga*, ed. Björn K. Þórólfsson, Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit 7 (Reykjavík 1972), ch. 24, p. 260.

[55] J. Ahola, *Outlawry*, 372.

[56] *Fóstbræðra saga*, ch. 8, p. 159.

Table 1. Comparison of the lifetimes and outlawries of St Óláfr Haraldsson and some famed Icelandic outlaws

Name	Birth	Reign	Outlawry	Death
St Óláfr Haraldsson	995	1015/1016–(death)	1028–(death)	1030
Grettir Ásmundarson	996		1016–(death)	1031
Þorgeirr Hávarsson	995		1014–(death)	1024
Þormóðr Bersason	998		1026–(death)	1030

Source: J. Ahola, *Outlawry in the Icelandic Family Sagas*. Helsinki 2014.

revered him almost as a king." Once again, the difference between kings and outlaws is made thin in the saga discourse.

Two more examples could be added to strengthen Ahola's point on the connection between St Óláfr and outlaws. In *Hrafns þáttur Guðrúnarsonar*, which can be called an "outlaw *þáttr*,"[57] Hrafn the outlaw is saved and pardoned by King Magnús, because his father, King Óláfr, appeared to him in his dream.[58] In the same fashion, King Óláfr appears in Sverrir's dream while he is leading a bandit-type of life in his youth, therefore legitimizing his claim to the throne.[59]

St Óláfr is not just one king in a line of many, and his association with outlaws is meaningful. He is the most glorious and famous king of Norway as he became *rex perpetuus Norvegiae*, Norway's Eternal King, the king of all other kings. He is obviously a popular ruler in the saga discourse in general and, through these examples, it seems that he can as well be seen as a patron to the outlaws, as the one who legitimizes them for posterity. He is what comes closer to the embodiment of kingship, for both the secular and religious spheres, and transcends the reign of specific, earthly kings.

A Criminal Discourse

Encounters between a king and an outlaw are obviously not as frequent as, for instance, encounters between a king and an Icelandic poet. In these encounters, specific kings could be criticised or made fun of, through humour and parody, about their way of ruling, their excesses or court life-styles, and, in return, Icelanders were building their own image and place in the royal periphery.

[57] The short story focuses on Hrafn, the protagonist, being outlawed from Iceland, then from Norway, before finally resolving his case in both lands.

[58] *Hrafns þáttr Guðrúnarsonar*, in *Vatnsdœla saga*, ch. 6, pp. 332–33.

[59] *Sverris saga*, ch. 5, pp. 8–9.

Encounters with ambitious Icelanders are also frequent, especially to prove their royal worth as with Kjartan who competes in swimming with King Óláfr, showing the Laxádalr clan as the royal family of Iceland.[60]

It could be argued that the encounters with outlaws would be a similar literary device as the encounters with Icelandic retainers or poets, but in a different tone: their dealings put the king at risk in the face of the law he is supposed to serve. It is obviously not easy to turn a king into an outlaw in practice, but it is possible to stain him with what can be called a criminal discourse within a literary text. What is at stake between a king and an outlaw lies in the saga discourse: through each other's antagonized natures, kings make statements on outlaws, and outlaws make statements on kings. A contamination of status appears when they meet: the king gives legitimacy to the outlaw, but the outlaw has the power to stain the legitimacy of a king. The outlaw may gain some nobility and legitimacy from the king, while the king is put to the test of justice and may lose his legitimacy regarding a higher standard of justice. This could also be interpreted through the Norse concept of *gæfa* or *hamingja*, "luck," which was an attribute of leadership, and which supposedly could be transferred to those close to the king.[61] It is noteworthy to stress that, in contrast, the most famous outlaws are said to be *ógæfumaðr* "man of misfortune," as Grettir, Gísli, and Hörðr.[62] Their encounter is a tense moment, breaking boundaries between them and emphasising that, in the end, they are not so different. For good and for bad, they both have an ambiguous and exceptional status. None of them are common men. One has power because he is at the top of the law, the other holds power because he is on its margins and does not have to deal with the law anymore. Each has the power to legitimize or delegitimize the other. This dialectic relationship would generate a specific type of criminal discourse repeated throughout the saga corpus.

Beyond the texts, this discourse may reveal a crucial aspect of the Icelandic mentality in the thirteenth century. Medieval Icelanders were very much preoccupied by the law. Legal procedures made it into literature alongside epic combats and skaldic poetry. For centuries, they did not belong to or have a king like every other country,[63] having the law instead,[64] and, much like contemporary Scandinavian states, functioning upon the principle which affirmed that "með

[60] Ármann Jakobsson, *Royal pretenders*, 48–50.

[61] Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Kings, Earls*, 81; Ármann Jakobsson, *Royal Pretenders*, 55–56.

[62] *Grettis saga*, ch. 39, p. 134; *Gísla saga*, ch. 27, p. 88; *Harðar saga*, ch. 3, p. 82. On the concept of *ógæfa* as an expression of guilt, see K. T. Kanerva, "Ógæfa as an Emotion in Thirteenth-Century Iceland," *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 84 (2012), 1–26.

[63] Sturla Þórðarson himself quotes a cardinal from Rome pointing out the fact that it is strange that his country did not belong to a king like every other one. Ármann Jakobsson, *Royal Pretenders*, 61.

[64] *Adami Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, MGH Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum, ed. B. Schmeidler (Hannoverae 1917).

lǫgum skal land byggja," "with the law, the land shall be built." Even after the submission to the Norwegian crown between 1262–1264, Iceland rejected the first law-code sent to them (*Járnsíða*) and preferred the one closer to their own laws (*Jónsbók*) and reflecting their legal tradition. The law (and thus its opposite, the out-of-the-law) was therefore a strong mind-set through which they could discuss social and political issues. By the middle of the thirteenth century, Norwegian kingship was spreading the concept of sacral kingship, producing texts such as the king's mirror (*Konungs skuggsjá*).[65] Although not condemning kingship as an illegitimate institution, Icelandic writers may have yet perceived kingship (and leadership in general) dependent on something higher than the king, on what was lawful on the one hand, and what was not on the other, and this mentality may have been their main argument when dealing with kingship in the sagas.

This argument could be expended through a wider corpus and analysed for different genres, time of redaction, or even compared to the encounters between outlaws and chieftains within Iceland. Yet, we may say that Icelandic outlaw stories or episodes, as much as the Matter of Greenwood in England, open a debate on justice, power and kingship, even though there was no king in Iceland during the Saga Age, and only a distant king during the thirteenth century. The fact that an outlaw never fully bends to a king in these encounters could partly explain why such figures are so long lasting and popular even though they are neither Robin Hood nor the noble social bandit described by Eric Hobsbawm.[66] The reason why even violent outlaws that do not defend any social cause are feared and admired at the same time may lie in the fact that they make the powerful ones powerless for once. Even if a criminal could come to one's own farm, steal all their belongings or mutilate and kill the whole family, the idea that he could potentially do the same to a lord, a king, or a wealthier neighbour, creates a rather nasty satisfaction of equality at least in fear and danger, which contributed to the popularity of criminals among their posterity in saga literature.

In Icelandic sagas, the (literary) outlaw could call on a higher, transcendent authority, namely a saint king or God himself. The epilogue of *Grettis saga* would summarize the role of the outlaw in the discourse on kingship. Even though the king was presented as an absolute ruler and God's representative on earth, the *Spesar þáttr* reminds us who holds ultimate power. Þorsteinn *drómundr*, formerly imprisoned in Byzantium for avenging his outlawed brother

[65] The king "er sva mioc miclaðr oc tighnaðr aiorðu at aller skulu sva luta oc niga til hans sæm til Guðs." L. Holm-Olsen (ed.), *Konungs skuggsiá* (Oslo 1983), 73. "[The king] is so highly honoured and exalted upon earth that all must bend and bow before him as before God. So great is his power that he may dispose as he likes of the lives of all who live in his kingdom: he lets him live whom he wills and causes him to be slain whom he wills." L. M. Larson (ed.), *The King's Mirror (Speculum Regale – Konungs skuggsjá)* (New York 1917), 73–74.

[66] E. Hobsbawm, *Bandits*.

Grettir, is asked to join once more the service of the Norwegian king in his old days. His wife, however, the Lady Spes (hope), suggests to him to go to Rome instead and lead a monastic life, bringing an argument with which an earthly king could not compete:

> "Þat vil ek, Þorsteinn," sagði hon, "at þú farir eigi á fund Haralds konungs, því at vit eigum öðrum konungi meira vangoldit."[67]
>
> "I don't want you to go and see King Harald, Thorstein, because we owe a greater debt to another king."[68]

[67] *Grettis saga*, ch. 91, pp. 286–87.
[68] *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, ch. 91, p. 189.

Ideals of Christian Kingship
The Implications of *Elucidarius*, *Konungs skuggsiá*, and *Eiríks saga víðfǫrla*

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This article examines three texts which, while thematically different, each exhibit an explicit interest in the location of a terrestrial paradise and other wonders, divulged through a didactic dialogue between a master and an apprentice.[1] It will be argued that the ideals of a good Christian and a good king, as represented in these texts, are the very same.[2] The texts in question are *Elucidarius*, *Konungs skuggsiá*, and *Eiríks saga víðfǫrla*.

Elucidarius is a text which is considered to have been written by the theologian Honorius Augustodunensis in the late eleventh century, though the work itself modestly claims to have been written anonymously. It is a didactic text in Socratic conversational form between a *Magister* and a *Discipulus*. The Discipulus asks questions regarding creation, Hell, morals and virtues, to name but a few examples, and the Magister elucidates the problems set by the Discipulus. All of the questions are concerned with being an ideal, informed Christian. The four pillars of Christianity, the prologue to the work says, are sensibility, the glory of the apostles, the wisdom of the forefathers, and the wise

[1] Another comparable text is *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla*, which is also greatly interested with geography and contains a dialogue between a master and a disciple very much akin to that of *Eiríks saga*. Yet its interest in the terrestrial paradise is not as explicit as in the other texts; it must rather be read between the lines and for this reason it has been left out of the present discussion. A closer comparison between *Eiríks saga* and *Yngvars saga* may be found in my doctoral thesis, *Skuggsjá sjálfsins: Skrímsl í lærdómshefð íslenskra sagnaritara 1100–1550* (Reykjavík; Hugvísindasvið Háskóla Íslands, 2017); cf. Haki Antonsson, "Salvation and Early Saga Writing in Iceland: Aspects of the Works of the Þingeyrar Monks and their Associates," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 8 (2012), 71–140.

[2] The relationship between Christianity and kingship in *Konungs skuggsiá* has already been argued for by A. Hamer, "Searching for Wisdom. The King's Mirror," in *Speculum regale. Der altnorwegische Königsspiegel (Konungs skuggsjá) in der europäischen Tradition*, ed. J. E. Schnall and R. Simek (Wien 2000), 47–62; and S. Bagge, "Old Norse Theories of Society. From Rígsþula to Konungs skuggsiá," in ed. J. E. Schnall and R. Simek, *Speculum regale. Der altnorwegische Königsspiegel (Konungs skuggsjá) in der europäischen Tradition* (Wien 2000), 7–45.

concerns of mentors.[3] *Elucidarius* existed in Old Norse translation already in the twelfth century, and it is this translation that will be discussed here.

Konungs skuggsiá ("The King's Mirror") is another didactic text, written in Norway in the middle of the thirteenth century by some unknown author who, by the same reasons of modesty given in *Elucidarius*, refuses to disclose his identity. It is the same kind of conversation as in *Elucidarius*, between *Sunr* and *Faðer*. The Son asks the Father all kinds of questions about kingship and trading, and also about reports of monsters inhabiting the sea around Iceland and Greenland, among other marvels. All of the Son's questions are concerned with the ideals of kingship or useful information pertaining to it.

Eiríks saga víðfǫrla is the story of a young man who sets out from Norway to find the terrestrial Paradise of Eden.[4] On his way there he has a sojourn in Constantinople and has private sessions with the king[5] who teaches him all that he knows in the same magister/discipulus kind of relationship as *Elucidarius* and *Konungs skuggsiá* portray. In this fashion, Eiríkr learns the truth of the Christian paradise and of the lands beyond, including the languages and the many strange people and monsters of the East. The main difference between the different dialogues is that the dialogue of Eiríkr and the king takes place within a narrative framework, whereas the didactic texts are strictly dialogues without narratives.

In summary, the first of the three texts deals with the ideals of Christianity, the second with the ideals of kingship, while the third text, a saga, is greatly influenced by both in that the relevant chapter deals with the ideals of both Christianity and kingship embodied in a single person: the Byzantine emperor. The fourteenth-century saga in this respect has its own relations to other texts which in themselves are interesting points of comparison. My aim here is to explore these connections and the implications the ideals of *Elucidarius* and *Konungs skuggsiá* have for the younger saga.

[3] "Inn fyrsta stöpul reisir spámanna skynsemi, inn annan styður postola tign, inn þriðja eflir speki feðra, en inn fjórða festir vitur áhyggja lærifeðra." Gunnar Harðarson (ed.), *Þrjár þýðingar lærðar frá miðöldum: Lucidarius, Um kostu og löstu, Um festarfé sálarinnar* (Reykjavík 1989), 45.

[4] To the medieval mind the existence of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise was a fact, and in this regard visionary literature was quite realistic to its audience. Learned men seem to have been in basic agreement on the location of the terrestrial paradise, for example, Isidore of Seville, Hrabanus Maurus and Honorius Augustodunensis in his *Elucidarius*, who all agree that Paradise is located in the east. This location is more specific in Icelandic manuscripts such as Hauksbók and AM 194 8vo which are based on continental learning. Cf. Sverrir Tómasson, "Ferðir þessa heims og annars: Paradís – Ódáinsakur – Vínland í ferðalýsingum miðalda," in *Tækileg vitni: Greinar um bókmenntir gefnar út í tilefni sjötugsafmælis hans 5. apríl 2011* (Reykjavík 2011), 362–64. On visionary literature in particular, see J. Wellendorf, *Kristelig visionslitteratur i norrøn tradition* (Oslo 2009).

[5] Norsemen seem not to have made much distinction between emperors and kings, as emperors of Byzantium are frequently referred to as kings.

What are the ideals of Christianity? *Elucidarius* provides an answer by means of carefully putting questions against a carefully thought out set of answers. To the modern reader there is no question so outrageously out of this world that the Master does not know the answer to it, but to the medieval audience of *Elucidarius* the things described therein were very much real. Among these things is the location of the terrestrial Paradise (the same that Eiríkr víðfǫrli seeks after having learned its location from the king), the reason for the creation of mankind and the exact location where it took place, the fall of Satan, why God allows evil to exist, and many other things. *Elucidarius* adheres to the theory of man as *microcosmos* within the greater *macrocosmos* of the world. In this respect, man reflects the world; it is even noted that Adam's head was made spherical like the Earth.[6]

This idea is rooted in Neo-Platonism and possibly reverberated in *Elucidarius* through older works of similar theological thought, such as the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville. While man may be one with nature, in this respect there was room for infractions in Isidore's view. Just as there is variation in individuals with particular cases of monstrous people, there were also to be found among nations entire races of monstrous people. Most importantly, the monstrous races were not to be considered contrary to nature, as nothing could exist except for the virtue of God.[7] In man's microcosmic reflection of the macrocosm of the *Etymologiae* it is never said what these monstrous infractions meant for the world as a whole. Such a question would probably never have occurred to the author of *Elucidarius*. If it did, he certainly was not keen on answering it. It might stand to reason that had Honorius known of Isidore's point of view (or, in this case, the Icelandic translator or scribe), he would have added or adapted it for his own work, as medieval scribes were wont to do. On the other hand, it might indicate displeasure if he (or the scribe) knew Isidore's influential work and did nothing to incorporate it. There may be other reasons why Honorius did not include the information on monsters in his dialogue. Perhaps he, contrary to many other Christian thinkers, simply did not think it mattered. Whatever the reason for Honorius's neglect of Isidore's teratology, his Norwegian counterparts certainly thought it important enough. The one thing Honorius and Isidore certainly did agree on was that nothing could exist unless God had created it. Scandinavians seemed to have taken this particular theological stance at face value.

Much like *Elucidarius*, *Konungs skuggsiá* begins by claiming to be a book of virtues and good advice, but that the author has refrained from naming himself "at eigi bæri suo at. at nockur hafne þui sem til nytsemdar má þar j finnast annat huort firi hádungar sakir edur ofundar edur einshuers fiándskapar

[6] "Höfuð hans var böllótt í glíking heimballar." G. Harðarson (ed.), *Þrjár þýðingar lærðar*, 55.

[7] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. S. Barney et al. (Cambridge 2010), 243–45.

vid þann er giordo," "so that it will not happen that someone should oppose that which might be useful in the book either out of mockery or envy or some kind of enmity toward him who made it."[8] In essence it is the same prologue as the one in *Elucidarius*.

The Father of Konungs skuggsiá is no less than the greatest and wisest king among kings,[9] and the Son, his heir, wants to make sure that he can fill his shoes when his time comes. The first advice is thus:

> Ælska ðu guð af ollu hiarta þinu oc af ollu afli þinu. oc af ollum mætti þinum. Nu skal guðe unna umfram hvætvætna en ræðaz guð hvært sinne er maðr girniz rangra luta. oc lata þo laust ranga girn' firi guðs saker. þo at maður hafi dirfð a at hallda firir manna saker. Nu mæð þvi at þu leitar hvat stafrof eða grunndvollr se til spæcðar nams þa er þætta æitt satt upphaf oc ækci annat. En sa er þætta næmr oc getir. þa misser sa æigi sannrar spæcðar oc allrar gæzko.
>
> Love God with all your heart and with all your spirit and with all your might. You should love God beyond all others but fear him when you are tempted to enact wrongful acts, but always relent for the sake of God, even if you would dare it for the sake of men. Now that you seek what alphabet or basis there is to the attaining of wisdom then this and only this is its true beginning and nothing else, and he who learns this and remembers it will never be lacking in true wisdom and kindness.[10]

Besides these examples and the didactic manner of the dialogue between the master and the apprentice, there are other things linking *Konungs skuggsiá* directly with *Elucidarius*. There are chapters on Lucifer's rise and fall, of God's punishment of him, how he tempted Adam and Eve, on how to interpret correctly the word of God, and, finally, it contains a chapter on the relationship between the king and the Church, and his responsibility toward God. Even though Ármann Jakobsson did not compare the two in his book *Í leit að konungi* ("In Search of the King"),[11] and without listing all of the parallels between the different texts, it seems that the ideology of kingship present in *Konungs skuggsiá* is similar if not identical to the ideal king as presented in

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[8] L. Holm-Olsen, *Konungs skuggsiá*, Norrøne tekster, vol. 1 (Oslo 1983), 2.

[9] The importance of royal virtues in *Konungs skuggsiá* has also been noted by S. Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror* (Odense 1987), 57 and onwards.

[10] Holm-Olsen (ed.), *Konungs skuggsiá*, 3.

[11] He does however note that "the emphasis followed by Christian kings in their role as monarchs is often reflected in king's mirrors (*konungs skuggsjár*), essays on royal virtues. Such a mirror was composed in the thirteenth-century in Norway, but the Icelandic *konungasögur* could be said to comprise in part a king's mirror, as in this genre the stories of individual kings are used to reflect upon the monarchy and kingly virtues." Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi: Konungsmynd íslenskra konungasagna* (Reykjavík 1997), 314 (my translation).

the konungasögur according to Jakobsson's analysis, in which, among other things, he concludes that:

> Royal virtues were both religious and secular. Kings were to protect and support the church in every way possible and serve as an example for others in Christian conduct. This they could do in a number of ways, such as going on crusades and building churches. In sagas including both heathen and Christian kings, the faith of the kings is naturally the central point. […] The "worldly" virtues of kings are, however, even more important. In kings' mirrors and essays on virtues they are most often four in number: wisdom, strength, temperance and justice. The Icelandic konungasögur indicate that kings needed to possess all of them. In the 13th century European kings emphasized their wisdom and learning, and the same tendency is visible in the Icelandic konungasögur.[12]

As was mentioned earlier, there are parts of *Konungs skuggsiá* dedicated to unusual beings. The Son asks the Father about the marvels and the monsters that have been reported to inhabit the oceans around Iceland and Greenland. The Father replies that he is not particularly enthusiastic about the subject as those who have not seen such marvels for themselves are all too eager to accuse those who speak the truth of telling lies, even if what they say is true. The Father mentions that a book has arrived in Norway which is said to have been written in India and tells of the marvels in those lands.[13] This has been taken to be an allusion to the legend of Prester John, probably the earliest extant reference to that legend in Scandinavian writing. The legend may be taken as a kind of precursor to the fourteenth-century *Book of Mandeville* which is extant in Old Danish translation since the early fifteenth century,[14] by far the most popular book on monster lore in the late Middle Ages.

The Father then explains further that those in distant countries would deem them, too, to be strange and remarkable, just as Norwegians might think exotic peoples to be marvelous – but those who only believe what they have seen are fools, for just as the people of Norway exist, strange as they might seem to others, then others might exist as well equally strange to Norwegians:

> Nu er þat ord flestra manna er heyra bokina at þat meigi eigi vera og þat sie eckj nema lygi er þar seigir j þeiri litlu bok. Enn ef giorla skal hier rannsaka j vorum londum. þá eru ecki hier þeir hlutir færri helldur en hinn

[12] Ármann Jakobsson, *Í leit að konungi*, 314–15 (my translation). His analysis in full on kingly virtues may be found on pages 191–239, et passim.

[13] L. Holm-Olsen (ed.), *Konungs skuggsiá*, 13.

[14] Available in the edition *Mandevilles rejse i gammeldansk oversættelse tillige med en vejleder for pilgrimme*, ed. M. Lorenzen (Copenhagen 1882).

> veg eru ritadir. er iafnvndarligir muno þikia edur vndarligri j odrum londum. þeim sem ecki eru slijkir hlutir sienir edur dæmi til birt.
>
> It is the opinion of most men who have read from that book that such things cannot be and that it is naught but a lie which is told of in that little book. But if a thorough inquiry should be made in our realm we should find there are no fewer things here than are reported there, things which would seem equally strange if not more strange in other countries, where such things have not been seen or spoken of before.[15]

This is perfectly sound logic and it illustrates a good understanding on the author's part of what is now the basis of monster theory.[16] We need not go further than to the sagas of the people of Hrafnista to see that in Northern Norway – at least in the saga world – one's neighbours in the next fjord could potentially be inexplicably horrible trolls by the standards of one's own community, even if oneself were related to them and even if one's own name literally had the word 'troll' in it, such as in the case of Hallbjörn Half-troll.[17] The ideal king thus not only knows of Christendom, of trade, of courtly manners – the ideal king also knows geography, anthropology and knows of scarcely explicable monsters.

Eiríks saga víðfǫrla, preserved in Flateyjarbók (1387–1394), is the story of young Eiríkr who seeks the terrestrial paradise of Eden, but, as he is religiously ambiguous before he adopts Christianity, he will also settle for the so-called *ódáinsakr*, which may be presumed to mean the Elysian fields. Eiríkr assumes these places to be one and the same – and he is right, it seems. He does eventually find the paradise, but he cannot enter as it is guarded by a heavenly flame and armed cherubim. However, Eiríkr would never have found Eden had it not been for the advice of the Byzantine king. The dialogue between Eiríkr and the king is presented in the third person, rather than in the first as in *Elucidarius* and *Konungs skuggsiá*, and, in terms of its content, it is a mixture of these two texts.

Eiríkr first asks the king who created Heaven and Earth, to which the king replies that it was the work of the one and only God. He goes on to answer question after question on the nature of God, his tripartition, his glory and power, his all-encompassing wisdom, his residence in heaven, about hell and Satan, and on related subjects. Eiríkr is shocked to hear all this, not least about the fate of heathens who shall be punished in hell: "Never before have I heard

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[15] L. Holm-Olsen (ed.), *Konungs skuggsiá*, 13.

[16] Cf. J. J. Cohen, "Monster Culture: Seven Theses," in *Monster Theory*, ed. J. J. Cohen (Minneapolis 1996), 3–25.

[17] This is explored in more detail in my article "'Er þat illt, at þú vilt elska tröll þat:' Hið sögulega samhengi jöðrunar í Hrafnistumannasögum," *Gripla* XXIV (2013), 173–210; and in my dissertation *Skuggsjá sjálfsins*.

such things about them,"[18] he says, and agrees to convert to Christianity because of the wisdom of the king. After this a kind of confirmation sequence follows in which Eiríkr wishes to know more: Where is hell? What is above the earth? What is above the air? More questions follow and Eiríkr is amazed by the wisdom of the all-knowing king.

In the following section Eiríkr poses questions about geography: What is the distance between Heaven and Earth? What is around the Earth? The ocean, the king replies. What is the farthest land in the southern hemisphere? India, he hears in reply. Eiríkr then asks the one question he really wishes to know the answer to: where is the place called *ódáinsakr*? Not only does the king know the answer to this very question, identifying it as the Christian Paradise, but he also informs Eiríkr that the Paradise is impenetrable. Having specified that it lies east of the outermost parts of India, the king implores Eiríkr to stay with him for three whole years before going in search of it, so that he may learn more and heed the king's every counsel. The king exhibits the knowledge of the subject material of *Elucidarius* and thus Eiríkr's mission is bound to fail per se, even if Eiríkr does reach his destination.

Eiríkr asks about many other things, such as the characteristics of nations, the layout of lands, the whole of the eastern and southern part of the world, the strange people and the customs of many nations, serpents and dragons and all kinds of animals and birds, and of precious gold and gemstones – which in medieval lore were frequently guarded by griffins. It is said that the king answered all of these questions readily and with wisdom, and after this Eiríkr and his men were baptized.[19] It is to be understood that Eiríkr would not have been as successful in his journey had he not enjoyed and heeded the advice of the king.

It is not particularly common that kings express knowledge of paranormal phenomena as the king of *Eiríks saga víðfǫrla* does, let alone the knowledge of the themes directly borrowed from Pliny's *Naturalis historia*, even though they were widely disseminated in Icelandic learned literature.

One interesting parallel can be found in *Ynglinga saga*, which starts with a short geographical treatise not altogether unlike those of the encyclopedic texts mostly extant since the start of the fourteenth century until its end, prime examples being the fragment AM 736 I 4to, *Hauksbók*, *Stjórn* and AM 194 8vo, which are all related to one another, albeit to a varying degree.[20] The manuscript

[18] "Aldri heyrða ek slíka hluti fyrr frá þeim sagða," *Eireks saga víðförla*, ed. Guðni Jónsson et al., *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 3 (Reykjavík 1944), 446–50.

[19] Guðni Jónsson et al. (eds.), "Eireks saga," 450.

[20] Editions of these texts may be found, respectively, in B. S. Kristjánsdóttir et al. (eds.), *Heimskringla* I (Reykjavík 1991); R. Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie: Studien und Quellen zu Weltbild und Weltbeschreibung in Norwegen und Island vom 12. bis zum 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin 1990), 429–32; *Hauksbók. Udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4*

fragment known as *Kringla*, which tragically was burnt for the most part during the great Copenhagen fire of 1728, is the basis of our extant *Heimskringla* and thus *Ynglinga saga*. It is thought to have been written in 1260 so it is quite close in age to the geographical treatises of AM 736 I and *Hauksbók*, both of which directly inspired the passages in AM 194 and, perhaps, were an influence on *Stjórn* as well. How these ideas and this knowledge circulated and mixed outside of the remnant extant manuscripts is unclear. *Konungs skuggsiá* is written at about the same time as *Kringla* and perhaps this coincides with a presumable spike in the popularity of Isidore's *Etymologiae* and other similar texts, as exhibited by the existing manuscript evidence. These texts all go to great lengths to explain strange creatures and monsters in the lands to the East and the South, evident not only in learned sources but also in the sagas such as *Eiríks saga víðfǫrla*, preserved in *Flateyjarbók*, written ca. 1387–1394,[21] and *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla*, extant in two fifteenth-century manuscripts, AM 343 a 4to (c. 1450–1475) and GKS 2845 4to (c. 1450).[22] Notwithstanding, many scholars believe that it was originally written in Latin by the twelfth-century Benedictine monk Oddr Snorrason.[23]

The relevant passage in *Ynglinga saga* refers to Scythia having various nations and many tongues, giants and dwarves, *blámenn*, strange peoples and amazingly big animals and dragons. The passage quoted in full is thus:

> Kringla heimsins, sú er mannfólkið byggir, er mjög vogskorin. Ganga höf stór úr útsjánum inn í jörðina. Er það kunnigt að haf gengur frá Nörvasundum og allt út til Jórsalalands. Af hafinu gengur langur hafsbotn til landnorðurs er heitir Svartahaf. Sá skilur heimsþriðjungana. Heitir fyrir austan Asía en fyrir vestan kalla sumir Evrópu en sumir Eneu. En norðan að Svartahafi gengur Svíþjóð hin mikla eða hin kalda. Svíþjóð hina miklu kalla sumir menn eigi minni en Serkland hið mikla, sumir jafna henni við Bláland hið mikla. Hinn nyrðri hlutur Svíþjóðar liggur óbyggður af frosti og kulda, svo sem hinn syðri hlutur Blálands er auður af sólarbruna. Í Svíþjóð eru stórhéruð mörg. Þar eru og margs konar þjóðir og margar

samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter af Det kongelige nordiske oldskrift-selskab, ed. Finnur Jónsson et al. (København 1892–1896); *Stjórn. Tekst etter håndskriftene,* ed. R. Astås, Norrøne tekster vol. 8 (Oslo 2009); *Alfræði íslenzk* I, ed. K. Kålund, STUAGNL 37 (København 1908).

[21] The seminal study on Flateyjarbók is E. Ashman Rowe's *The Development of Flateyjarbók: Iceland and the Norwegian Dynastic Crisis of 1389* (Odense 2005).

[22] Jón Helgason, "Til Yngvars sagas overlevering," *Opuscula* 1, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana vol. 20 (København 1960), 176–78; E. Olson, "Inledning," in ed. E. Olson, *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla: jämte ett bihang om Ingvarsinskrifterna* (København 1912), i–xxiv.

[23] G. Jensson, "Were the Earliest fornaldarsögur Written in Latin?," in *Fornaldarsagaerne: Myter og virkelighed*, ed. A. Lassen, Ármann Jakobsson, and A. Ney (København 2009), 79–91; Haki Antonsson, "Salvation and Early Saga Writing," 74–77, 107–8. Cf. D. Hofmann, "Die Yngars saga Víðförla und Oddr munkr inn fróði," in *Speculum Norrœnum. Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. U. Dronke et al. (Odense 1981), 188–222.

> tungur. Þar eru risar og þar eru dvergar, þar eru blámenn og þar eru margs konar undarlegar þjóðir. Þar eru og dýr og drekar furðulega stórir. Úr norðri frá fjöllum þeim er fyrir utan eru byggð alla fellur á um Svíþjóð, sú er að réttu heitir Tanaís. Hún var forðum kölluð Tanakvísl eða Vanakvísl. Hún kemur til sjávar inn í Svartahaf. Í Vanakvíslum var þá kallað Vanaland eða Vanaheimur. Sú á skilur heimsþriðjungana. Heitir fyrir austan Asía en fyrir vestan Evrópa.
>
> The world's orb, that which humans inhabit, is cut up by many fjords. Great oceans penetrate the land from the outward sea. It is known that an ocean reaches from Nörvasund all the way to the land of Jerusalem. From that ocean a winding deep sea runs to the land, north of which is called the Black Sea. It divides the three parts of the world. To the east it is called Asia but on the western side some call it Europe while others call it Enea. Reaching from the north to the Black Sea is Sweden the great or the cold.[24] Sweden the great is by some men said to be no smaller than Saracenland the great, and some equate it with Blueland the great[25] in size. The northern part of Sweden the great is uninhabited due to frost and cold, such as the southern part of Blueland is barren due to it having been scorched by the sun. In Sweden the great there are many great provinces. There are many kinds of peoples and many tongues. There are giants and there are dwarves, there are *blámenn*[26] and there are many strange peoples. There are animals and dragons of astonishing size. From the north, from the mountains that lie outside of all settled regions, a river runs through Sweden the great the right name of which is Tanais. Once it was called Tanakvísl or Vanakvísl. It reaches the sea by the Black Sea. By the Vanakvísl lay Vanaland or Vanaheimur. This river divides the thirds of the world. East of it lies what is called Asia, to the west of it Europe.[27]

For some reason this description of the world precedes a voluminous narrative of kings which otherwise is not overtly interested in such things. At around the same time in a small book in Norway, the aforementioned *Konungs skuggsiá*, geographical interest is portrayed as explicitly important to a king. In the fourteenth-century *Eiríks saga víðfǫrla* an image of the perfect king emerges, one who not only knows about the many lands and their strange inhabitants, but who is also a true servant of God.

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[24] Sweden the great, or *Svíþjóð in mikla*, refers to Scythia or roughly modern day Siberia.

[25] Bláland refers to Ethiopia and Africa south of Sahara.

[26] *Blámenn* (sing. *blámaðr*) is a complex term, in this context especially it is uncertain what it was meant to entail as usually they were not to be found in the north but rather in Africa or India. It can mean a 'black man,' 'muslim,' 'moor,' and 'demon,' among other things. The meaning of the term *blámaðr* is addressed more closely in my forthcoming article "Demons, Muslims, Wrestling-Champions: The Semantic History of Blámenn from the 12th to the 20th Century."

[27] B. S. Kristjánsdóttir et al. (eds.), *Heimskringla* I (Reykjavík 1991), 7.

True to the popular theology of the Middle Ages, the texts that have been discussed in the preceding pages portray a king as the person who not only recognizes true faith and the existence of strange creatures, but who realizes – much as Augustine and Isidore did before him – that the latter informs the former and vice versa, and thus that knowing both is of equal importance. The creator is reflected in his creation, to put it differently. Knowing God means knowing all of his creation,[28] even its darker half. A good king, therefore, should be equally knowledgeable about the good and the bad, the terrestrial Paradise and the damned nations on the Earth's periphery, for knowing the other is to know oneself.

[28] Cf. A. Hamer, "Searching for Wisdom: The King's Mirror," 59–60: "If one were asked to summarise the contents of Kgs […] in Part I, the heavens and the heavenly bodies, the seas, the earth and its marvels, the winds; learning in the whole text, and eloquence in the court (Parts II and III); death and hell (and the downward-sloping paths that lead there) throughout the work. The difference between the belief of idolaters and that of the Christian is that the latter is grounded in the knowledge that 'all creation serves the one true God.' That is the humble basis for the understanding of God's creative love, and for the Christian's loving fear of God, itself the beginning of wisdom."

A Crown on a King's Head: Royal Titles and Royal Sovereignty in the Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Poland and Scandinavia

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Royal ideology belongs to the most fascinating and – strangely enough – still current questions in the research into the history of the Middle Ages and earlier times, especially into the history of the Viking Period. Among the most important questions under scrutiny are: the problem of the so-called *germanisches Sakralkönigtum* and the criticism of this theory which is obviously politically motivated, but which nevertheless illustrates the necessity to ask about the foundations of the royal power. These foundations on the one hand may have been religious, magical or charismatic, and, on the other hand, also legal, democratic, and bureaucratic. Another issue is the question of the continuity or discontinuity, and similarities or differences between the pre-Christian idea of royal power in the pagan past of the barbarians living on the outer side of the fallen Roman limes versus the royal power functioning in the core "Frankish" and "Carolingian" part of the Christian world. In the written sources related to this issue one may find the idea of the royal power as derived from the Holy Bible and from the royal ideology of Ancient Rome, as well as the idea of the more despotic kingship of the Orient, which was very important for the Byzantine part of the Christian world. To illustrate how many questions related to the topic of royal power one may encounter, it is enough to mention that the crown meant something else in ancient Rome, and something else in medieval France. The same may be said about other insignia, about the throne and enthroning ceremonies, the procedures for election of rulers, limits of royal power, the names denoting rulers (and, in general, about the terminology connected to the royal power), and finally about the hierarchy among rulers – feudal, pre-feudal, barbarian, Roman, Greek, Old-Testamental, European and non-European (including kings of villages in sub-Saharan Africa), etc. On may pose more detailed questions: Is an earl allowed to do the same that a king? Is appropriate for an emperor to be engaged in battle like a simple warrior? Is a pagan king in paganism also an archpriest, or is a Christian king a person equal or comparable to a bishop (as both, the king and the bishop, were anointed)?

Not to mention other problems, such as the issue of legitimate and illegitimate rulers (and the strategies or tricks to legitimize a king's power), royal bastards and simple usurpers, who sometimes were successful. And – last but not least – some of the rulers were female kings, and, what needs emphasizing, a woman who ruled as a king was *not* a queen but simply a king (a female king but a king altogether)! Queens and princesses are, in turn, quite a different subject – sometimes beautiful and always fascinating.

Among many problems connected to royal ideology at the eve of Christianization in Northern and Central Europe around the tenth and eleventh century A.D., one of the most intriguing and overlooked questions is that of the difference between how royal power was perceived, defined and used in Poland and Bohemia, that is, among Western Slavs, and how it functioned in Scandinavia. The underpinning of this problem is the relation of Western Slavic and Scandinavian rulers to the Western Empire, that is, to the Germany of its time, and to her emperors.

One of many differences between Western Slavic lands and Scandinavia at the time of the conversion and during the first centuries after the conversion was the fact that Scandinavia had kings, while Poland and Bohemia typically not, albeit with a few exceptions. It is important to ask why such was the case. As far as I know, the only scholar who has discussed the problem from a comparative perspective is the Polish historian Andrzej Pleszczyński who, speaking about the institution of royalty in early Polish state writes:

> No ruler […] whose power was not legitimized in the realm of Carolingian tradition had ever been elevated to the status of a king, i.e. a ruler wielding sacral authority similar to the status of Frankish monarchs. Scandinavian monarchs were referred to as kings only on the basis of the similarity of titles in Germanic languages. In fact, however, in the strict Christian understanding of the designation, they were not kings as such, because, in those days, their authority stemmed only from their native cultural heritage. Only Anglo-Saxon monarchs could claim a status equal to Carolingian dynasts, as they employed similar means of demonstrating their position and wielded comparable sacral powers. However, said monarchs legitimized their function by reference to native tradition of old Christendom.[1]

In the original Polish edition of Pleszczyński's book this statement is expressed more clearly and accurately, without the doubtful focus on questioning the royal rank of Scandinavian kings, but instead stressing correctly the important difference between the old pagan, and the new Christian foundations of royal power, and the obvious presence of kings in Scandinavia con-

[1] A. Pleszczyński, *The Birth of a Stereotype. Polish Rulers and Their Country in German Writings c. 1000 A.D.* (Leiden 2011), 313.

trasted with the absence of kings in West Slavic lands, which to me sounds even more convincing.[2]

And herein lies the crux of the matter! Scandinavian kings were always called kings at home and abroad (including in the British Isles and in the Carolingian and post-Frankish part of the continent), when they descended from an appropriate, that is, divine in its origins, royal family, when they had enough power to fulfil the prescribed rituals. The rituals in question were originally pagan in their nature, and, naturally, did not include the "Frankish" ceremony of coronation and "Christian" anointing, although thrones or enthroning stones were present in them.

These kings, either already baptized or not yet, were, as a matter of fact, kings in the pagan sense. But what was more, they belonged to the other historical reality, that of the Scandinavian Viking period, which is simultaneous to the continental and Western European "early Middle Ages," but which was not the same, since numerous issues in terms of customs, laws and social structures were still different in Scandinavia, with the remnants of the "barbaric" way of life of early Germanic tribes from the Migration period. These differences were not only related to the question of religion. However, Scandinavian kings, non-baptized or newly-baptized, were nevertheless commonly acknowledged in continental Christian early medieval Europe as kings. This was not only due to the linguistic contiguity between the Scandinavian substantive *konung* as compared to the German substantive *König* and to the English substantive *king*, as Pleszczyński believes. The same may be said about early pagan rulers of Western Slavic tribes (the Obodrites and the Polabians), who were denominated in Latin sources precisely as their Scandinavian counterparts, that is, as *reges* (kings), but frequently also to stress the distance and to bring them to their proper position in propaganda, as *reguli* or even *subreguli* (petty kings). Also the Polish ruler Mieszko I at the beginning of his career recorded in written sources, when he was most probably still pagan, is named by the Saxon chronicler Widukind a "king" (without any diminishing suffix or comment, except for stressing the fact that he was a person ruling over *longius degentes barbaros*). Widukind called him simply a *rex* (in proper case), mentioning Mieszko (Misaca) for the first time in the year 963 or 964 when he was defeated by the German adventurer Wichman serving as a mercenary officer for some Slavic "barbarians" (by whom Widukind here most probably meant the Wolinians and/or the Wieletians) in their war against Mieszko, who ruled, as has been already mentioned, *longius degentes barbaros* – "barbarians dwelling even farther away [as the Weletians and the Wolinians]"). Wichman, fighting together with "barbarians [the Weletians and/or the Wolinians]" with *Misacam regem,*

[2] A. Pleszczyński, *Niemcy wobec pierwszej monarchii piastowskiej (963–1034). Narodziny stereotypu* (Lublin 2008), 304.

cuius potestatis erant Slavi qui dicuntur Licicaviki, duabus vicibus superavit fratremque ipsius interfecit, predam magnam ab eo extorsit,[3] "King Misaco, who held sway over Slavs known also as Licicaviki, overcame him twice, killing his brother and extorting great plunder." Despite many problems connected to the historical interpretation of what precisely was happening then (which provided Polish historians with a broad study area for about two hundred years), there is no doubt that in his first *entré* in written sources Mieszko I appears as a king. But already in the next (and last) mention about him by Widukind from 967 A.D. his rank is simply not mentioned at all (except for the information that he is already *amicus imperatoris*)[4] and every further source refers to him by using a variety of terms (including *marchio* and "duke"), but never calling him king again. The three subsequent Polish kings, accepted, with many objections, as kings of Poland, were Bolesław I, Mieszko II, and Bolesław II, but many problems were connected with coronations and crowns of all these monarchs, while the coronations themselves were well enough though rather poorly documented in written sources. Problems evidently arose already at the time when the coronations were taking place (ending, in the cases of Mieszko II and Bolesław II, with the loss of the royal rank in turbulent circumstances and involving depositions by foreign forces), and are subject to historical interpretations in modern historiography. Maybe, however, we should view the problem from an altogether different perspective?

What can then be said about coronations of Scandinavian kings? Jenny Jochens wrote in her encyclopedic summary: "During the 12th century German emperors in turn employ similar [as continental coronations] ceremonies as means of controlling Danish kings and subkings on whom they conferred crowns in return of oaths of obedience."[5] The first such king obedient to the empire appears to be Knútr (Canut) Lavard (d. 1131), a Danish royal prince called *dux Daciae*, but being crowned king of Obodrites by Lothar III. After Knútr was murdered, Lothar III crowned his rival Magnús Nielson in 1134 (*regio more coronatus*), and Magnús was then carrying a sword before the emperor. Finally, in the time of the Danish civil war, Sveinn III Grathe was crowned king by Frederic Barbarossa in 1152 and also was carrying sword before the emperor.[6] The first, so to speak "ecclesiastical" Scandinavian coronation not influenced

[3] Widukindi rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri tres, MGH SS rer. Germ.in us. School, ed. G. Weitz (Hannoverae 1882), 81.

[4] Widukindi, 81–84. The events enalysed in: L. P. Słupecki, *"Chrzest Polski" i kilka związanych z nim problemów*, in *Tyś z nami związał się przez chrzest. 1050 rocznica Chrztu Polski. Podkarpacie 2016*, ed. S. Nabywaniec and A. Pęzioł (Rzeszów 2017), 21–24.

[5] J. Jochens, *Coronation*, in *Medieval Scandinavia. An Encyclopedia*, ed. Ph.Pulsiano (New York 1993), 108.

[6] P. Beskov, *Kröning*, in *Kulturhistorisk Lexikon för nordisk medeltid*, vol. 9 (Malmö 1964), 498–502.

by the empire was performed in Norway, where in 1163 (or 1164) Magnús Erlingsson was crowned king by Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson in an effort to stop the civil war. The first Danish ecclesiastical coronation was the one of Waldemar I the Great in 1170 in Ringsted, which may indicate the possibility that the king was trying to secure the rights to the throne for his lineage by being crowned at the same time as his son Knútr. An important question arises at this stage: was Knútr inn ríki crowned as king of England? Jakub Morawiec, the author of a new biography of Knútr claims that it happened "perhaps in 1017" – unfortunately with no arguments and no sources quoted.[7] Undoubtedly, the problem of coronations is not so important for Scandinavian historiography as it is for Polish historiographers.

After this short overview of the basic information about Scandinavian coronations we should turn back to Western Slavs, and look into Polish historiography which seems to be in a way obsessed with the idea of coronation as a symbol of national independence in the earliest time of Polish history. The arguments are as follows, to summarize and simplify them: the ideal situation for Poland was at that time to have a king as a state ruler, acknowledged by the emperor and the pope, who in this way would acknowledge the independence and sovereignty of Poland and confirm that the Polish state firmly belonged to the family of civilized European and Christian nations. Comparing all this to Scandinavian coronations, such an interpretation seems to be absurd. The coronations suggest dependence on the empire! This is illustrated by a very famous and interesting miniature interpreted by Johannes Fried as a depiction of Emperor Otto III and two kings – Polish King Bolesław I and Hungarian King Stephen (I am convinced by Fried's interpretation connecting it to the events around the year 1000).[8] One may also turn to the famous letter of St Bruno of Querfurt to Henry II where St Bruno expresses his regret about the conflict between German Henry II and Polish Bolesław the Great, stating that it would be better for Henry *talem hominem habere fidelem, cuius auxilio et consilio tributum accipere*....,[9] "[as] such a man to have a lasting dynasty, from whom tribute could be received for the help and advice." It is more than clear then that the postulated relation between the German soon-to-be emperor and the Polish ruler (willing to be accepted as king), was for St Bruno a situation

[7] J. Morawiec, *Knut Wielki, król Anglii, Danii i Norwegii (ok. 995–1035)* (Kraków 2013), 124.

[8] J. Fried, *Otto III. und Boleslaw Chrobry. Das Widmungsbild des Aachener Evangeliars, der „Akt von Gnesen" und das frühe polnische und ungarische Königtum* (Stuttgart 2001). I believe to some extent in Fried's interpretation and connection of the pictures to the events around the year 1000, but his hypothesis was welcomed with much skepticism in Polish historiography.

[9] *Epistola Brunonis ad Henricum regem*, in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, nova series, vol.4/3, ed. J. Karwasińska (Warszawa 1973), 102.

when, in friendly agreement with Henry, Bolesław may deliver to him *auxilio et consilio* "help and advice," that is as his royal vassal.

There remains an important question as to why Polish (and Czech) rulers would agree to follow the Carolingian model of royal power (giving them lesser rank within, so to speak, European feudal system with the emperor on top), while the old pagan model of rulership – preserved in Scandinavia – seemed to secure more power for rulers, including the royal title itself. The Old Rus' seems to initially follow the Scandinavian model and Vladimir I is for Thietmar of Merseburg, of course, a king, while Polish Bolesław I is in the same chapter of his Chronicle called only by his name,[10] despite the meeting in Gniezno in the year 1000 where he was already crowned, according to the already mentioned interpretation by Johannes Fried.

The explanations of this difference between West Slavic lands and Scandinavia regarding kings and coronations is, in my opinion, very simple. The West Slavic elites decided to enter the imperial system of Western Europe of that time trying to act as external members of this network of power.[11] However such efforts incurred some cost – it was necessary not only to accept baptism but also for some rulers to agree and accept imperial hierarchy and assume a subordinate place in it. In consequence, the acceptance for the royal rank of West Slavic rulers disappeared and they were no longer automatically acknowledged as kings just because of their own old custom. Their rulership in their lands was acknowledged but only within a broader system of power and the status of Slavic rulers fell below the royal rank. To be promoted to the rank of the king within the system required not only power and obedience, but also bids for favours, agreements, concessions, etc. That was the West Slavic way adopted after the Czech and Polish rulers decided to enter into the Christian and imperial world. At the same time, Scandinavian rulers seemed to have ignored that possibility, being aware that the British Isles were Christian but managed to remain outside the imperial system. What they may have thought about entering into such feudal structures with subordinated rank is shown in the well-known story in Dudo of St Quentin's *Gesta Normanniae Ducum* relating a probably invented although instructive episode of how Rollo paid "homage" to the French king Charles III the Simple: Rollo was unwilling to kiss King Charles's foot and supposedly said:

> Nunquam curvabo genua mea alicujus genibus, nec osculabor cujuspiam pedem. – Francorum igitur precibus compulsus jussit cuidam militi pedem regis osculari. Quis statim pedem regis arripiens, deprtavit ados suum,

[10] *Rex Ruscorum*, Thietmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, nova series, vol. 9, ed. R. Holtzmann (Berlin 1935), 528–29.

[11] If I am right, one of the first titles given in the sources to Mieszko after he accepted baptism was *marchio*, which quite correctly depicts his position.

> standoque deflixit osculum, regemque fecit resupinum. Itaque magnus excitatur risus....[12]
>
> "I shall never bend my knees to the knees of another, nor shall I kiss anyone's foot." – Compelled, however, by the prayers of the Francs, he ordered a certain soldier to kiss the king's foot. This man immediately seized the king's foot, put it to his mouth and kissed while the king was still standing. The king felt flat on his back. This raised a great laugh....[13]

Taking all the facts into consideration it seems to me that it is impossible to interpret the coronations of the first three Polish kings as symbols of Polish sovereignty. It was precisely the opposite – the coronations signalled the efforts of Polish rulers to obtain a higher rank within the network of the imperial feudal structure connected to the empire. Even the wars fought at that time between Polish rulers and German kings and emperors had similar meaning and were the consequence of the efforts of Polish dukes and kings to secure more power within the system, but not outside of it. Bavarian rulers did the same.

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[12] Dudonis Decani S Quintini... De Gestis Normanniae ducum libri tres, Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol.141 (Paris 1853), 650–51.

[13] Translated in *The Normans in Europe*, ed. E. Van Houts (New York 2000), 30. For an interpretation of this episode, see W. Fałkowski, "The Ambitions of the Normans and the Monarchy of the Last Carolingians. The Creation of Reality in the Chronicle by Dudo of Saint-Quentin," *Questiones Medii Aeavi Novae* 9 (2004), 117–52, esp. 122–23.

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Aspekty władzy królewskiej w średniowiecznej Skandynawii

Streszczenie

Niniejszy tom jest przyczynkiem do badań nad rozumieniem pojęcia i ról królów i królowych we wczesnym średniowieczu Europy Północnej. Inspiracją dla zawartych w nim tekstów było seminarium poświęcone różnorakim aspektom władzy królewskiej w średniowiecznej Skandynawii, które odbyło się w Uniwersytecie Śląskim w Katowicach w lutym 2016 roku. Tom jest zbiorem artykułów napisanych przez międzynarodową grupę badaczek i badaczy reprezentujących różne dyscypliny naukowe, od historii, przez literaturoznawstwo, po prawoznawstwo i religioznawstwo, którzy podejmują w nim problematykę władzy królewskiej z perspektyw poszczególnych dziedzin i rozpatrują wiele poszczególnych zagadnień z nią związanych.

Anne Irene Riisøy (University College of Southeast Norway) w swoim artykule zatytułowanym „Nawrócenie, *thingi* i wikińscy królowie" rozważa rolę *thingów*, tj. regionalnych zgromadzeń, w misyjnych przedsięwzięciach trzech norweskich królów: Hakona Dobrego, Olafa Tryggvasona i Olafa Haraldssona, opierając swoją analizę zarówno na sagach królewskich, jak i na starszych analogiach. Jakub Morawiec (Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach) w artykule „Swen Haraldsson – porwany król Danii" omawia zachowaną w wielu skandynawskich i kontynentalnych źródłach opowieść o porwaniu króla Swena Widłobrodego przez jarla Sigwaldiego i o późniejszym okupie zapłaconym przez jego poddanych. Nawet jeśli niemożliwe jest stwierdzenie, czy historia ta oparta jest na prawdziwych wydarzeniach, Morawiec dowodzi, że może ona świadczyć o energicznej działalności propagandowej, której celem był król Danii i która podjęta była w czasie jego buntu przeciwko władzy ojca, Haralda Sinozębego. Z kolei Łukasz Neubauer (Politechnika Koszalińska) w artykule „Między historią a propagandą: rozważania nad królewskimi i wojowniczymi cechami Knuta Wielkiego w poemacie *Liðsmannaflokkr*" analizuje sposób, w jaki anonimowy autor owego poematu dokonuje porównania pomiędzy Knutem, młodym królem Anglii i Danii, i jarlem Thorkelem Wysokim, skupiając się na przymiotach charakteryzujących ich jako przywódców wojskowych. Choć intencją skalda było podkreślenie naturalnych zdolności Knuta, zwłaszcza w porównaniu do znacznie bardziej doświadczonego jarla, zobrazowanie królewskiej męskości i odwagi w poemacie może być, według Neubauera, uznane za historycznie wiarygodne. Bjørn Bandlien (University College of South-Eastern Norway) omawia koncepcję ideologiczną, której emanacją była seria monet króla Olafa Haraldssona wybitych ok. 1024 r. przez angielskiego mincerza, a na których rewersie widnieje postać ptaka. Do dziś odnaleziono jedynie trzy monety pochodzące z tej serii i wszystko wskazuje na to, że ich wartość płatnicza była ograniczona. W tekście zatytułowanym „Monety i władza królewska w późnym okresie wikińskim: motyw ptaka na monetach króla Olafa Haraldssona" Bandlien dowodzi, że ich emisja była podyktowana przede wszystkim pobudkami ideologicznymi, ściśle związanymi z prestiżem monarchy i jego skłonnością do wzorowania się na obcych, głównie anglosaskich wzorcach ideologii

królewskiej. Erin Michelle Goeres (University College London) w artykule zatytułowanym „Niebezpieczeństwa hojności: pieniądze, władza i polityka w *Vestrfararvísur* i *Kálfsflokkr*", odwołując się do dwóch jedenastowiecznych poematów skaldycznych, omawia konsekwencje królewskiej hojności, która może być interpretowana bądź jako nagroda dla zwolenników króla, bądź jako sposób na wykupienie i zneutralizowanie wrogów. Rafał Borysławski (Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach) w tekście „*Hlæfdige* i *Hlaford*: władza, płeć i obrazy ciągłości w *Encomium Emmae Reginae*" mówi o przedstawieniu Emmy z Normandii, małżonki króla Etelreda i króla Knuta, jako królowej w kontekście ciągłości władzy i podziałach ról władców i władczyń związanych z ich płcią. Wizerunek swoich ról i wpływu, który, jak się wydaje, królowa promowała w poświęconym jej anonimowym *Encomium*, jest również rodzajem mistycznego przedstawienia władzy królewskiej. W artykule zatytułowanym „Wilk pomiędzy wilkami: królowie, wyjęci spod prawa i ich dyskursy w sagach islandzkich" Marion Poilvez (University of Iceland in Reykjavik) analizuje silnie zantagonizowane wyobrażenia monarchy i ludzi wyjętych spod prawa. Monarcha symbolizuje sprawiedliwość i prawo, natomiast człowiek wygnany ze społeczności jest z niej wykluczony, złamawszy ustanowione prawa. Islandzkie sagi obfitują jednakże w przykłady znacznie bliższych i bardziej skomplikowanych stosunków między stanowiącymi i łamiącymi prawo, które Poilvez omawia. W kolejnym artykule tomu, pt. „Ideały chrześcijańskiego królestwa. Konsekwencje wynikające z *Elucidariusza*, *Konungs skuggsiá* i *Eiríks saga víðfǫrla*", Arngrímur Vídalín (University of Iceland in Reykjavik) analizuje trzy teksty wymienione w tytule, które skupiają się na różnych aspektach władzy chrześcijańskiego króla, i które silnie postulują konieczność odpowiedniego wykształcenia władcy w celu zdobycia wiedzy o świecie powstałym w wyniku boskiego aktu stworzenia. Zamykając tom, Leszek P. Słupecki (Uniwersytet Rzeszowski) w artykule „Korona na głowie króla. Królewskie tytuły i władza w X- i XI-wiecznej Polsce i Skandynawii" omawia różnice w sposobie przedstawiania władców skandynawskich i środkowoeuropejskich (polskich, czeskich i węgierskich) w źródłach historycznych. Nordyccy władcy byli konsekwentnie określani mianem królów pomimo braku rytów błogosławieństwa i koronacji. Można to wytłumaczyć przynależnością do miejscowej, zakorzenionej w czasach pogańskich, tradycji królewskiej, rozwijającej się niezależnie od tradycji karolińskiej, która z kolei silnie wpłynęła na wizerunek władcy w Europie Środkowej.

On the cover: a painting by Radosław Perlak

Copy editing Gabriela Marszołek
Technical editing Małgorzata Pleśniar
Cover design Anna Krasnodębska-Okręglicka
Proofreading Joanna Zwierzyńska
Typesetting Barbara Wilk

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ISSN 0208-6336
ISBN 978-83-226-3399-1
(print edition)
ISBN 978-83-226-3400-4
(digital edition)

Publisher
Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
ul. Bankowa 12B, 40-007 Katowice
www.wydawnictwo.us.edu.pl
e-mail: wydawus@us.edu.pl

First impression. Printed sheets: 10.5. Publishing sheets: 13.0.
Offset paper grade III, 90 g Price 30 zł (+ VAT)

Printing and binding:
Volumina.pl Daniel Krzanowski
ul. Księcia Witolda 7–9, 71-063 Szczecin


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Price 30 PLN (+ VAT)
ISBN 978-83-226-3399-1
9 788322 633991

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